

Between Optimism and Opportunism

Deconstructing 'African management' discourse in South Africa

PhD dissertation by Henk van den Heuvel

Department of Culture, Organisation and Management

Faculty of Social Sciences

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

2007

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Heidi Dahles, Prof. Dr. Kees van der Waal, Dr. Harry Wels

CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Chapter 1: Researching Afrocentric management discourse – introduction	6
<i>Introduction</i>	6
1.1 <i>A case of ‘glocalisation’</i>	16
1.2 <i>Between Optimism and Opportunism</i>	22
1.3 <i>Structure of the thesis</i>	24
Chapter 2: Methodological issues: a reflexive description of the research process	30
2.1 <i>Reflexivity in retrospect</i>	32
2.2 <i>Non-anonymity of data and informants</i>	40
2.3 <i>Being an associate of a key research participant</i>	45
2.4 <i>The research process</i>	48
Chapter 3: ‘African management’ flows: emergence and distribution	68
<i>Introduction</i>	68
3.1 <i>Emergence and externalisation</i>	69
3.2 <i>Distribution</i>	83
<i>Concluding remarks</i>	100
Chapter 4: ‘African management’ flows: utilisation	101
<i>Introduction</i>	101
4.1 <i>Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users</i>	101
4.2 <i>Mbigi’s Rainmaker Management Consultants: a key actor</i>	118
<i>Concluding remarks</i>	126
Chapter 5: Themes, deviations and critiques	129
<i>Introduction</i>	129
5.1 <i>Themes</i>	129
5.2 <i>Deviations and critiques</i>	140
<i>Concluding remarks</i>	150
Chapter 6: Colonialism, apartheid and transition	152
<i>Introduction</i>	152
6.1 <i>A long history of coercive labour</i>	153
6.2 <i>Transition and the role of business</i>	165
6.3 <i>Impact of colonialism and apartheid</i>	177
<i>Concluding remarks</i>	187

Chapter 7: Challenges of business transformation	189
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>189</i>
7.1 <i>Does Black Economic Empowerment imply value changes?</i>	<i>190</i>
7.2 <i>Cultural diversity and global competitiveness</i>	<i>197</i>
7.3 <i>African Renaissance.....</i>	<i>200</i>
7.4 <i>Corporate Social Responsibility and ethical enterprising</i>	<i>204</i>
<i>Concluding remarks.....</i>	<i>207</i>
Chapter 8: ‘Africanness’ in Afrocentric perspective.....	209
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>209</i>
8.1 <i>Afrocentrism.....</i>	<i>211</i>
8.2 <i>The Black Athena debate.....</i>	<i>221</i>
<i>Concluding remarks: ‘Africanness’ as Otherness?</i>	<i>227</i>
Chapter 9: ‘Africanness’ as open-ended.....	230
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>230</i>
9.1 <i>‘Race’ and ethnic identity discourse</i>	<i>231</i>
9.2 <i>Identity in-the-making</i>	<i>247</i>
9.3 <i>Multiple identities</i>	<i>250</i>
9.4 <i>Postmodern or Postcolonial: either, neither or both?</i>	<i>252</i>
<i>Concluding remarks: dimensions of ‘Africanness’</i>	<i>257</i>
Chapter 10: An interpretative framework	261
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>261</i>
10.1 <i>The historical dimension.....</i>	<i>262</i>
10.2 <i>Management strategies for business transformation</i>	<i>279</i>
10.3 <i>‘Africanisation’ and post-apartheid identity formation</i>	<i>290</i>
10.4 <i>Management guru theory.....</i>	<i>301</i>
<i>Concluding remarks.....</i>	<i>305</i>
Chapter 11: Conclusions	307
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>307</i>
11.1 <i>Research question.....</i>	<i>308</i>
11.2 <i>Answers and interpretation.....</i>	<i>308</i>
11.3 <i>Final remarks.....</i>	<i>321</i>
Annexure I: Abbreviations	322
Annexure II: Summary in Dutch (samenvatting).....	323
Annexure III:	324
References.....	326

Foreword

Chapter 1: Researching Afrocentric management discourse

– introduction

Introduction

Some years before I started this research, I once read about *ubuntu* in a Dutch magazine. Only much later, I found out that this was a keyword in Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa. It concerned a cynical comment by ‘Landos’, a fictional bar-mate, brought alive in Bafana Khumalo’s columns in *Tribute*. Khumalo is a South African playwright and author on cultural issues.

The hypocrisy of the new elite is really unbearable. And they all swear by *ubuntu*, the new buzzword of the blacks. *Ubuntu* is Xhosa for togetherness, a sort of communal warmth and solidarity that according to experts is typically African. In practice, it comes down to group egoism and there is nothing particularly African about it. [...] You assholes are just too lazy to compete with the whites, so you invent nice new words like *ubuntu*. You hear this kind of bullshit only in boardrooms among affirmative action-type of managing directors, while outside it does not even exist (De Groene Amsterdammer, 27 May 1998 – translation by H. v.d. Heuvel).

Probably, this was my first mindful encounter with the concept of *ubuntu*. This very quote was already full of elements that I would be chewing on for several years. In the final stage of thesis writing, I was preparing an article about different applications in South Africa of *ubuntu* in practice (Van den Heuvel 2007). Then, I came across a citation of another Bafana Khumalo, co-director of the *Sonke Gender Justice Network* in Johannesburg and member of the *Commission on Gender Equality*:¹

The network is also trying to include traditional leaders in its work through invoking the concept of *ubuntu* - a term used in a number of South African languages that can be loosely translated as ‘humanity’. More broadly, it refers to a traditional belief that a person's humanity is determined by the extent to which the humanity of others is upheld. But the NGO has found that approaching the leaders requires considerable tact. “You don’t start by criticising their way of life as being backward. They will close ranks and refuse to talk to you. It’s safe to talk to the elders, for example, about the problems of women who have been kicked out of their matrimonial homes. Kicking out women goes against the spirit of *ubuntu*,” Khumalo says (Mail&Guardian, 10 July 2007).

These two citations immediately show how differently *ubuntu* can be interpreted. Intriguing questions in this example are whether and to what extent the following factors account for the difference in interpretation: (a) the elapse of time (1998-2007); (b) age and difference in responsibilities of the concerned persons (a young journalist or a middle-aged Reverend and co-director of an NGO); (c) the specific contexts referred to (‘new elites’ in hypermodern urban areas

¹ This was not the same person as the columnist mentioned earlier.

versus traditional leaders in rural areas), or (d) the strategic use of *ubuntu* (criticising ‘the new elite’ versus supporting rural women). These cover only some of the many interesting questions dealt with in this research about ‘the meaning of *ubuntu*’ particularly in a context of management and organisation. This study is about the emergence and evolution of ‘African management’ in South Africa. It is an attempt to interpret this locally emergent management discourse in a context of transformation and globalisation and in terms of identity formation and power relations. A quick literature scan will learn that this is most probably the first elaborate qualitative research on ‘African management’ in South Africa in an organisational ethnographic perspective.

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’. Its scope may still be rather marginal. One could argue, however, that it is rather significant in view of a long historical development of colonialism, oppression, and liberation in South Africa. Over the years, this particular management approach has received a considerable deal of media attention.² Presently, a number of South African firms strongly sympathise with Afrocentric approaches, and arguably make efforts to implement its principles. *Eskom Holdings Limited* is a case in point, which is contributing about 50% of the total energy production in Africa with its approximately 32,000 employees, operating in 30 countries on the African continent. This ‘public enterprise’ happens to be ‘Africa’s largest electricity utility’. Allegedly, it has undertaken bold initiatives to institutionalise an ‘African Business Leadership’ vision, illustrating a contemporary appropriation of ‘African management’ philosophy. Another example may be *First National Bank (FNB)*.³ For several years, Mike Boon of *Vulindlela Network* has been actively involved with project to transform FNB’s organisational culture. Boon, who is 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*, had approached Boon for this grand operation. A few years later, Van der Walt stated that the initiative has met with ‘overwhelming success’.⁴ Amongst others, it was claimed that FNB employees showed more understanding for each other and were more capable to relate to colleagues with different cultural backgrounds. At work, purportedly

² E.g. 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; Finansies & 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.

³ 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; see Van der Pol (2006): *African Leadership: An Employee Perspective. An Empirical Study into the Ways Employees Give Meaning to the Concept of African Leadership: The Case of First National Bank* (MA-thesis *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*).

⁴ *VUKA: How a bank gave itself a wake-up call* Sunday Times, 28 April 2002.

employees were behaving less bureaucratically and less formally towards each other, and meetings were said to be more participatory than before. High staff turnovers had decreased and profit margins went up. The number of accountholders went up considerably, mainly due to the opening of new offices in townships.

Eskom and FNB are two better-known illustrations, but several other organisations could be mentioned that have been drawn 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 its then managing director Albert Koopman (Koopman; Nasser & Nel 1987).

Overall, the dominant management and leadership style in South Africa is however still mostly described as ‘western’.⁵ For over 15 years now, ‘African management’ advocates have been making efforts to expand their influence gradually. This study focuses on South Africa, not because Afrocentric management perspectives would be improbable elsewhere in Africa (or beyond). In South Africa, there was growing attention for African management’ philosophy in the 1990s, as the outcome of a combination of developments and factors that were specifically related to historical, political, and economic contexts in this country. The possibility that similar views on management and organisation will emerge in other countries on the continent should not be excluded.

This label became accepted publicly through one specific publication, namely, *African management: Philosophies, Concepts and Applications* (Christie; Lessem & Mbigi 1994). This can be considered as the launch of the ‘African management’ concept in South Africa. The book was the outcome of a workshop, where new leadership and management conceptions were debated, which would assumingly suit a post-apartheid context. At the time, much was expected from the incorporation of concepts and insights originating from ‘traditional African culture’. Furthermore, it is assumed to apply to South Africa as a whole, despite the country’s broad cultural variety. Consequently, regional and local variations are largely disregarded, at least as far as its general notions and principles are concerned. Herewith the reader is immediately introduced to discursive dispositions in ‘African management’ thought. Namely, it would not matter whether this management vision was applied in organisations in Gauteng Province – with the metropolitan area of Johannesburg as the country’s economic powerhouse and with Pretoria as its main administrative centre – or the industrial and trading areas of Durban and its Kwa-Zulu hinterland, or the Western Cape. This may be a remarkable feature, as culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically there are quite substantial differences between these regions, and between (and among) its respective diverse population groups. It instantly reveals the assumption of its potential in terms of cultural diversity

⁵ Usually, management in South Africa is not only typified as ‘western’, but also as ‘North European’, ‘Eurocentric’, ‘British’, ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and even as ‘American’.

management, integration, and nation building on the organisational level.

Moreover, according to the ‘producers’ of ‘African management’ philosophy, who will be introduced in Chapter 3 and consecutive chapters, the same principles and concepts would actually apply to the whole of Africa, if not the whole world. Africa is being associated with humanity and humaneness. Similarly, an ‘African management’ approach is discursively associated with these virtues. Furthermore, it is assumed that in several societies – especially in ‘the west’ – people would suffer from a loss of cultural identity and spirituality. They would have lost much of their sense of humaneness. Often, generalising contrasts between ‘North’ (Europe), ‘West’ (the Americas), ‘East’ (Asia) and ‘South’ (Africa), or an even simpler binary position of ‘Eurocentric’ versus ‘Afrocentric’ are used to explain the main tenets of ‘African management’ philosophy.

Researching ‘African management’ flows

Cultural processes can be imagined in terms of *flows* (e.g. Hannerz 1992; Appadurai 1996; 2002). Thoughts are developed as ‘processes of the mind’ and externalised, i.e. made known publicly in some way. An idea or a concept is launched and distributed to individuals and groups. Again, others pick it up and they may make something different out of it, or combine it with existing ideas, thus altering or adding (new) meanings. A flow is constantly moving. It expands, every time taking different shapes. It diffuses and may eventually dissolve or be sucked into other flows. Flows represent the dynamic character of culture, its changeability, and its flexibility – as opposed to a static view on culture – constantly interacting with and diffusing into other cultural flows, consequently producing new cultural products, taking on new meanings.

The notion of cultural flows is related to the concept of creolisation, seen in a postcolonial perspective, not so much in linguistic terms, but in the sense of a creative interplay, as cultural interactions over long stretches of time, especially, ‘putting things together in new ways’, mostly as part of asymmetrical centre-periphery relationships. Cultural influx from outside does not ‘inscribe itself on a cultural *tabula rasa*’. It does not enter into a vacuum, as if nothing existed before that. Creole culture is intrinsically of mixed origin. In this connection, Hannerz argues that creolisation is opposed to the view of ‘cultures’ as territorially well-bounded wholes:

It allows the sense of a complex culture as a network of perspectives or as an ongoing debate. [...] Creolization thought is open-ended (Hannerz 1992: 266).

Similarly, in this thesis ‘African management’ is seen as a ‘network of perspectives’, a result of cultural interactions and as an ongoing debate, though advertised as a truly ‘indigenous’ – as a ‘pure’ – perspective. Now, should ‘African management’ – as other products of creolisation – primarily be understood as *oppositional*, or as a continuous process that is inherent in all forms of

cultural encounters (Nuttall & Michael 2000: 6-7)? Creolisation understood as a process of ‘interweaving’ and ‘cultural diffusion’ with ‘the blurring of lines of alterity’, makes it problematic to draw “clear distinctions between the versions of the colonised and the colonisers” (Nuttall & Michael 2000: 8).⁶ South African history is the outcome of a long-lasting creolisation process of complex daily encounters and interactions that created ‘reluctant bonds’ (Nuttall & Michael 2000: 9).⁷ There may be doubts as to what extent creolisation is about resistance. The bonding aspect however, although sometimes reluctantly, seems very important, as well as the social construction of affinities. As such, an ‘African management’ vision could be interpreted as an outcome of a long historical process of creolisation and hybridisation, as oppositional – ‘colonisers’ versus ‘colonised’ though often with unclear distinctions between them – and in terms of bonding, be it often with ‘unreluctant bonds’. South Africa’s society today could be seen as the outcome of protracted processes of contacts and mixing; the blending that resulted from interactions between people with different cultural backgrounds and diverse origins produced a mix that is impossible to unravel (Martin, D.-C. 2006).⁸

Contemplating the culture concept in terms of creolisation and cultural flows, it almost seems as if Hannerz sees a whole world of creolisation emerging, while rejecting the idea of well-bounded coherent cultures and giving up the idea that the local has an autonomy of its own:

...the distribution of meanings and meaningful forms over people and social relationships in the world is now so complicated that any social units we work with in cultural studies must be more or less arbitrary... The idea of cultures in the plural is problematic... (Hannerz 1996: 23).

Putting it in a slightly different way: “...it is something about this ‘throwing together’ that makes more visible fluidities that characterize all societies” (Nuttall & Michael 2000: 6). Along similar lines, Chapter 3 explores flows of ‘African management’, both considering spoken texts (e.g. speeches, presentations, and interviews) and written texts (books, book reviews, articles, published interviews, websites, profiles, etcetera) for which both primary and secondary data have been accessed and analysed.⁹ The proposed outline of ‘African management’ as process is mainly analogous to the ‘three dimensions of culture’ that Hannerz has distinguished in the proliferation of people’s meanings:

⁶ The authors drew here on the work of Carolyn Hamilton (1998).

⁷ *Lion and rabbit can work together* Sunday Independent, 15 August 1999. The notion of ‘reluctant bonds’ refers to what Njabulo Ndebele said in relation to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.

⁸ Denis-Constant Martin (2006) argues that Édouard Glissant’s theories of métissage and creolisation could be relevant to analysing the history of South Africa, because these theories stress processes and relations, considering creolisation as a continuous process. Noteworthy, however, are warnings of the ‘unreflexive use’ of the metaphor ‘creolisation’. It can become problematic to use creolisation as an analytical concept, if one accepts that ‘languages’ or ‘cultures’ are themselves sociocultural constructs. Thus, ‘creolisation theory’ is “ultimately a mere reflex of the very conditions it seeks to denounce and supersede,” according to Stephan Palmié (2006), on page 448.

⁹ The contextual information in chapters 3, 4 and 5 is limited, as chapters 6 and 7 deal more comprehensively with this. ‘African management’ in South Africa Page 10 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

1. Ideas and modes of thought as entities and processes of the mind [...];
2. Forms of externalisation, the different ways in which meaning is made accessible to the senses, and made public; and
3. Social distribution, the ways in which the collective cultural inventory of meanings and meaningful external forms – that is (1) and (2) together – is spread over a population and its social relationships (Hannerz 1992: 7).

The notion of cultural flows, as applied here, is actually a process of knowledge production, comprising *knowledge producers* (authors, consultants, and academics), *knowledge disseminators* (e.g. publishers, media, universities, business schools, conferences), and *end-users* (entrepreneurs, business-leaders, managing directors). Similarly, we can discern at least two phases: (1) development of modes of thought, externalisation and emergence, and (2) social distribution and utilisation. The latter phase is understood here as the ways, in which actors as ‘end-users’ (claim to) implement ‘African management’ ideas, mainly from the perspective of chief executive officers, business leaders, and other organisation leaders.

Any management idea that is being distributed and promoted widely, meets at some point with some mode of implementation. Discourse and social practice go together (Hardy; Lawrence & Phillips 1998). ‘Talking’ and ‘doing’ are concurrent and ‘mutually implicated activities’ (Grant; Keenoy & Oswick 1998b: 5). They can be considered as ‘two sides of the same coin’, shaping each other (Pijnenburg 2004: 34). Once applied, ‘African management’ as a management concept will be used in an organisational setting that is embedded in a web of localised social meanings within a particular power configuration. How the concept – and values attributed to the it – will work out in practice in a culturally diverse environment, eventually depends to a considerable extent on its institutional context and on interfaces with the organisation’s environment, its external fields that together determine the social and cultural order within an organisation (Glastra 1999: 77-81).

Consequently, this makes it difficult, if not impossible, to say what ‘African management’ *is* precisely, what it exactly means in practice. An assorted spectrum of empirical data as presented in chapters 3 and 4 particularly, demonstrates how various actors in South Africa define and tend to give meaning to the concept of ‘African management’. This thesis gives a rather differentiated account of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. Readers expecting a ‘definite’ interpretation of this phenomenon might therefore get slightly disillusioned.

In this thesis, the term ‘African management’ is consistently placed between inverted commas, thus putting emphasis on its conceptual and discursive character. It clarifies that it neither refers to a clear-cut and generally accepted concept, nor concerns a description of universal daily management practices, but a management *vision* with a story to be told. Since the concept of *ubuntu* is a key term in the ways that ‘producers’, ‘disseminators’ and ‘end-users’ define and promote ‘African management’ philosophy, one might as well say, that this research is about the travelling tales of ‘*African management*’ in South Africa

ubuntu in relation to management and organisation in South Africa. In other words, it is an ideational history.¹⁰ The chosen research approach did not allow comprehensive ethnographic case studies of specific organisations. How the research was conducted is explained in Chapter 2: *Methodological issues: a reflexive description of the research process*.

The research question

The central question underlying this research is:

How and in what political and cultural context can the emergence and the evolution of ‘African management’ in South Africa be interpreted, and how is this concept constructed and strategically used, in a context of transition and transformation and in terms of globalisation and identity formation?

In other words, when and how did ‘African management’ emerge in South Africa, and how do concerned actors construe this concept (and related concepts, such as *ubuntu*)? What narratives do actors use when they define this concept, what cultural idiom is employed, what meanings do they attribute to it, and how do they (claim to) apply it? This thesis offers a look into the various ways people tend to interpret ‘African management’ discourse and related concepts. It looks at broader local contexts – historically and culturally – in which organisations in South Africa operate and how these relate to and affect emergent (Afrocentric) perspectives on management and organisation. In addition, globalisation is taken into account, or more precisely, cultural dimensions of globalisation: how and to what extent does globalisation play a role in the emergence and evolution of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa? All this is considered in the light of a transition from apartheid to democracy (Chapter 6), and in view of a process of business transformation (Chapter 7).

Following a poststructuralist perspective on ethnography, one would have to accept that the ethnographer’s ability to ‘capture the meanings on the basis of which people act’ are limited, as these meanings are generally not very stable (Hammersley & Atkinson 1997: 13). Consequently, an ethnographic account is an attempt ‘to make sense’ of the phenomenon under review; it is a social construction, employing rhetorical strategies. Dealing with discourse and rhetorical strategies, it is necessary to analyse how subjectivities are constituted through language. In analysing ‘African management’ discourse, deconstruction does not focus for the most part on linguistic aspects, but is broader. It seeks to analyse and primarily to *contextualise* the discourse, dissecting various elements that constitute its rhetorical vocabularies. How this was done, is explained in Chapter 2.

Contesting discourses....

‘African management’ discourse causes much polarisation and controversy, as the reader can learn

¹⁰ The notion of ideational history is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

from this thesis. Therefore, polarisation and contestation constitute crucial elements of this deconstruction endeavour. The discourse is full of truth claims in organisational contexts of what is 'right' and 'wrong', 'true' or 'false', 'just' or 'unjust', often accompanied (and thus discursively justified) by a reference to a binary opposition with an 'Eurocentric' and an 'Afrocentric' pole, representing a contestation between the (*former*) 'coloniser' and the (*former*) 'colonised'. This refers to the debate on postcolonial perspectives on management and organisation studies (e.g. Prasad 2003b; Frenkel & Shenhav 2006). Chapter 10 will go into this binary opposition more in-depth, in particular 10.1 *The historical dimension*.

Apparently, dominant management discourse defends itself against 'different' truth claims from contesting perspectives, often making use of a similar dichotomy. For example, 'African management' philosophy would be 'not empirical', but mostly mythical and anecdotal, in other words second-rate. For instance, unlike 'African management' philosophy, dominant management discourse is, generally unfamiliar with explicit religious notions and expressions such as 'African spirituality', labelling those therefore as 'not viable'. What does 'African spirituality' mean after all, how can it be expressed in language and can it be transposed to the domain of management and organisation?

Can everything, especially everything spiritual, be expressed in language? The answer is inevitably: no, of course not. Can everything, especially everything spiritual, be transferred from the specific domain of one language to that of another language? Here the answer is: yes, to a considerable extent, but not totally (Van Binsbergen 2003: 31-32).

If it *can not* be expressed in language, then it is not hard to imagine that some might perceive it as mythological or as 'not empirical'. This leads to the primary question of epistemology, concerning "theories about how we know about the nature of reality – that is, how we know how things are" (Martin, J. 2002: 30).¹¹ This is an academic question, but – in a somewhat different perspective – also concerns management practitioners and consultants.

Academia seems to be part of the polarisation in this debate as well. Various scholars, in South Africa and beyond, have commented on Afrocentric management perspectives in often rather polarising ways. Therefore, academia cannot be considered in isolation, outside the realities of discursive formations, but has to be viewed as part of the political and cultural arena, although not situated right in the middle of it.

South African and non-South African scholars commenting on 'African management' discourse represent universities and research institutes, bastions of power and knowledge, which happen to be players in guarding or challenging a cultural hegemony. My own position as a scholar

¹¹ Questions of ontology and epistemology with regard to researching 'African management' discourse are further discussed in Chapter 2.

is trying not to get caught in this polarisation, but to take it as a notable feature and try to figure out what the underlying motives and concerns are. Current South African academic perspectives on management and organisation issues still seem to reflect a residue of pre-1994 paradigms. However, as I will argue in Chapter 6, here a significant transformation is slowly taking place, possibly with major cultural implications, for better or for worse.¹²

This research is about a discourse, a philosophy, a narrative, or a vision. One might even call it a *prophecy* (Van den Heuvel; Mangaliso & Van de Bunt 2006). The boundaries between these qualifications are not clearly discernible. For what reasons and under which conditions could it rightfully be termed a discourse, a narrative, a philosophy, or a vision for example, and when and why not? Instead of becoming uncomfortably caged in an endless argument over correct typifications and definitions, I chose to use the term ‘African management’, as well as ‘discourse’, as sensitising concepts.¹³ Moreover, several actors who (used to) identify with Afrocentric management approaches – for instance, Albert Koopman and Lovemore Mbigi – regularly refer to it as ‘discourse’.¹⁴ This also seems to suggest that they belong to South Africa’s intelligentsia. To a certain level, they actually draw on a scholarly idiom similar to that of the researcher. This created a peculiar dynamism throughout the field research.

The term ‘African management’ (discourse) does not imply that ‘management’ as such is the prime keyword in this study. It deals as much with leadership as with management, perhaps even more with leadership, depending on one’s definition of both concepts. Alfred Koopman, one of the most prominent ‘African management’ thinkers, clarified this question as follows:

Quite simply the manager focuses on doing things right. The leader is concerned with doing the right things (Koopman; Nasser *et al.* 1987: 145).¹⁵

Others would rather equate management with leadership, or at any rate consider leadership capabilities as an important precondition for effective management (Drucker 1955: 13). If one differentiates between management and leadership, an *orientation towards change* would be a key characteristic of leadership. Leadership presupposes an overall strategic and visionary perspective and the ability of communicating this to others, in such a way that they act and make accomplishments in the spirit of such a vision:

¹² This issue is discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, in section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid*.

¹³ In Chapter 2, the notion of ‘sensitising concepts’ as applied in the context of this research is clarified (section 2.4 *The research process*).

¹⁴ They do not refer to it exclusively as ‘discourse’, but alternately also use the term ‘philosophy’, e.g. Broodryk (2005), or (African spirit) ‘religion’, such as Mbigi (2000).

¹⁵ Probably, Koopman was indebted to others for this insight, possibly to Bennis & Nanus (1985) with reference to a similar citation on page 21 in their book *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*.

Those who make a clear distinction portray the leader as someone who develops visions and drives *new initiatives*, and portray the manager as someone who monitors progress towards objectives in order to achieve *order and reliability*. The leader is prophet, catalyst, and mover-shaker, focussed on strategy. The manager is operator, technician and problem solver [...] (Huczynski & Buchanan 2001: 703; italics in original text).

Leaders are expected to develop a long-term vision for the organisation and to provide for necessary conditions, in which employees can work efficiently, enabling them to achieve organisational goals. Management suggests more constriction; it is limited in scope and horizon, thinking and acting within a predetermined frame of fixed parameters. The main concern of management is to achieve a limited number of targets before a particular date, within a specific budget and other resources available. As a research participant put it, management focuses on project management and control, while leadership focuses on the broader picture, looking ahead.¹⁶ Speaking of South Africa in the early and mid-1990s, in times of volatility and political transition, prioritising 'management' was probably quite likely, as business tried to survive and keep things under control. Once a long process of business transformation commenced and gradually the situation for the South African business sector becoming a little bit more stable, it is conceivable that a demand for long-term leadership visions emerged. Having said this, it suffices to state that 'African management' discourse is indeed very much about leadership in organisations in South Africa. The term should therefore not be mistaken for an exclusive focus on management issues only.

.... seeking incorporation!

As noted earlier, contestation is a prominent aspect in manifestations of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, with a fair deal of controversy, dramatisation, and charismatic performance, as chapters 3 and 4 show. Such manifestations are usually characterised by rather essentialist notions about 'African culture' and 'Africanness'.¹⁷

Attempts of contestation often come with notions of liberation and reconciliation, resentments, while sometimes simultaneously touching on notions of racism, marginality, and subalternity.¹⁸ However, 'African management' philosophy has never been publicised as being opposed to capitalist development or as 'anti-globalist'. A central theme rather is a quest for cultural

¹⁶ Interview with Eric Mafuna on 11 May 2004.

¹⁷ The issue of 'strategic essentialism' in this context is taken up in Chapter 10 of this thesis, in section 10.3 '*Africanisation*' and *post-apartheid identity formation*. Elements of 'strategic essentialism' in 'African management' discourse in South Africa, for instance, could be interpreted as a plea for 'multivocality', encouraging a 'moral conversation' in the context of management and organisation.

¹⁸ With regard to the notion of subalternity, reference is made to Bhabha (1994). On page 256, Homi Bhabha discusses "the theoretical focus in the enunciatory present as a liberatory discursive strategy." The articulation of subaltern agency would offer possibilities to seek revision and reinscription (Bhabha 1994: 274-277). Bhabha suggests that in historical and cultural studies that take an essentialist perspective, this point is often missed.

recognition and incorporation of an Afrocentric worldview in management and organisation, however open-ended and situationally that may be defined in practice. In the meantime, ‘African management’ proponents operate within (or in collaboration with) dominant structures, benefiting from commodifying the discourse smartly. Apparently, the foundations of a capitalist mode of production in a neo-liberal policy framework are discursively not seen as problematic.¹⁹ ‘African management’ advocates seem to flourish quite well in a capitalist business environment, as some well-to-do management consultants make us believe. Research findings suggest that they do not have a problem with functioning in such a setting, as long as basic notions of Afrocentric discourse are being ‘accepted’ and as long as they are in some way absorbed into leading organisational narratives, and to some degree into management practices, or if perceived as such.

1.1 A case of ‘glocalisation’

In this research, ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa is considered as a case of localisation against a background of globalisation, or rather as a case of *glocalisation*, which is explained in the following. Culturally speaking, globalisation means a worldwide process, in which – perhaps somewhat paradoxically – notions of ‘home’ and ‘community’ are becoming increasingly emphasised at the local level. Amongst other things, the exploration, reconstruction, and revitalisation of notions, such as ‘indigenous knowledge’, ‘traditional values’, and ‘cultural heritage’, tends to be intensified in the era of globalisation. Moreover, a tendency towards commodifying such concepts into marketable products can be observed. Such localised concepts and products may eventually also become usage at the global level. This could be framed in terms of localisation, or glocalisation. The latter terms stresses particularly global cultural influences on localisation, while again localising processes also contribute to ‘the global’. In other words, processes of localisation are constitutive of globalisation, often leading to new insights or products. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to assume that globalisation would have actually *caused* ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. Actual circumstances, specific moments in time, 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, such as the transition from apartheid to majority rule, and the processes of business transformation.

Thus, ‘African management’ discourse, as presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5, can be viewed as a highly differential and complex case of glocalisation in South Africa, with the revitalised

¹⁹ The relationship between ‘African management’ and capitalism and the aspect of seeking integration with dominant structures, is discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, specifically in section 5.2.7 ‘*African management*’, *capitalism, and trade unions*, and in Chapter 10, in section 10.2 *Management strategies for business transformation*.

‘traditional’ concept of *ubuntu* as a key feature. This is, however, not a unique phenomenon. Also in other parts of the world, in Latin America, and especially in Asia – although in entirely different contexts and periods – local management and leadership discourses have emerged, in which notions of traditional values and indigenous knowledge were emphasised (e.g. Hayashi 1988; Van Wolferen 1989; Redding 1993; Chung; Lee & Jung 1997).

Global cultural processes

Several theorists in cultural studies contend that globalisation evokes local responses, whereby the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ would gradually merge. Globalisation can entail a localising process (Friedman 1994; Appadurai 1996). A contraction of the words ‘globalisation’ and ‘localisation’ results in the term ‘glocalisation’, expressing that processes of localisation are inherent to globalisation (e.g. Peters Talbott 1995; Robertson 1995; Tomlinson 1999). This is sometimes also termed ‘global localisation’ (e.g. Ohmae 1992; Nederveen Pieterse 2004).

People may attach other meanings, *new* meanings, to products of global culture in a specific local setting, involving aspects of status and hierarchy that may differ considerably from what they mean in the context where they were produced. Even if cultural elements are easily distributed and can be found all over the world, it does not say anything about their use or the meaning they have for people locally. ‘western products’ may be interpreted very differently in other cultural contexts; they can get an important symbolic meaning in the construction of local identities.

Increasingly, the world is seen as ‘one place’ including the ways, in which we are made conscious of this process. At the same time, there are cultural changes pointing in the opposite direction, paying particularly attention to the local and experiencing an awareness of a greater diversity in the world (Featherstone 1995: 114). Hence, notions such as ‘home’, ‘community’, and ‘locality’ are being (re)constructed and emphasised (Robertson 1995: 30). Moreover, since the 1960s, an increasing interest in ‘postmodern spaces’ can be observed, such as theme parks, contemporary museums, and the heritage industry. Such a phase of nostalgia is often associated with postmodernism.

...commemorative ritual devices, which reinforce, or help people regain, a lost sense of place. At the same time, they encourage the performance of rites, the watching of simulated performance or the participation in bodily practices, which revive many aspects of the past cultural forms (Featherstone 1995: 96-97)

These processes can be referred to as ‘reconstitution of locality’: the ‘controlled decontrol’ of the emotions (Featherstone 1995: 97). This seems related to a tendency among members of ethnic groups for instance, who are romantically attracted to the perceived authenticity of ‘a simpler life’ and sense of ‘home’. Almost jokingly, they have been called ‘refugees from modernisation’, who

tend to be scorned for doubts cast on the genuineness of their sense of identity (Featherstone 1995: 98). Now, can 'African management' proponents be typified in similar terms as 'refugees from modernization', dreaming away, attracted to supposedly authentic African traditions? Emphasis on the universal (global) and particular (local) can occur simultaneously and can go together to some extent, and even merge into each other. An increasingly global cultural interconnectedness should however not be equated with homogenisation of all cultures.

...contemporary conceptions of locality are largely produced in something like global terms, but this certainly does not mean that all forms of locality are thus substantively homogenized (Robertson 1995: 31).

If the global is *in the local* and the local is *in the global*, it might imply that the global does not necessarily dominate the local. Supposedly, it is not merely a matter of the local versus the global, or the global versus the local. There can be reciprocity, a rebound of new meanings, 'new culture' emerging from the local, is incorporated into the global.

...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: 38-39).

It is questionable, however, to what extent this is as fairly balanced a process, as Roland Robertson seems to picture it. He takes position against the assumption that the global is at all times dominant, and that the global and the local are by definition opposed to each other. Altogether, this makes locality, and globality, a relative idea (Robertson 1995: 31). Now, if we accept the principle of continuous cultural change and the idea of glocalisation, what would this imply for the notion of indigeneity? More precisely, how 'indigenous' is 'African management' as a (g)local approach to management and organisation?

An indigenous management approach?

One could argue that 'glocalisation' occurred in South Africa a long time back, for example already in the 17th century, when Jan van Riebeeck set foot on the Cape coast. From then on, great numbers of European settlers followed. That marked the beginning of a whole range of cultural encounters with long-term consequences, for better or worse. When did globalisation actually start, and in what time do we situate 'glocalisation'? Probably, a difference between global interactions in previous centuries and globalisation as perceived today is merely of a qualitative nature; what such a qualitative difference actually means, can only be found out when analysing "how globalisation affects daily life in Africa today" (Van Binsbergen; Van Dijk & Gewald 2004: 9).

In consecutive decennia and centuries people from other regions, from within and outside Africa with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds were brought in and mixed with each other,

producing new (creole) culture.²⁰ Globalisation as such may refer to a long-lasting evolutionary process, but “it is precisely the acceleration of that process in or around the nineteen nineties that forced it (anew?) onto our minds,” in particular after the collapse of the socialist world (Kalb 2004: 12). Or would we have to go back much further than that, to times when various Nguni-speaking groups of people, slowly migrated from central African regions southwards and met with the ‘indigenous peoples’ of southern Africa (MacKinnon 2004: 10-11)?²¹ In the second half of the first millennium B.C.E., people stemming from a region presently known as Botswana, Zambia and Angola, moved gradually into the Highlands of central Namibia, the Highveld and the Cape, bringing along cattle with them (Ross 2001: 19). Khoisan peoples became an interrelated group and emerged from whom are believed to be the earliest people in South Africa: the San (hunters and gatherers) and the Khoikhoi (cattle herders). The oldest rock paintings of the San in South Africa and the Kalahari go back about 27.000 years (Ross 2001: 21). There may have been tensions between San and Khoikhoi, but they developed patterns of cooperation as well. Well before the arrival of Europeans in South Africa, different San communities occasionally interacted with other societies, some of which originated elsewhere, and intermingling took place (Ross 2001: 18-20; MacKinnon 2004: 7-9). From approximately 200 B.C.E., Bantu-speaking peoples originating from west-central Africa migrated in slow, overlapping phases of interaction and expansion, flowing east and south, reaching southern Africa probably around the year 500 C.E. (MacKinnon 2004: 10).

The question is where to draw the line? At best, indigeneity could be considered a temporary condition. “From prehistoric times down to today,” W.E.B. du Bois already wrote in the early 20th 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).²²

‘Glocalisation’, and thus globalisation, is usually situated in the present time. In general, it is associated with ‘high tech’ development, interconnectedness (‘global connectivity’), ‘time/space compression’, high speed of travel, density, and intensity of communication flows and mobility of capital. In this light, the encounters of Khoikhoi and San with Bantu-speaking peoples and resulting cultural interactions and forms of community must have been quite different from global processes as presently understood.²³ At that time, there was almost certainly no consciousness of the potential of a world ‘unity’ as perceived today, unless perhaps in a particular religious or mythological sense

²⁰ The notion of ‘creolisation’, as described in the introduction to this chapter, is applicable in this context.

²¹ The Nguni language group and the Sotho language group are part of the larger family of ‘Bantu languages’ that cover much of southern, central and western Africa, according to MacKinnon (2004).

²² In this quote, the word ‘mulatto’ is basically interpreted as ‘of mixed blood’, or ‘of mixed origin’. This again refers to ‘creolisation’ in the sense of processes of creative interplay and cultural interactions, as discussed earlier, in the section on *Researching ‘African management’ flows*.

²³ It is noted that, historically, it may be somewhat problematic representing encounters and interactions between Khoikhoi, San and Bantu-speaking peoples as smooth, harmonious processes.

– at any rate conceived differently. The level of ‘global connectivity’ of people and places in the world was naturally much less developed than it is today. Probably, the difference between global interactions in previous centuries and globalisation as perceived today is merely of a qualitative nature; what such a qualitative difference actually means, can only be found out when analysing ‘how globalisation affects daily life in Africa today’ (Van Binsbergen; Van Dijk *et al.* 2004: 9). In any case, cultural encounters and interactions between societies and civilisations have been taken place since the very beginnings of humanity.

...much of the conception of contemporary locality and indigeneity is itself historically contingent upon *encounters* between one civilizational region and another.[...] Within such interactions, many of them historically imperialistic, has developed a sense of particularistic locality (Robertson 1995: 38).

Therefore, the local with ‘indigeneity’ as a case in point, is in itself a product of constant change and external cultural influences. The notion of indigeneity – and thus of ‘purity’ – is rather a momentary representation, a temporary product of multiple ingredients, resulting from ‘work in progress’ of ongoing cultural processes. It is impossible to get to an authentic heart of the matter:

The more common responses [i.e. to claims of indigeneity that have been discredited] have been either to accept the fact of multiplicity and try somehow to give it a local home-grown look, or to minimize it and privilege one or another ingredient in it as the heart of the matter. Or, of course and most common, both at once (Geertz 1995: 53).

Consequently, it would be quite illusionary to assume that indigeneity and authenticity are revealed by ‘stripping away any foreign ornaments’. Rather, it is preferred to speak in terms of cultural multiplicity and polyethnicity, from which the local is created. These reflections on glocalisation and the idea of indigeneity make it somewhat problematic to make a priori assumptions about ‘African management’ as an ‘indigenous’ approach to management and organisation. Rather, it is seen as an amalgamation of multiple cultural ingredients, partly ‘African’ and ‘non-African’, which becomes even more clear when postcolonial theory on management and organisation is considered.²⁴

‘Africanisation of globalisation’

Particularly in African contexts, intensified globalisation is often associated with ‘accelerated closures’ and ‘violent strategies of exclusion’, bringing about a “greater obsession with citizenship, belonging and the building or re-actualisation of boundaries and differences through xenophobia and related intolerances” (Nyamnjoh 2003: 1). In addition, there is the “growing importance of boundaries in a world pregnant with rhetoric on free flows and boundless opportunities for

²⁴ This is discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in section 5.2.7 ‘*African management*’, *capitalism, and trade unions* and in Chapter 10, section 10.1 *The historical dimension*.

individuals and communities without discrimination” (Nyamnjoh 2003: 2). These notions are relevant, as they allude to more callous characteristics of globalisation, and to some of its inherent contradictions.

However, not all ordinary people in Africa like to see themselves as victims of globalisation. Numerous rural poor and slum dwellers opt for a creative appropriation with firm dedication. They would rather prefer their own version of globalisation, an ‘Africanisation of globalisation’, whereas “an elite few use their consuming foreign as an identity, and as a source of prestige, status and power” (Nyamnjoh 2003: 17).²⁵ Instead, the former try to find ways to escape misery and poverty, through second-hand consumption and the endless recycling of consumer products dumped by the developed countries. Many are drawn to new religions, informed by a creative marriage of ‘African’ and ‘western’ traditions; through chains of pyramid schemes and games of chance; through production of and trade in fake immigration and work permits and for instance through the diaspora of diviners, *Sangomas*, to meet the need for magical interpretations to material realities and the rising interest in the occult. This global demand for diviners and ‘the occult’ seems to coincide with the afore-mentioned desire for (post)nostalgia and an escape from modernisation. Creative countervailing strategies to withstand the dark sides of globalisation may offer hope, preventing ordinary Africans from disempowerment and marginalisation: “...Africans are able to resist the exclusion and homogenisation implicit in global consumer capitalism” (Nyamnjoh 2003: 24).

Quite similar sentiments may be simmering in South Africa, as for instance the disputable reputation of ‘Zulu Shaman’ Credo Mutwa suggests (Chidester 2004).²⁶ In view of Francis B. Nyamnjoh’s interpretation of the ‘Africanisation of globalisation’ and the rising interest in the occult that he noted, such developments could generate a significant support base for Afrocentric doctrines as well. Moreover, ‘African management’ philosophy comes with ‘optimism’, promising a better future for the marginalised, as will be elaborated in this thesis.

Therefore, an Afrocentric management approach, interpreted as a case of ‘glocalisation’, could be viewed as an exponent of ‘Africanisation of globalisation’, in the sense of taking responsibility of one’s own destiny, and creating conditions to make ‘Africans feel at home’. Supposedly, this issue also concerns matters of ownership.

²⁵ The expression ‘Africanisation of globalisation’ was coined by Francis Nyamnjoh, inspired by Paul Zeleza’s *Rethinking Africa’s globalization* (e-mail correspondence with Francis Nyamnjoh, 1 December 2005). The following citation from Zeleza (2003) illustrates this: “...the struggle to create a global civilization, in which we as Africans, for so long victims of oppressive forces emanating from elsewhere, can feel at home” (Zeleza 2003: 61). Zeleza’s views on globalisation and Africa are discussed in Chapter 9, section 9.4 *Postmodern or Postcolonial: either, neither or both?*.

²⁶ Credo Mutwa is author of *Indaba, My Children*, published in the early 1960s. He is generally known as one of South Africa’s ‘bearers of indigenous authenticity’, striving for recognition of ‘traditional culture’ and Africa’s ancient wisdom. Allegedly, ‘Sanusi’ Dr Credo Mutwa is however ‘a false prophet’, according to David Chidester (2004). In Chapter 10, the construction and exploitation of ‘indigenous authenticity’ is discussed more in detail (section 10.1 *The historical dimension*).

Ownership as a Western concept has the implication of disenfranchising others, creating 'haves' and 'have-nots' in a static and often highly confrontational mode. Africa then appears as the disowned place par excellence (Van Binsbergen; Van Dijk *et al.* 2004: 39).

Consequently, this raised the question how to position 'African management' discourse in term of (the Africanisation of) globalisation, disenfranchisement and 'ownership'; it is possibly an example of (South) Africans acquiring 'ownership' over globalisation. This might however involve the construction and exploitation of notions around authenticity and indigeneity, supporting lots of (South) Africans to regain a lost sense of place. Thus, other (new?) versions of African identity are formed that reveal aspects of a globalising world though, belonging to the category of allegedly traditional identities or 'pseudo-traditional' identities (Van Binsbergen; Van Dijk *et al.* 2004: 7).

1.2 Between Optimism and Opportunism

Optimism is a prominent characteristic of Afrocentric discourse, offering a strong sense of hope for the future. Similarly, the key concept of *ubuntu* is understood. Despite widespread scepticism, several (non-Afrocentric) commentators in South Africa attribute a great potential to *ubuntu*, and its value is conceivable as well in the domain of management and organisation. In this context, 'optimism' is usually interpreted in a more confident and idealistic way than former Archbishop Desmond Tutu explained this term. Tutu stated that at any moment 'optimism' could turn into 'pessimism'. Therefore he preferred to call himself a 'realist' rather than 'optimist' (Tutu 2004: 5).

This feature, a strong sense of optimism, hoping for a better future, is one of the major 'selling points' of an 'African management' vision. Sometimes, it proclaims religious-like messages, *messianic* hopes, as if it would bring salvation from deep-felt misery. Apparently, this also links up to notion 'Africanisation of globalisation': fighting back, and shaking off a subordinate position. Some book titles in the realm of Afrocentric management discourse symbolise a particular fighting spirit and a rather strong political profile, such as *The Corporate Crusaders* (Koopman; Nasser *et al.* 1987). Likewise, the metaphor of a 'crusade' has rather weighty religious connotations.

In typically messianic phrasing, Afrocentric management philosophy promises deliverance and bright prospects, for example regarding cross-cultural management or global competitiveness. Business in South Africa is increasingly confronted with a demand to diversify its personnel and to promote 'previously disadvantaged groups'. However, evidently, affirmative action and *Black Economic Empowerment* produce their own specific problems and dilemmas. The political changes since 1994 have led to high expectations among employed and unemployed South Africans,

creating space for the articulation of hitherto suppressed opinions and aspirations.²⁷ It is not hard to imagine that these ingredients can lead to rather tense situations, also in organisational contexts. Nation building and reconciliation are not only processes that play a role on a macro level, but on a micro level as well: in firms, public institutions and local communities.²⁸ ‘African management’ advocates and practitioners have ‘discovered’ this area of problems as a major market. The very conditions of transition and business transformation seem to offer lucrative business opportunities. In other words, ‘African management’ dwells in spaces, in which optimism and opportunism often go hand in hand. In this study, both sides – optimism and opportunism – are examined, including potentially positive effects in the area of healing and reconciliation. Allegedly, these effects are – at least to some extent – attributable to discursive practices of ‘African management’ in organisations. Quite often, the latter seems to be somewhat underrated.²⁹

Glocalisation, in the sense of two-way processes of cultural influencing and as a case of *the local in the global*, raises prospects of ‘exporting’ ideas around *ubuntu* and management to places beyond (South) Africa. Thus, forms of *glocal ubuntu* will gradually become more manifest, as ‘African management’ *prophets* anticipate.³⁰ The general idea that innovation always comes from ‘the west’ is being discursively reversed. ‘African management’ proponents radiate this kind of optimism, which may be quite appealing to numerous practitioners.

The title of this thesis *Between Optimism and Opportunism: Deconstructing ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa* hints at both sides of the coin that can be associated with this phenomenon: optimism and opportunism. Moreover, the title alludes to symbolically constructed communities around ‘African management’ philosophy, with interlocking networks throughout different sectors.

In the public face, internal variety disappears, or coalesces into a simple statement. In its private mode, differentiation, variety, and complexity proliferate (Cohen 1985: 74).

Optimism is a prime feature of the ‘public face’ of the ‘African management’ *movement*, or *ubuntu* movement in South African management. The message of optimism is principally represented as a clear, unified, and rather consistent entity. Internally, however, the image is far more differentiated, and fragmented, with conflicting viewpoints and interests, and opportunism. Actually, the debate on Afrocentric management perspectives provokes strong responses and

²⁷ Fierce and repeated denials that the economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe would have anything in common with discontent among underprivileged population groups in South Africa only seem to reinforce the opposite.

²⁸ In Chapter 10 of this thesis, the potential contribution of an ‘African management’ approach to processes of truth and reconciliation within organisations is analysed (section 10.2 *Management strategies for business transformation*).

²⁹ Of course, an ‘African management’ approach is not the one and only strategy to this. I mainly argue that viewing ‘African management’ consultants merely as opportunists is somewhat simplistic.

³⁰ The term ‘glocal *ubuntu*’ is deduced from *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Glocal Management*, edited by Van den Heuvel; Mangaliso, *et al.* (2006).

considerable polarisation, from *any audience* involved in management, academia, or otherwise. Such responses are usually either extremely positive or very negative. This makes 'African management' almost an article of faith: a controversy of *believers* versus *non-believers*. In this case, I have taken both perspectives into account, those of the *believers* and those of *non-believers*. Therefore, I looked both at – in Anthony Cohen's terminology – the 'public face' and the 'private mode'. In the second chapter, on methodological issues, I will further clarify my positioning as a researcher.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The following chapters offer a rather full-fledged representation of 'African management' *flows* in South Africa, a travelling tale of the keyword *ubuntu* in the world of South African management and organisation. Altogether, they illustrate a highly differential and complex process of localisation in South African management, in an era of globalisation. Possible implications of globalisation in this context are explained in section 1.2. Section 1.3 explains the title of this thesis. In the following, a short description of each chapter is given, clarifying the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 *Methodological issues: a reflexive description of the research process*, is about research methodology. The key issues addressed here concern: reflexivity in retrospect; non-anonymity of data and informants; problematising the role of associate of a key research participant, and a justification of how the research was conducted. The section on 'reflexivity in retrospect' offers insights into the background and (personal) motives to undertake this research in the first place, and additionally, discusses a number of dilemmas faced during fieldwork. In section 2.2, I will clarify why data and persons were not anonymised and how I dealt with private information in this organisational ethnographic research. Another issue that deserves special attention is the problematic side of being an associate of a key research participant. There are advantages and certain risks to this, which are considered in section 2.3. In this section, the pros and cons of being an associate of a key research participant are described and examined. In the last section of this chapter, I will account for the research process as a whole, highlighting a few particular aspects.

Together, chapters 3, 4 and 5 present the empirical data concerning 'African management' flows in South Africa. The notion of 'flows' was explained in the beginning of this introductory chapter. These flows concern three components: emergence and externalisation, distribution, and utilisation.

Chapter 3 *'African management' flows: emergence and distribution*, is divided in two parts: (1) emergence and externalisation, and (2) distribution. Section 3.1 on emergence and externalisation comprises a reconstruction of the 'emergence' of the discourse, referred as 'the cradle' of 'African

management' philosophy in South Africa. This 'cradle' is specifically located in Johannesburg in 1992 at the *Theory of the African Firm* workshop. In addition, similar events and other factors that led to the launch of the concept of 'African management' are considered. From then onwards, an Afrocentric perspective on management and organisation evolved, gradually expanding into various sections of society, particularly the business community. Some of the key actors in the 'African management' debate are introduced, briefly summarising their background, their views, and core activities. Section 3.2 on 'distribution' discusses three types of actors that play an important role in disseminating 'African management' ideas to a wider audience in South Africa and beyond. These are: the tertiary sector (universities, business schools, and philosophers); the media (newspapers, magazines, journals; publishers) and the business community itself with associated social and professional networks.

Chapter 4 *'African management' flows: utilisation* illustrates the application of 'African management' ideas and principles, in the sense that organisational leaders talk about these issues and give meaning to it. Altogether, six different cases will be described, of which one will be examined more thoroughly: Lovemore Mbigi's *Rainmaker Management Consultants* (RMC). Other relevant illustrations concern WKKF's *Leadership Regional Network* (LeaRN), and *Eskom Holdings Limited*. Additionally, there are three more concise yet interesting cases in point: *Vukuni Ubuntu Community Projects*, *CIDA City Campus* alias the 'Ubuntu University', and an example of using *ubuntu* and 'African management' philosophy, without exhibiting these labels.

Chapter 5 *Themes, deviations and critiques*, displays a set of – seemingly obvious, but not always unproblematic – common traits in 'African management' discourse, as well as a significant number of deviations and salient paradoxes. In brief, five common themes can be distinguished: humanistic aspects; 'industrial democracy' and participatory decision-making; 'eccentric' organisational principles; Afrocentric management in relation to notions of 'Africanness' in management and organisation; personal life stories and (past) political engagement. These are examined in 5.1 *Themes*. Please note that also among the identified common traits there are varying nuances in interpretation, containing elements of multiple interpretation and inconsistency to varying degrees. Section 5.2 *Deviations and critiques* deals with a number of problematic facets of 'African management' discourse. Perhaps two issues are most prominent: the application of 'African management' philosophy against the background of an overall neo-liberal macro-economic policy framework and a capitalist production mode, and the binary position of 'Afrocentric' versus 'Eurocentric' approaches to management and leadership.

Chapter 6 *Colonialism, apartheid and transition*, inserts an essential layer of contextualisation, in conjunction with Chapter 7. It comprises a momentous historical dimension and considers the

impact of colonialism and apartheid in particular regarding matters concerning management and organisation. In more recent times, transition refers to the 'pre-emergence' phase of 'African management' discourse, connecting the role of business in the process of political transition with the emergent local management perspective under examination. It clarifies how prior developments and events, which preceded the emergence of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, produced some of its prime ingredients and labels. Moreover, the 'pre-emergence' phase created some of the conditions leading to such a specific local management debate, providing as well a substantial degree of inputs to the debate.

The chapter is divided into three sections: 6.1 deals with the issue of 'coercive' (unfree) labour, and 6.2 is about the process of transition from apartheid to democracy, both in the political domain and in the domain of business. At the end of the 1980s, some of the more proactive sections of South African business were involved in bringing about a radical breakthrough in the stalemate between the business sector and the liberation movement. Finally, section 6.3 assesses the lasting impact of colonialism and apartheid on contemporary management thought and practices in South Africa. The relevance of this chapter, together with the next one, is to provide for the necessary contextualisation in interpreting 'African management' discourse in South Africa, as the latter is generally assessed in a rather a-historical fashion. As a result, one loses sight of continuities with the past, which sets a serious limitation to understanding this phenomenon.

Chapter 7 *Challenges of business transformation*, should be read in tandem with the previous chapter, as it is a continuation of the effort of contextualising 'African management' discourse, specifically viewed in terms of the process of transforming the economy, the business sector and its ownership base, and in terms of cultural changes accompanying or resulting from afore-mentioned processes. Four issues deserve close examination in this regard.

Firstly, *Black Economic Empowerment* (BEE) aims to broaden the ownership base of the economic sector and, as such, should not be confused with 'African management' philosophy. From an 'African management' perspective, BEE does neither imply nor facilitate or encourage in the first place an active process of cultural transformation in organisations in (Afrocentric) terms of Africanisation, although without doubt it will eventually have cultural implications for concerned organisations. In debates about BEE, however, notions of ethnicity and cultural values often play a role. Therefore, it is worthwhile exploring these debates, since BEE constitutes part of the context, in which 'African management' discourse is embedded. Next, the issue of cultural diversity in organisations is addressed, because it has become an important management issue in times of business transformation. With the elimination of preferential conditions for specific categories of employees and managers prevalent before 1994, and with affirmative action legislation in place,

supposedly the South African workplace gradually becomes more diversified. Can this be taken for granted and consequently ignored, is it a problem, or an asset? This situation creates opportunities to management consultants to 'sell' their concepts and ideas on cultural diversity management to firms that are evidently struggling with this issue. From an 'African management' perspective, rather far-reaching claims have been made how to address cultural diversity management in a successful manner, allegedly with the *ubuntu* concept as a unique tool, while it would simultaneously enhance 'global competitiveness'. In an 'African management' perspective, South Africa's cultural diversity in organisations is seen as an asset. Discursively, embracing cultural diversity and cross-cultural diversity management is being represented as inherent to Africa's 'cultural heritage'. In addition, a connection is made with notions of 'nation-building' and 'the Rainbow Nation', in which – after the demise of apartheid – a positive imagery of South Africa is being produced and disseminated, both for internal use and to promote South Africa abroad. Thus, it reveals a close connection between debates on 'African management' and African Renaissance. Section 7.2 discusses how certain cultural stereotypes are put on display in viewing cultural diversity in this context. Thirdly, ideologically the African Renaissance debate is closely associated with 'African management' discourse. Hence, it is appropriate to look at particular characteristics of African Renaissance to see if and to what extent they coincide or differ with claims and features of 'African management' discourse. It is argued, that there are definitely similarities between both, but criticism on representations and expressions of African Renaissance ideology can not be automatically projected on 'African management' views. However, arguably, current debates on African Renaissance can be seen as a favourable condition for the further promotion of 'African management' philosophy. In the final section of this chapter, it is argued that recent worldwide debates on Corporate Social Responsibility and ethical enterprising, provide opportunities for further disseminating and popularising 'African management' philosophy, as the latter seems to be reasonably flexible in taking advantage of this popular trend in contemporary management and business. Together, Chapter 6 *Colonialism, apartheid and transition*, and Chapter 7 *Challenges of business transformation* are twin chapters, contextualising 'African management' discourse in South Africa. Two subsequent chapters will go into issues relating to identity formation.

Chapter 8 '*Africanness*' in *Afrocentric perspective*, is the first of two chapters, which can be seen as a conceptual prologue (in two parts) to Chapter 10, in which a comprehensive interpretative framework is presented. The keyword in chapters 8 and 9 is *identity*, or rather identification, and more specifically the making of identity in (South) African contexts. Chapter 8 discusses the concept of 'Africanness' in an Afrocentric perspective, while Chapter 9 considers problematic aspects pertaining to the latter and presents 'Africanness' in a more open-ended perspective.

Chapter 8 takes the reader to an important cultural foundation of ‘African management’ discourse: Afrocentrism. It offers a concise historical outline in relation to Afrocentrism: the idea of (Pan) Africanism and its origins. Furthermore, it explores various meanings associated with it, including the notion of an ‘Africa-centred paradigm’ calling upon rather essentialist notions of ‘African culture’ and ‘belonging’, which is often explained in contrast to a Eurocentric worldview.

In order to get a more profound understanding regarding particular themes, issues, and symbols used in ‘Afrocentric management’ discourse in South Africa, it is useful to examine their ideational roots and some of the social and political backgrounds, from which a Pan Africanist ideology emerged. Section 8.1 considers important Afrocentric tenets and viewpoints, which are explored by discussing Pan Africanism, the notion of an ‘Africa-centered paradigm’ and theories of Afrocentricity. As will be argued here, a potential contribution of Afrocentric discourse lies in a fundamental questioning of an almost self-evident use of conventional (represented as ‘Eurocentric’ or ‘western’) concepts, knowledge and practices in (South) African organisational contexts.³¹ This might be a temporary phase, to arrive eventually at historicised and contextualised ‘home-grown’ poly-centred perspectives on leadership or management in (South) Africa. Section 8.2 is about a recent, rather politicised Afrocentric topic: the *Black Athena* debate. For various reasons, this debate is illustrative for the emergence and evolution of Afrocentric management perspectives in South Africa. Afrocentrists have argued that Africa’s historicity in dominant historiography has been systematically denied. These claims may initially be rather amateurish, mythical and highly politicised, yet drawing attention to the exposure and recognition of ‘myths’ in mainstream history writing. Moreover, as a critique of ideology, the *Black Athena* debate points at ideological contexts of knowledge production. This aspect at least to some extent is applicable to ‘African management’ discourse: its far-reaching claims may be ‘non-empirical’ and in part ‘mythical’, but point at underlying ideological and mythical (and religious?) assumptions of dominant management discourse as well. The chapter ends with a reflection on the notion of ‘Africanness’ in an Afrocentric version, discussing some of the flaws in such a perspective, particularly the ‘othering’ aspect and concerning the notion of authenticity, while also acknowledging the motive of ‘a move towards cultural decolonisation’. In the next chapter, a discussion follows about ‘Africanness’ understood in more fluid terms.

Chapter 9 ‘*Africanness*’ as open-ended, concerning a sense of African identity *in-the-making*, discusses a number of issues with a view to more processual, dynamic conceptualisations of ‘being African’. Themes discussed in this chapter are, amongst others, various meanings of and critiques

³¹ This binary position of ‘western’ versus ‘African’, or ‘Eurocentric’ versus ‘Afrocentric’, is problematised in Chapter 10 of this thesis, in section 10.1 *The historical dimension*.

on claims of Africa's *Otherness* and the problem with 'race' in defining 'Africanness'; 'Africanness' in terms of identification and identity politics; 'Africanness' and the notion of multiple identification and fragmented identities; 'Africanness' in the context of postmodernity and postcoloniality. Arguably, in a somewhat peculiar melange, 'African management' discourse compromises elements of both: essentialist notions of African identity and more processual, open-ended perspectives on 'Africanness'. It could be an indication of a shift towards less static formations of African identity, also in South African organisational contexts. In brief, notions concerning identity formation in Chapter 8 in conjunction with Chapter 9, constitute the fundamental theoretical focus for interpreting 'African management' discourse in South Africa. Arguments developed in these two chapters are expanded in Chapter 10, linking them more precisely with the central research subject.

Chapter 10 *An interpretative framework*, will present four interrelated perspectives: (1) the historical dimension; (2) management strategies for business transformation, at macro and micro level; (3) 'Africanisation' and post-apartheid identity formation, also comprising a perspective on the moral and reconciliatory dimension to 'African management' discourse; and, finally, an additional perspective, (4) 'African management' discourse in terms of *management guru* theories. These four perspectives cover in my view the most relevant aspects in deconstructing 'African management' discourse in South Africa. At least, the framework makes clear, that this thesis deals with a multifaceted subject matter, involving a variety of perspectives. In this particular exercise of deconstructing 'African management' discourse in South Africa, the central themes are contextualisation (historically and politically) – as examined in chapters 6 and 7 – and identity formation – as examined in chapters 8 and 9 – in context of globalisation, particularly in cultural terms. Therefore, the next section considers relevant notions pertaining to cultural dimensions of globalisation.

Chapter 11 is the final chapter, which will give a concise account of the main findings and conclusions in response to the central research question.

By studying this thesis, I hope that the reader will have an assorted experience of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, brought in a nuanced yet critical manner, culminating in a constructive framework for interpretation. As author of this thesis, I bear sole responsibility for what is written here; acknowledging the magnitude of sources and people that I have consulted, while recognising that the scholarly debate on interpreting this intriguing social phenomenon will continue.

Chapter 2: Methodological issues: a reflexive description of the research process

Methods, techniques, and tools are your resources, but the most important resource is you.

The above-mentioned citation was taken from a Dutch 'project management calendar' (2007), meant for (wannabe) managers and potential clients of project management consultants. As in management, a method or technique is a tool and the person managing the research project is the primary 'resource', a 'human resource' in somewhat demeaning functionalist terms. Supposedly, it is not always easy to separate researcher from used research methods. The choice of methods, including ways of dealing with circumstances, dilemmas, and considerations underlying that decision, are probably a great deal bound up in the personality of a researcher. However, it is also noted that serendipity and coincidence can be important, sometimes even decisive factors.³² Then also, it depends a great deal on the researcher's personality and shrewdness how to deal with these. Altogether, a PhD research is largely an individual project. Of course, a PhD researcher benefits from the advice of his or her academic supervisors and colleagues. In addition, fellow researchers from other universities give their support and well-intended recommendations, besides family, friends, and accidental conversation partners. However, at the end of the day, it is the researcher, who has to do the job, make sense of the data, and be accountable for the research results.

...all research work includes and is driven by an interpreter – who in the social sciences, moreover, often interacts with and contemplates other interpreters (the people studied) (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000: 7-8).

Indeed, he or she may use 'other interpreters' to contemplate, including 'the people being studied'. For this reason, I generally prefer the term 'research participants' to 'informants' or 'respondents'. This does not imply action research, but is meant as a principle recognising the significant contribution of 'the people being studied' in the process of data generation and interpretation, seeking their feedback and checking preliminary insights.³³ After all, published

³² Harry Wels (2000) argued that any (social) research is highly influenced by coincidence as a distinctly decisive factor. He illustrated this in an analysis of the course of events in relation to his PhD research on the use of fences in private wildlife conservation in Zimbabwe. A citation from his dissertation illustrates this: "I want to convince the reader that my outcome of the research might even be called a coincidence, in the particular meaning of being one possibility amongst many others, even within the demarcated boundaries of chosen concepts and methodology" (page 53). Wels went as far to describe his main research method as 'planned coincidence' in the process of finding and constructing data (page 77).

³³ Both terms, 'informants' and 'respondents', suggest largely a unilaterally passive role of people, from whom 'information' and 'data' are obtained for research purposes. The image of an active researcher dealing with merely 'African management' in South Africa Page 30 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

research findings should be trustworthy and recognisable by the people who have been studied. This also avoids the impression of an ‘almighty’ researcher in command over a group of passive information providers.

A minimum standard in academic research work is a clear account, in which the researcher explains and justifies what methods were used and why and how these were applied. Presented research information should be verifiable and there should be transparency about what the researcher has done. This explanation provides the possibility for others to check and evaluate the research that was conducted, offering an ‘audit trail’. Moreover, it gives ‘lessons learnt’ an appropriate place in a PhD thesis, possibly providing others with useful ideas (or otherwise words of warning). Probably, it is even more necessary to be explicit about research methodology when writing for a community of readers who do not all share the same presuppositions and assumptions about accessing and generating data and about data analysis.

But when writing for other interpretive (or meaning or discourse or epistemic) communities, or across communities (as in interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary work), or within communities with no agreed-upon procedural norms or when such norms are under contestation, explicit statements of methodological concerns and procedures become more necessary (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006: xiii).

In practice, qualitative research may have a rather fluid character with instances of ‘on-site flexibility’. This does not imply that it is, therefore, unsystematic or that just ‘anything goes’ (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006: xvi). A rigor of logic and argumentation of what was done and how may eventually prove more valuable than following strict predetermined procedures that *suggest* systematicity.

This academic endeavour of deconstructing ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa was conducted in the tradition of qualitative, interpretative research methodology and organisational ethnography (e.g. Cohen 1985; Van Maanen 1988; Kunda 1992; Wright 1994; Tennekes 1995; Bate 1997; Hammersley & Atkinson 1997; Grant; Keenoy & Oswick 1998a; Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000; Alvesson 2002; Martin, J. 2002; Grant; Hardy; Oswick & Putnam 2004; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; O'Reilly 2005).³⁴ What it entailed in this research is considered by an elaboration on four

passive ‘respondents’ answering questions would not be an appropriate representation of fieldwork practices, and would not do justice to the role of the people being studied and their influence in the generation of research data.

³⁴ Initially, the plan for this research was to carry out two or three case studies of specific organisations in South Africa, which allegedly implemented ‘African management’ principles, to fill the gap of ‘empirical evidence’ on the application of ‘African management’ philosophy. After a preliminary study in 2002, the realisation rose, however, that this idea was not quite feasible, since such organisations could not easily be identified. The fact that organisational leaders claim to adhere to ‘African management’ principles does not imply that the concerned organisation actually implements ‘African management’ principles *in a pure and ideal typical sense*, as a result of the emergent discourse. The extent of diversification and differentiation within an organisation, the organisational history, and the organisation members, altogether make an organisation the product of various influences and identities. Therefore, external identification of an idealtypical case of ‘African management’ for a case study would have been highly problematic. Therefore, it was resolved by taking *discourse* on ‘African management’ as such as the central research subject.

issues in particular. I will start with a section on ‘reflexivity in retrospect’, offering insights into the background and (personal) motives to undertake this research in the first place, and additionally, a number of serious dilemmas and specific issues that I experienced as extraordinary.

Secondly, the question of non-anonymity of data and informants is discussed. I will clarify why data and persons were not anonymised and how I dealt with private information in this organisational ethnographic research. It is quite likely that other ethnographers doing research on organisation discourse struggle with similar questions as well. Another issue that deserves special attention is the problematic side of being an associate of a key research participant. There are advantages and certain risks to this, which are considered in section 2.3. In this section, the pros and cons of being an associate of a key research participant are described and examined. In the last section of this chapter, I will account for the research process as a whole, highlighting a few particular aspects.

2.1 Reflexivity in retrospect

This section is dedicated to reflect primarily on my role as researcher. I will clarify the main motives for me to do this research and what it meant to me personally. Moreover, I will discuss some dilemmas that I was facing, and how I tried to cope with these. An important aspect was making a contribution to ‘countering Afropessimism’. A major predicament, for example, was the role of observer (‘keeping distance’) versus the role of ally (‘becoming involved’). In this regard, I cherished the principle of ‘suspended judgment’. A separate section, 2.3 *Being an associate of a key research participant*, will expand on this specific dilemma.

The researcher’s affiliations and (multiple) identifications

During fieldwork in South Africa, I occasionally referred to my past involvement with anti-apartheid and solidarity organisations in the Netherlands, when I introduced myself as a researcher. In the 1990s, amongst others I worked with the *Holland Committee on Southern Africa* (KZA) and the *Eduardo Mondlane Foundation* (*Fundação Eduardo Mondlane* in Portuguese, FEM).³⁵ The former, KZA, mobilised support for the liberation struggle of the ANC in South Africa and for SWAPO in Namibia, disseminated information about the apartheid system. In addition, KZA protested against multinationals, such as Royal Dutch Shell that invested in South Africa and criticised the Dutch government for its ambivalent foreign policy in regard of the apartheid regime in South Africa. The latter, FEM, mobilised humanitarian support and provided technical

³⁵ In brief KZA, or in full *Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika* in Dutch. The history and activities of KZA are described in detail by Van Beurden & Huinder (1996), written in the Dutch language. For background information on the *Eduardo Mondlane Foundation*, see Chapter 9 on the ‘southern African movement’ in Beerends (1993), also in Dutch. ‘*African management*’ in *South Africa* Page 32 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

assistance to population groups in Lusophone countries in Africa, mainly Mozambique and Angola. In 1997, the *Holland Committee on Southern Africa* and the *Eduardo Mondlane Foundation* merged with AABN, the former *Anti-Apartheid Movement* in the Netherlands. The new organisation that resulted from that merger was called the *Netherlands institute for Southern Africa*, based in Amsterdam.³⁶ By putting emphasis on my previous professional and political engagements, I positioned myself in a way that might seem ‘not unsympathetic’ towards my research participants. In addition, I assumed that a considerable number of them were probably (rather patriotic) Africanists, realising and acknowledging – prior to fieldwork – ideological parallels between ‘African management’ philosophy and the debate on African Renaissance in South Africa. Some might even have been involved in the anti-apartheid struggle themselves, or at the very least sympathised with it. Moreover, presenting myself in such a way implied a deep interest and knowledge, to some extent, in the history and political and economic developments in the southern African region, with a proven professional involvement in humanitarian and developmental issues. This would supposedly create a quite different ‘first impression’ from an introduction by a social scientist researching management discourse in just any ‘non-western’ environment, who somehow coincidentally ended up in South Africa, without any prior connections to that country. Clearly, it showed my identification as a politically engaged researcher, with a vigorous scientific attitude.

Certainly, I did not conceal my particular role as a researcher. Within a broader spectrum of scientific identities, I presented myself as a practitioner of qualitative research, favouring particular elements of organisational ethnography. In short, I wanted to understand what it was about, particularly how and why people, who were captivated by this philosophy, would interpret the concept and explained why and how it was meaningful to them. This may seem a rather unassuming position, but it implied that I disassociated myself from a positivist approach to social science research (Hammersley & Atkinson 1997: 3-10).³⁷

‘Not empirical’

Somewhat to my surprise, this positioning turned out to be rather significant: academia, and specifically criticism on ‘empirical research’, constituted a reiterative theme in numerous conversations and interviews. Generally, informants, or rather research participants who identified with an Afrocentric worldview, were overtly positive about qualitative research and usually rather

³⁶ Usually, the abbreviation NiZA is used to refer to this organisation. I worked with NiZA until mid-2001.

³⁷ In describing ethnography, Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson discuss ‘positivism’ as privileging quantitative methods. By contrast, ‘naturalism’ would promote ethnography as a more legitimate social research method. Although the meaning of ‘positivism’ is often not clear, as they state, it is generally characterised by the logic of experiment (with physical science as leading model), the searching for universal laws, and the assumption that observation is a neutral enterprise; descriptions based on observations are believed to be ‘beyond doubt’.

sceptical about ‘western academia’, and positivist research. Moreover, I had expected my research participants – as far as they concerned ‘African management’ proponents – to be hesitant towards outsiders, in particular towards a researcher from abroad. After all, anthropology has quite a contentious history in South Africa, especially cultural anthropology and its South African version of *Volkekunde*.³⁸ Professor Lovemore Mbigi, one of my key research participants, was quite positive about qualitative research, and in general about extensive field studies and action-based research.³⁹ There did not seem to be a problem from his side with the contested reputation of anthropology in the past. By no means, he linked my project and disciplinary orientation to practices of *Volkekundiges* in the past, as far as I could oversee.⁴⁰

A qualitative, hermeneutic approach, as well as action-research, was identified as a type of academic tradition that would suit Afrocentric scholars. Moreover, Reuel Jethro Khoza, one of the leading figures in Afrocentric management debates in South Africa since early 1990s, has explicitly embraced the hermeneutic method in seeking “to identify the ‘messages’ of culture that are carried by speech, acts, documents, performances and even events” (Khoza 2006: 15). He even explicitly valued the importance of ‘business anthropology’ as an essential approach in interpreting culture in organisations and working out an effective management approach (Khoza 2006: 107). It is perhaps an odd observation, but several principal representatives of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa happen to be most appreciative of a disciplinary foundation, with which I identified. Of course, by no means this implies that they would also approve of my research findings and interpretations. It struck me, however, that repeatedly ‘empiricism’ was confused with ‘positivism’. In other words, when criticising a positivist approach to social research, people would say that they had a problem with ‘empirical research’, as illustrated in the following:

In my own humble view, I feel it is important for African academics [...] to express their own voices on their own terms and not to have to conform to the structures of western academia.

[X] has carefully studied research methodology, juxtaposing African culture, and has concluded with great depth of thought, that *in Africa, we are really not empiricists at all!* So, my comment was also embracing our own findings and approach...we’re actually encouraging our students to focus on phenomenology and hermeneutics [emphasis added].⁴¹

³⁸ For a discussion of the role of (cultural) anthropology in South Africa, see 6.1 *A long history of coercive labour*.

³⁹ Action-based research was not part of my research design.

⁴⁰ It is not clear to what extent Mbigi was informed about the role of cultural anthropology in South Africa in the past, but supposedly, he knew about it. This assumption is based on observations during regular visits to Mbigi’s private library that contained many books on history, politics, culture, including anthropology, as well as several other issues. Hand-written notes and highlighted markings in numerous books indicated that most of the literature had been read and studied.

⁴¹ Correspondence dated 31 July 2006 and 7 August 2006 respectively. Both citations are anonymous, because the argumentation is relevant, not the name of the concerned person who wrote the e-mail messages, although this person was very much involved in the distribution of ‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa, and actually still is. *‘African management’ in South Africa* Page 34 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Not being much aware of this disposition in Afrocentric discourse prior to my arrival in the field, the chosen research methodology, and the institutional scientific embeddedness of the department that employed me, provided me with an *a priori* vista that seemed to suggest a certain degree of credibility. This asset must have facilitated considerably getting access to people, and to their organisations and networks.

Explicitly critical responses to ‘African management’ philosophy – condemning it as ‘non-empirical’ or irrelevant – point at the degree of polarisation that characterises the debate on Afrocentric management perspectives in South Africa, as noted already in the introductory chapter. I have avoided going along with this polarisation, while it also stimulated my thinking on dominant management discourse in South Africa. I became increasingly curious about possible reasons for such fierce allegations addressed to ‘African management’ advocates. Criticism tells something about what is being criticised, but also – and sometimes even more – about *who* is articulating this criticism. In the course of the field study, it became increasingly clear to me that there was a pattern in the type of (academic) responses. During my initial enquiries before the actual start of the fieldwork, several South African practitioners, academics, and journalists dealing with management and organisation issues had expressed an amount of cynicism on ‘African management’ philosophy, judging it largely as nonsensical and above all ‘not empirical’. They seemed to suggest that Afrocentric management principles had not been well researched, or not well enough. Therefore, allegedly, the philosophy was ‘anecdotal’. Assumably, such an alternative management approach could only be of any value, if tested in practice, meticulously documented, and analysed academically. If not, it would give reason to serious doubt. It suggests an enormous amount of trust in acts of measuring and particularly in quantitative assessments. Moreover, it seems to reflect a managerial fixation with effectiveness and efficiency that is still dominant in management literature (Grant; Keenoy *et al.* 1998a; White; Asfaw; DeGusta; Gilbert; Richards; Suwa & Howell 2003: 4). If no direct contribution to profit maximisation is foreseeable, it is easily judged as useless and irrelevant. Besides, a sense of Afropessimism might play a particular role among mainstream academics and management practitioners in South Africa.

Countering Afropessimism

Looking back, my motivation to do this research was partly born out of a personal aspiration to counter Afropessimism, to offset the largely one-sidedly, negative ways, in which Africans and developments in Africa are time and again portrayed in public discourse, e.g. in ‘western media’. It is easy to blame ‘western media’ in general, but this is also rather complex. The perception that ‘foreign media’ are only interested in stories that fit the motto ‘if it bleeds, it leads’ is only part of

the explanation (Hunter-Gault 2006: 109).⁴²

The emergence of the African journalist [also] holds out the promise of influencing the perspective of international journalists, who all too often continue to feed the world distorted pictures of the continent. [...] ...their editors back home show little enthusiasm for stories that go against the grain. For example, international journalists sometimes have an advantage over local journalists, particularly when there is a thorny issue to be pursued. The foreigner can often get away with the tough questions because he or she doesn't live there and won't be affected in the long run by an affected official (Hunter-Gault 2006: 108).

Supposedly, I share this characteristic of countering Afropessimism to some degree with many of my Afrocentric research participants. Afropessimism assumes that Africa is a hopeless continent, lacking about everything needed to make progress and to achieve economic development. In current modernist discourse, it is seemingly inappropriate to bring the past (i.e. colonialism, slavery, apartheid) back to memory in 'explaining' social phenomena in contemporary African societies. If anything, the assumed obsolescence of 'African culture' is blamed for lack of socio-economic development – full stop (e.g. Van der Veen 2004). I do not agree with the view that cultural factors, such as 'traditional African values', are the main obstacle to development in Africa. Nor do I agree to opposite cliché statements, claiming for instance that Africa is 'unique' and that Africans are categorically 'different', in the sense of exceptionally spiritual, essentially human, or dynamic.⁴³ However, it is not always easy to be an 'Afro-optimist' (Abbink 2002).⁴⁴ Not all developments in Africa are hopeful, some actually very gruesome. Assumingly, both Afropessimism and Afro-optimism are about 'taking a stand' and touch upon identity issues. In this regard, I support the view of Richard Werbner, saying that "identity issues in Africa should not be understood differently than elsewhere in the world" (Werbner 1996: 8).

What did I expect then precisely? Something 'new' coming from Africa: a fascinating and original way of thinking, from which 'Europe could learn something'? Probably, such somewhat undeveloped thoughts might have played a role under the surface. However, my personal motive of countering Afropessimism is not synonymous to Afro-optimism. Rather, the former ambition is about contributing to a more balanced perspective on Africa, on Africans, and on developments and social phenomena in Africa.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, I considered apartheid an evil system, and like many likeminded people of my generation, I equally condemned the destabilising and disastrous economic effects of the apartheid regime's actions on the population groups of South Africa's neighbouring countries,

⁴² For further reading: *Africa's Media, Democracy and the Politics of Belonging* by Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2005). This is a diligent analysis of the role of the media and journalism in Africa.

⁴³ As in this thesis, the idea of Africa as something categorically mysterious, extraordinary, and mystique is also referred to with the term *Otherness*.

⁴⁴ I borrowed this from Jan Abbink in his review of a book about Africa in the second half of the 20th century, written by Van der Veen (2002), which was also published in English: *What went wrong with Africa. A contemporary history* by Van der Veen (2004).

then called the 'frontlines states'.⁴⁵ For that reason, I decided to make southern Africa a special geographical focus in my studies of international relations and development issues, as a student of political science in the 1980s. Later, in my professional life, I chose to continue along that line and committed myself to what was characterised as 'solidarity work'. Thus, Africa became part of my political and professional identity. In addition, other people – colleagues and friends – who were committed to support the same or a similar cause became part of my social network. Liberation movements in southern Africa, such as the *African National Congress* in South Africa and *Frelimo* in Mozambique, were to me representations of a broader political ideal, a more just and humane world. Actually, as a young man I believed that revolutionary developments in Africa could eventually accelerate fundamental social changes inside Europe. At least they could serve as an enormous source of inspiration to more progressive sections in European societies. Later on, when former liberation leaders started displaying undemocratic, authoritarian, and even dictatorial behaviour in several countries, this belief gradually faded away.

A comprehensive literature study, which was part of this PhD research, has both deepened and broadened my knowledge and awareness about Africa's history, about slavery and colonialism. One comes to realise even more profoundly how slavery, colonialism, and apartheid have affected the lives of Africans, including African in diaspora, affecting several generations.⁴⁶ Admittedly, this was also a little discomfoting, as I used to consider myself as a rather well informed person on African issues. Nonetheless, the literature study provided insights as to how colonialism and slavery have led to diasporic discourses on 'black identity' and 'African identity', eventually producing an ideology of Pan Africanism. Elements of this can also be found in contemporary Afrocentric (management) discourse.

In the course of years, my political and professional commitment to 'solidarity work' with regard to liberation struggles and democratisation movements in southern Africa has developed gradually into a scholarly inquisitiveness that goes further than merely choosing 'politically correct' sides. A prior preoccupation with an 'ideal ideology' or ideological ideals, and a propensity to make immediate judgements and categorisations – discerning, in other words, 'good guys' from 'bad guys' – has been transformed into an attitude of continuous searching and questioning. With this, I began to realise that thinking in binary positions – good versus bad, black versus white, victim versus conqueror – is too simplistic. Of course, this change cannot be seen entirely in isolation from

⁴⁵ For further reading, see for instance Minter (1994) and Hanlon (1987).

⁴⁶ Notwithstanding increased awareness, however, it never gets even close to real life experiences. The immensity of the issues pertaining to slavery, colonialism, and apartheid are by far impossible to grasp comprehensively merely through literature study. Would this, on the other hand, legitimise an everlasting hate and forms of (reversed) racism? A 'neurosis of victimisation' resulting from experiences of colonialism has become the foundation for a rhetoric on 'Africanity' that could be assessed in negative terms, according to Achille Mbembe (2002).

the emergence of postmodernist ideas. Probably, changes in personal views and political orientation have something to do with the course of contemporary history, e.g. the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, and concurrent events in world politics, comprising inter alia (violent) manifestations of Muslim fundamentalism, emergent Occidentalism, the invasion in Iraq, transnational capitalism, and globalisation in general (e.g. Buruma & Margalit 2004). Assumingly, these developments have nourished a worldwide tendency of thinking in dichotomies and polarisation.

Subjectivity and critical distance: suspended judgment

From the outset, I have been aware of the chance that *anything* I wrote on this subject would be highly sensitive, perhaps even considered controversial. Writing in a critical, academic style could be perceived as (or mistaken for) a heartless account by some disassociated outsider. My research participants, prominent members of the ‘African management’ movement in South Africa, might even take it as infidelity, if their concerns, their specific version of making sense of ‘African management’ philosophy would have been ‘misunderstood’, distorted or described in otherwise prejudiced ways. On the other hand, an empathetic position as a researcher, producing – at least to some extent – an emic description of ‘African management’ philosophy might lead to highbrow reservations from scholars about an assumed lack of necessary critical distance. From a phenomenological point of view, however, a certain level of subjectivity is unavoidable in doing qualitative research, and even necessary, while sustaining a ‘critical consciousness’ with regard to ‘discourse-in-practice’ (Holstein & Grubium 2005: 484-500).⁴⁷

Instead of serving two masters at a time – both passionate ‘African management’ advocates and critical academics – I chose to focus primarily on the research objectives, remaining faithful to accepted principles of qualitative research and organisational ethnography. The fact that I feel the urge to clarify this point is due to the polarisation of the discourse and its politicised character: either you support it or you are against it. As noted in Chapter 1, ‘African management’ discourse is almost an article of faith: a controversy of *believers* versus *non-believers*.⁴⁸ Somehow, choosing a position in the middle seems difficult. It was not my intention to ‘unmask’ or discredit ‘African management’ proponents. Yet again, being critical – about ‘African management’, or about African Renaissance for that matter – can also provoke strong disapproval from the ‘believers’, who might perceive critique as an assault on their cause.

⁴⁷ Holstein and Grubium draw here on the work of the phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz and point out that phenomenology concerns interpretative practice of everyday realities, but could also reveal a potential for change.

⁴⁸ This was mentioned in the previous chapter, in section 1.2 *Between Optimism and Opportunism*.

Critics can be easily silenced. Those who voice criticism or scepticism must be Afropessimists beyond hope, opponents of the national interest, enemies of Africa (Van Kessel 2001: 51).

The kind of allegations can only be guessed. Moreover, once the doors to researchers are shut, it becomes more difficult to conduct interpretative studies on this subject in the future. To do this research properly, an intensive immersion into the private domain of the 'African management' community in South Africa was required. This should not be misconstrued as automatically becoming an ally or a 'believer'. However, there is always a risk of being portrayed as 'an adept' of Afrocentric thinkers and 'African management' advocates. After the fieldwork phase, quite a few fellow social scientists were quick to conclude that I had become a believer, using unflattering qualifications, such as 'ally', 'partisan' or – with more religious connotations – even 'disciple' and 'missionary'. To be *not* associated as such, would that require a mission that unilaterally focussed on unambiguous unmasking? Is this how scholarly debate should be understood? Well, perhaps, it *does* take confrontational debates and even sometimes unpleasant characterisations to sort out the underlying sensitive issues and to be able to strike a fine balance between subjectivity and critical distance. Critiques from the academic community are as well signs of the polarisation of the 'African management' debate, of ideological contestation, and fights over worldviews. Framing it as such, it becomes less a personal matter, and more an archetypal issue. In a related field of study, a similar dynamics could be observed, as illustrated through the *Black Athena* debate.⁴⁹

Rather than choosing an *a priori* position of discrediting 'African management' discourse and its followers, I have consistently tried to develop an empathetic interpretative account. Romanticising and divulging a supposedly ancient and 'pure' reservoir of indigenous knowledge on leadership and social organisation – allegedly holding promising insights about people cooperation and leadership in an 'authentic' African way – was not the aim of this research. Therefore, I held on to the principle of 'suspended judgement', postponing my assessment, as far as possible not working from a preconceived angle, but positioning myself as an observer with an interrogative attitude. In brief, researching Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa was a major balancing act, with 'instant judgement' and a too sympathetic positioning as absolute 'no go' areas. In addition, to get a more comprehensive picture it was important considering not only the perspectives of the *believers* but also those of the *non-believers*. Suspending judgement more or less automatically led to the principal question, whether one has to be 'a believer' to be able to study and interpret 'African management' discourse. In my view, the answer is no: believing that an 'African management' vision is the most suitable, logical, effective, and desirable approach to leadership and management in organisations in South Africa is not a precondition to making valid

⁴⁹ The *Black Athena* debate is discussed in Chapter 8 'Africanness' in *Afrocentric perspective*.

statements on the issue.

Throughout the fieldwork in South Africa, amazement was a sensation that dominated most. In my perception, the notion of amazement is much related to the principle of suspending judgement. It was there to stay until the last day in the field. Recurring experiences of amazement to some extent explained that my position of ‘suspending judgement’ was not so difficult to maintain after all. Every time, additional field experiences and insights threw new lights on the phenomenon under review. It was unfeasible to take either a fully sympathetic or an ‘unmasking’ point of view. At that stage, fieldwork impressions were too overwhelming and diverse to support either of the two. The aim of this study is to describe, interpret and deconstruct ‘African management’ discourse, not to judge whether it is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘effective’ or ‘illusive’. Eventually, there are no unanimous ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ conclusions in my overall assessment.⁵⁰

As regards amazement, I realise that my fascination with business and management issues has grown. In prior professional and political engagements, I used to be rather sceptical about business, but my previous perspective has changed somewhat. An intensive exposure to the world of business and management consultancy was a relatively new experience to me. Now, I am more positive about the creative, imaginative, and innovative aspects of entrepreneurship than I used to. Cultural processes at work are actually very fascinating: playing with power and language; the importance of networks; the use of humour; the balancing between business interests, personal ambitions, and political ideals. This again alludes to the title of this thesis: *Between Optimism and Opportunism*, engaging elements of being principled, being flexible, and being opportunistic.

In the company of key research participant Lovemore Mbigi – for a full year – there was never a dull moment, not in the last place because of his colourful personality. Since Mbigi is a relatively well-known public figure – at least in a specific professional community and in certain ‘Afrocentric circles’ – I thought anonymisation would be quite inappropriate. Why I did so, is explained, and justified in the next section.

2.2 Non-anonymity of data and informants

The Code of Conduct for scientists in the Netherlands provides guidelines with regard to the protection of private information about research informants, an important and noble principle.⁵¹ In brief, the guidelines propose that not more information about persons should be collected than

⁵⁰ Chapters 10 and 11 reflect my overall assessment.

⁵¹ The *Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice* was drawn up at the request of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and came into force as from January 2005. Key principles stipulated in the Code of Conduct were: scrupulousness, reliability, verifiability, impartiality, and independence. Subsequently, a code of conduct for the use of private information in scientific research came into force as from January 2006, as documented in VSNU (2005).

necessary in the context of the research, and secondly, data (and names) should be anonymised as much as possible. In general, the Code of Conduct seeks to promote the value of scrupulousness, transparency, and integrity.

The integrity of each scientific practitioner is an essential condition for maintaining stakeholders' faith in science. Integrity is the cornerstone of good scientific practice (page 3).

This is a respectable norm. Privacy is an issue of particular concern relating to the generation, processing, and retention of personal data. A careful approach in this regard is both a matter of normative conduct and a question of quality standards. In the Netherlands, it is not (yet) obligatory to seek prior approval from an Institutional Research Board, like in the United States, before a researcher can make use of databases with private information.

In this qualitative research, data have *not* been anonymised. Following the ethical principles of the Code of Conduct for the use of private information in scientific research, this could be regarded as problematic. Article 7 of the Code of Conduct stipulates namely, that publication of research results is done in such a manner, that it is by no means possible that information leads to identification of concerned 'respondents', unless the latter have given their explicit consent to this (VSNU 2005: 16). Why are data not anonymised in this research, how can this exception to the general rule be justified, and yet in what way are principles of scrupulousness, transparency, and integrity adequately safeguarded?

Two important reasons can be given here. Firstly, the persons mentioned in this research are mostly *public figures*. Secondly, private data concerning individuals, institutes, firms, and projects as publicised in this thesis are *proportional* and consequently *legitimate* in terms of research ethics. These reasons will be elaborated in the following.

The main reason *not* to anonymise was that unquestionably it would have made the research unrealistic and incredible. A major part of the research concerned namely a reconstruction of the emergence and evolution of 'African management' discourse in South Africa. This involves the driving forces of the first hour that gave it a push in the early 1990s, and beyond. They are people who have published articles and books, which should be in the reference list of the thesis. Inevitably, one comes to speak of *real persons* with real names.

Although it is hard to demarcate the boundaries of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, it is indispensably associated with specific individuals and institutions. The people being studied are mostly public figures, known to the public or – even more so – known to a specific audience or professional community. Moreover, by estimation, the 'African management' audience in South Africa is relatively small. Stating, 'everyone knows one another' would go too far, but it is important to put the question of (non)anonymity in this perspective. In other words, even using

other names than the real ones would not make the concerned persons unidentifiable. In most cases, the principle of anonymity would thus entirely miss the point. Therefore, actually, anonymising persons and data was no really an issue. It would have been quite odd, like writing about the emergence of the ANC and calling Nelson Mandela for instance 'John Maluka'.

All sorts of information about numerous key people being studied on private and less private matters, such as educational background, activities, opinions, responsibilities, and achievements (or lack of achievements) circulate regularly in newspapers, magazines, in radio programmes and television broadcastings. Yet,

....the concept of privacy is complex. What is public and what private is rarely clear-cut. Is the talk among people in a bar public or private? [...] Similarly, are religious ceremonies public events? (Hammersley & Atkinson 1997: 267).

For research purposes, many of such publicly available data were collected and systematically ordered. Only a relevant selection was used for contextualising primary research data. This would have been impossible, if names of concerned persons did not match with actual information in secondary sources. Otherwise, secondary data should have been anonymised as well, leading to other ethical complications, like manipulation of original sources. Just as a clarification, no data sets were obtained from external (commercial) databanks. In such a case, anonymity is supposedly more pressing, since then the respondents could impossibly know beforehand for what type of research their information would be used.

Anyhow, data were treated with great care. Research findings were not presented in such a way to inflict defamation upon research participants, purposefully affect their reputation, exploit information revealed by them, or do harm in any other way. Those who agreed to an interview or to cooperating otherwise in research activities obviously had a choice and in most cases, interviewees were sensible people belonging to South Africa's intelligentsia. It would have been a quite different and even a more complex matter, if I had to interview less educated people and/or people in specifically vulnerable positions. All concerned have been informed in advance about the background of the research and thus gave their 'unconstrained consent', although a researcher's "control over the research process is often limited" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1997: 264, 266).⁵² They must have been very much aware of the ultimate output by way of a dissertation and other publications. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that after a while even the most sensible people may tend to forget that they are dealing with an actual researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson

⁵² From the outset, it was absolutely clear to me that anonymity was out of question and inappropriate. In retrospect, though, I should perhaps have asked explicitly "in advance whether [...] hosts/providers of information wish to remain anonymous or receive recognition, and [anthropological researchers must] make every effort to comply with those wishes," as stipulated in the Code of Ethics of the *American Anthropological Association* (approved June 1998). However, it remains questionable whether the final result had been different.

1997: 265; O'Reilly 2005: 61). Besides a few exceptions, there were no objections or any special conditions, such as anonymisation.⁵³ Apparently, there was no real concern in this regard. The question of anonymity is basically an issue of confidentiality and privacy. If a study is not anonymous, does it imply that the researcher has betrayed the rules of confidentiality?

The distinction between confidentiality and anonymity in most ethical discussions is unclear. An anonymous study is one in which nobody, not even the researcher, can identify who provided the information. Clearly, this is impossible in ethnographic research. But it may be that the ethnographer wishes to retain anonymity for her participants in the writing and archiving of data. Confidentiality means ensuring that what you hear goes no further (or is not attributed to anyone who can be identified) (O'Reilly 2005: 65).

Even the notion that 'ensuring that what you hear goes no further' can be somewhat arduous in my view. If you have to leave out everything 'what you hear' that can be 'attributed to anyone who can be identified', limits the scope of the researcher unacceptably, at least in the context of this research. In some instances, I have indeed used statements made by identifiable individuals, if these had an added value to the issue under examination that would otherwise not have come out.⁵⁴ As there is no universal definition or consensus about what confidentiality means in ethnographic research, it has to be assessed conscientiously case by case. At the end of the day, it is an issue of balancing research interests and the rights of the concerned people being studied. To escape from this predicament, it is helpful trying to answer the question what effect might it have (O'Reilly 2005: 66).

Applied to this research, what effect might non-anonymity have on the people being studied? The particular subject certainly involved real interests – e.g. in the realm of reputation, credibility, and business – but did not particularly involve risky situations. Admittedly, this is a subjective assessment, but to put it hyperbolically, there were no lives at stake.

Frankly, the requirement of following the ethical principle of anonymity would in this case not have measured up to the need for a credible ethnographic account. Beside ethical considerations, a researcher is very much concerned about the quality of his or her research. Moreover, it can be asserted that numerous respondents were quite pleased with this special form of attention. They might have been astonished or even disappointed if all persons had been anonymised. It might have

⁵³ One exception concerned a representative of *Eagle Publishing Company* that publishes IPM's *People Dynamics*. The concerned person preferred the interview not to be recorded. This wish was respected.

⁵⁴ For example, the restructuring of *LeaRN* was a case in point. In an interview, a staffmember in a senior-management position stated that the restructuring process was so overtly against *ubuntu* principles that I found it indispensable to report this. Overall, his views seemed reasonable, balanced and well-founded. Moreover, he was no longer in a hierarchical relationship with the persons his statements referred to. In addition, I confronted the concerned persons with this view without naming the source, and included their point of view to make it a balanced account. Despite numerous attempts after my field research to ask his permission for quoting his words, I did not manage to contact him. Taking all this into account, I considered it justified and ethical to include this information as such in the thesis, notwithstanding the risk of that person being identifiable.

had to do with the very nature of the categories of people involved: authors, lecturers, management consultants, publishers, and CEOs. Possibly, this is also a side-effect of ‘studying-up’: studying people in (relatively) powerful positions.

Respecting participants’ confidentiality and right to privacy may mean anonymity, but sometimes we have to juggle that against some participants’ desire to be recognised (O’Reilly 2005: 65).

To put it bluntly, some people crave for extra publicity, even by way of a PhD thesis and academic publications. Apparently, public relations was a motive in itself to some of the prominent ‘African management’ advocates for anything they would engage in. For example, Lovemore Mbigi allowed me doing my research work, because he wanted to ‘keep the discourse alive’, as he literally put it. This confirmed that he personally considered ‘African management’ a *discourse*, with a quite self-possessed attitude concerning his own involvement. Mbigi saw the dissemination of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa, and beyond as his personal mission, or at least that is how he explained it. He realised that allowing me to do the research would result in a dissertation and probably a number of additional publications, generating additional publicity, and possibly a form of recognition by a foreign academic institute.⁵⁵ It could imply extra media attention abroad and in South Africa, perhaps new clients and an expansion of his business network. Wholeheartedly, Mbigi believed in networking and building partnerships, envisaging a great future for network organisations, including for his own consultancy firm. Therefore, he was eager to have new additions to his network, and so I was appointed his associate. This proved helpful in getting access to numerous insightful events, in which Mbigi performed to talk about ‘African management’ and related issues: seminars, guest lecturers, breakfast talks, workshops.

Publicity becomes even more attractive, if such a mission goes hand in hand with potentially new business opportunities. Commercial interests were probably never quite absent. Supposedly, ‘keeping the discourse alive’ is also a political game, an ideological struggle, as with the debate on African Renaissance. This debate has an ideological, a political, and an economic dimension.⁵⁶ From this perspective, besides the aspect of informed and unconstrained consent, there actually seemed to be *very little concern about privacy* or mentioning real names.

Furthermore, I have consistently attempted to use primary and secondary data in this dissertation in a proportional way, namely with the sole aim to address the central research question. Data that somehow seemed embarrassing or discomfoting to a concerned person –

⁵⁵ The search for academic recognition, as one of the characteristics in ‘African management’ discourse, is discussed in Chapter 5 *Themes, deviations and critiques*, in section 5.2.4.

⁵⁶ This is also discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, in section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid*. Noteworthy is for instance the subtitle of the volume *African Renaissance: The New Struggle*, edited by Prof. Malegapuru William Makgoba (1999). ‘The Struggle’ has become a heroic term in South Africa, particularly to the older generation, thus giving ‘African renaissance’ an almost mythical flavour.

sometimes stumbled upon accidentally – seriously touching on the issue of privacy, were dispelled. This was particularly so, in absence of a clear relationship with the line of inquiry or key argument in the thesis. There is no reason to disclose just anything ‘extraordinary’ about persons being studied, including findings on controversial private matters, under the (false) pretext of ‘critical’ organisational ethnography.

However, researching ‘African management’ and *ubuntu* – moral concepts that are strongly associated with ‘being human’ – makes it extra precarious to consider any evidence that objectively or intuitively goes against notions of ‘being human’. Such a dilemma – if one wishes to call it like that, as I personally perceived it mostly as a matter of special interest – could be put aside by the thought that humankind is characterised by inconsistent behaviour. Imagine, for instance, that a key informant is overtly not practising what he or she is preaching. Should that receive specific attention in a PhD thesis that deals with issues of morality, humanity, and management, or should it not, out of respect for privacy? If such an observation would not just concern an isolated incident, but be a sign of a significant wider pattern, assumingly it should be exposed.

Eventually, any finding should be considered in the light of the question whether it helps to understand the social phenomenon being researched. Admittedly, not always research ethics alone, but quite often also practical considerations underlie delicate decisions to use or not to use private information. This does however not imply that anonymity in ethnographic research is justified under all circumstances. It always needs a conscientious balancing between the rights of people being studied and research needs, and a careful assessment case by case.

2.3 Being an associate of a key research participant

As noted already in the introductory chapter, Professor Lovemore Mbigi facilitated my access to ‘the field’ very much. On an orientation visit to South Africa in June 2002, Mbigi invited me to his office straight away, without knowing anything about me. Moreover, I could even stay over for a couple of nights and all kind of services were catered for, like food, transport, and e-mail access. I was pleasantly surprised about such an unreserved hospitality. Was this an instant demonstration of *ubuntu* in real life? While I was trying to abstain from a (‘western’?) essentialised imagery of Africa, Mbigi confirmed a rather stereotypical view about Africans as social, friendly, warm, and hospitable at our first contact – in a positive way. This was a first step in laying the foundations for my later fieldwork. I immediately experienced amazement and curiosity, realising the complexities and many-sided dimensions to cultural issues in South Africa. Fieldwork promised to become an interesting period. Whereas I had expected great difficulty in establishing contacts with ‘informants’, I was already building up rapport with a key person. Alternatively, did I make a

crucial mistake by jumping immediately on to this spontaneous, fresh contact? In the following, I will explain why it was not a mistake.

Once my fieldwork began, Mbigi and I started having regular meetings, sometimes on a daily basis almost. There was a friendly and relaxed contact, also with the office staff and even with some of his clients. As a researcher, I felt confident in Mbigi's company, either in a formal interview setting or in a social gathering. Personally, I experienced a sense of mutual respect. When my fieldwork was progressing in the second half of 2003, Mbigi suddenly proposed me to become one of his associates. His idea of a modern organisation is to have a loose (worldwide) network of affiliates, while maintaining a limited core office staff. Affiliates to the network can work together on one or several projects, making use of each other's contacts, knowledge, and facilities, free of charge. Many dealings of Prof. Mbigi have a rather informal character and being one of his associates was not a demanding high-profile engagement. Besides, there were no formal obligations. First and foremost, it offered me a trouble-free justification for my presence during workshops and meetings with clients. For instance, we once talked about an assignment with a client in Johannesburg. Mbigi was expected to have meetings with several staff members, discuss their problems, and to conduct a workshop. I asked Mbigi whether I could accompany him the whole day to do observations. He said yes. I asked whether I should write them a letter first asking their prior permission. He gave me a typical response:

That is the western way. It takes too long to get a reply and perhaps in the end they might say no. The African way is different, more efficient.

The 'African way' in this case was just accompanying him as his associate, without asking prior permission. I had a few basic tasks, e.g. carrying equipment, setting up the notebook and the projector. At the start of the meeting, Mbigi would introduce me as his associate, sometimes mentioning the affiliation with my university or with the *University of Pretoria*. I was wearing a nametag with my name and mentioning 'Associate of *Rainmaker Management Consultants*'. Nobody ever asked questions. I could make observations and take notes endlessly, a rather luxurious position to many a researcher in the field of organisational ethnography.

Moreover, this special status gave me also an opportunity to observe Mbigi in many different situations and under varying circumstances, both 'front stage' – during his formal work as a management consultant – and 'backstage' – in his office, privately and even at home. This was a unique opportunity for an ethnographer. Thus, indeed, it had several vital advantages, but there were also problematic sides to this particular status. To mention three potential risks from a research point of view that apply in this case and in similar cases:

- Risk of bias: subtle influencing by the key informant;

- Risk of becoming identified by others with the key informant;
- Risk of self-censorship: refraining from (too) critical questioning.

It was actually not feasible to check all above-mentioned risk factors. For instance, a ‘control group’ experiment was not possible. Otherwise, a comparison could have been made with a similar research set-up, without the role of being an ‘associate’ of a key informant. However, I made notes in my research diary of situations that seemed peculiar to some extent in terms of the researcher/associate position.

This position had also implications with regard to the issue of privacy and confidentiality. Occasionally, Mbigi and I spoke privately on personal matters. What was discussed in these instances, I have kept confidential. It occurred to me that Mbigi has hardly ever shared very sensitive personal matters with me. There was overall a cordial and trustful working relationship, but not excessively intimate. Furthermore, I was aware of Mbigi’s intelligence, his (ideological) agenda, his shrewdness as a businessperson, but I never experienced any blatant or stealthy attempts to influence me as a researcher. Nonetheless, some information might not have reached me or might have been consciously withheld from me.

If there was any ‘subtle influencing’, it was probably mostly because of the reiteration of arguments, statements, anecdotes, and the continuous stream of information on and – Mbigi’s interpretation of – ‘African culture’ and ‘African management’. Additionally, the magnitude of books, research reports, papers, and videos lying around in the office and in Mbigi’s library so to speak constituted ‘circumstantial evidence’ of potential influence on the researcher. An intensive exposure to all these resources for a full year might lead either to growing uneasiness or indeed to a fine form of indoctrination, although the latter would assume calculated actions to bring this about, which is again most unlikely. Perhaps Mbigi had anticipated quite smartly, that in my case it would not cause antipathy. If I try to rationalise this in retrospect, it might have been because of my attitude of ‘suspending judgement’. As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, I neither advertised myself as a sceptic nor as a proponent of ‘African management’ philosophy, although I was obviously most interested in the issue.

The most serious risk was probably that others in South Africa might identify me unilaterally with Prof. Mbigi. This might have affected their decision to cooperate or not – for reasons unknown to the researcher. Clearly, these reasons were actually most intriguing and relevant from a research point of view. An over-identification with *Rainmaker Management Consultants* would have deprived me from such evidence. In addition, vice-versa, as an ‘associate’ of Prof. Mbigi, he might put me in touch particularly with informants preferred by him. That would have incorporated a serious bias as well in the generation of data. Because of the PhD training programme at CERES, I

was aware of this risk.⁵⁷ Therefore, I had decided beforehand not to work exclusively with Mbigi and his office in spite of the unique opportunities, but to start working from ‘different directions’. As the following section on the research process will show, there were various entry points to the field, other than through my key research participant only.

Moreover, when I contacted persons for an interview I never introduced myself as an ‘associate of *Rainmaker Management Consultants*’. Thus, I acquired a relatively independent position from Prof. Mbigi. It was my impression that even if informants knew about my affiliation with RMC, they would not refrain for instance from articulating their opinion on Mbigi’s interpretation of *ubuntu* as a management philosophy or on the style he operates as an ‘African management’ consultant. Because I was much aware of such a prospective bias, I have taken necessary precautions from the start of the research, thus preventing it to become a serious threat to the quality of the research. A final remark on this issue concerns the fact that I had no other interest in my affiliation with *Rainmaker Management Consultants* but the PhD research. There were no personal or business benefits involved. Otherwise, that might have jeopardised my independence as a researcher.

After this concise reflection on these two rather testing problems, an elaborate explanation follows on how the research was actually conducted.

2.4 The research process

The research process includes different phases from drafting a research plan and writing up a research design up to publication of the research findings. Separating ‘fieldwork’ from other phases in a research project, especially from the preparatory phase and the phase of data processing is problematic. In a virtual way, one can still be highly engaged with the field without being physically there. Access to the internet and e-mail communication makes it hard to separate fieldwork from ‘non-fieldwork’.

This section does not consider all respective phases in detail, but focuses on context analysis, the field study including the interviews, and the processing, and interpretation of data, with a few additional notes on questions of ontology and epistemology and on ‘African management’ as discourse.

⁵⁷ CERES is the *Research School for Resource Studies for Development*. CERES is the coordinating body for development oriented research in the Netherlands. CERES coordinates the work of the senior staff members, as well as the training of PhD candidates. The *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* is one of the six academic institutions participating in CERES (further information on: <http://ceres.fss.uu.nl>).

Context analysis

Conceptually, context analysis could be understood in a very broad sense. In this research, it was basically defined in terms of the historical context, the political context, and the economic context, in terms of the transition from apartheid to democracy and the process of business transformation.

Prior to and during fieldwork in South Africa from June 2003 until June 2004, context analysis was an integral part of daily research activities. Initially, the scope was rather broad and sources of information that were being accessed ranged from academic and non-academic literature to journals, newspapers, websites and magazines on various topics, amongst other politics, culture, (post)apartheid, the truth and reconciliation process, labour relations and trade unions, economic transformation, affirmative action, black economic empowerment, and business management. The newspapers, journals, and magazines that were regularly scrutinised concerned: ThisDay, Sowetan, Mail&Guardian, Financial Mail, and Sunday Times/Business Times.⁵⁸ Not just written information, but also television programmes, documentaries, films, cultural manifestations, major political events and public celebrations (e.g. *Reconciliation Day* on December 16; national elections in 2004) – in brief, being in the field as a total experience, in the sense of living and working in South Africa for a full year – was an immense and precious source of contextual information.⁵⁹

The number of topics to categorise contextual information amounted to 22, which made the load of information manageable in terms of data processing.⁶⁰ These were also part of the topics of academic literature used for conceptualisation. The literature database (in *Endnote* format) comprised the same topics and concepts (and more: 37 in total).⁶¹

Upon return from the field, additional information was gathered through SA media, an on-line news service accessed through the library of the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*. This provided

⁵⁸ Others were: Africa Confidential, Africa Insight, African Business, Beeld, Black Business Quarterly, Business Day, Business Report, Cape Argus, Leadership Magazine, Leadership SA, Metro, MRB Southern Africa Monthly Regional Bulletin, NewAfrican, People Dynamics, Pretoria News, SouthScan, Sunday Independent, The Citizen, The Natal Witness, and The Star. The production of daily newspaper ThisDay stopped in 2004.

⁵⁹ December 16 is also the day when especially Afrikaner nationalists commemorate the victory over Zulu King Dingane's army at the *Battle of Blood River* on 16 December 1838 (*Afrikaners and Zulus come at a shared history from very different angles. Blood feud on the banks of the river* Mail&Guardian 19-31 December 2003, page 3).

⁶⁰ The topics were: Afrocentrism/Pan-Africanism; African Renaissance/NEPAD/AU; Apartheid/Post-apartheid; Black Economic Empowerment; Business & management; Corporate Social Responsibility; Culture; Cultural diversity; Gender; Globalisation (and Africa); Ethnicity ('race' and racism); Identity; Indigenous Knowledge (Systems); Leadership; (Re)traditionalisation/tradition; South Africa (politics; general); Trade unions; Transformation; Transition; Truth & Reconciliation (Commission); *Ubuntu/lekgotla*; Zimbabwe.

⁶¹ The literature database in Endnote comprised the following (partially overlapping) concepts and topics: Africa; African management; African philosophy; African Renaissance; Africanism & Afrocentrism; Afrikaners; Anthropology; Apartheid; Black Economic Empowerment; Corporate Social Responsibility; Creolisation; Cultural diversity; Culture & cultural studies; Discourse; Ethnicity & race & racism; Ethnography; Gender; Globalisation; Hybridisation; Identity; Indigenisation; Leadership; Management & business in South Africa; Management & organisation; Management fashion & gurus; Organisational culture; Philosophy; Research methodology; South Africa; Spirituality & mythology; Story-telling & organisations; Trade unions; Transformation; Transition; Trust; Truth & reconciliation; *Ubuntu*.

relevant additional historical and contemporary material, especially on actors who had been involved in the field research.⁶² Eventually, these data generating efforts resulted in a rich databank with numerous records of articles and newspaper clippings, at least covering the one-year fieldwork period in South Africa, ordered on the basis of topic and publication date. The purpose was two-fold: becoming up-to-date as much as possible about ongoing political, cultural, and business issues, which was of great help in the identification and positioning of research informants. Notes that I wrote up throughout the fieldwork period, in which I tried to link news items to empirical findings, also constituted building blocks of the context analysis, telling me something about ‘underlying social processes and structures’.

...qualitative research studies can contribute to social theories where they have something to tell us about the underlying social processes and structures that form part of the context of, and the explanation for, individual behaviours or beliefs (Ritchie & Lewis 2003: 267).

Thus, so to speak, even watching TV became a sort of data generating activity. Context analysis was an integral and continuous research activity, before and during (and in fact also after) the field study, primarily meant to facilitate and complement the field study.

The field study

The first important step in the research was to prepare a work plan with a tentative scheme for the entire 12-month field study period and a priority list of actors (individuals and institutions) to be approached for interviews and/or for observations. Having access to the internet, access to the excellent library of the *University of Pretoria* and a modest office space made available to me were important assets.⁶³

To make a quick headstart, I first engaged in exploring the field of business and management in South Africa, with a focus on (though not exclusively searching for) ‘African management’. Therefore, in the first weeks of the fieldwork starting in June 2003, I spent a lot of time at the library of the *University of Pretoria*, scanning through numerous magazines, journals, research reports, and dissertations (hardcopies and partly electronically available). In the preparatory phase before the fieldwork, I had already put together a list of articles and publications to be checked, which was compiled with the assistance of NiZA’s library and documentation centre.⁶⁴ This list

⁶² Accessible via: <http://www.samedia.uovs.ac.za/>.

⁶³ The office space that I used was initially at the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology and later with the Department of Human Resource Management at the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. I am especially obliged to Prof. Christiaan Boonzaier (Department of Anthropology and Archaeology) and to Prof. Leopold Vermeulen (Department of Human Resource Management) for their generous support extended to me during the entire fieldwork period in South Africa.

⁶⁴ For this, I am especially obliged to Kier Schuringa of NiZA’s *BIDOC*, who compiled at my request a helpful ‘list of resources’ with ‘African management’ and *ubuntu* as queries.

served as an entry point to my further library searching. An information specialist of UP's library services provided me with an *Ezee-dex information systems* database on management consultants in South Africa, including contact details. In addition, the *Ananzi site directory* on business consulting offered an extensive list of possibly useful contacts.⁶⁵

Besides, application of the 'snowball method' proved helpful in exploring the field, though at the risk of incorporating particular biases, if applied in a one-directional manner. This risk was counterweighted by creating several 'snowballs' and pushing them from different directions. One way was to follow up contacts encountered through internet search, the *Ezee-dex* database, and contacts acquired during my pre-fieldwork orientation visit in 2002. Another way was to ask lecturers and researchers at UP's *Department of Human Resource Management*, and outside the *University of Pretoria*.⁶⁶

A third way was to approach persons through my key research participant, Prof. Lovemore Mbigi. This made perfectly sense as he was centrally positioned in this field: Mbigi was namely represented in all three identified 'African management' *flows* and well connected to producers, distributors, and end-users of 'African management' philosophy. This is how I met Prof. Rukuni of the *W.K. Kellogg Foundation*, for example. Doubtlessly, Professor Mbigi has played a crucial role throughout the fieldwork period. With some interruptions, I paid regular visits to his office and his residence during a full year, with four extended in-depth interviews.⁶⁷ The advantages and potential risks with regard to this relationship were discussed earlier.

The office of Prof. Mbigi provided me with a detailed list of contact persons. Despite the potential influence resulting from this, it was a calculated risk, since it was being offset by other 'snowballs' that started rolling. By no means, I was solely dependent on the contacts of my key research informant. A few examples illustrate this. A colleague at UP's *Department of Human Resource Management* suggested me a useful contact at GIBS' business school in Illovo, Johannesburg, namely Prof. Karl Hofmeyr. He happened to have published a book (jointly with Linda Human) on black managers in South Africa (Hofmeyr, K. & Human 1985). Hofmeyr gave me the contact details of Kobus 'Luthando' Prinsloo, a management consultant of Afrikaner origin, working as a business mediator on conflict resolution. Months later, I called Prinsloo and he immediately agreed to an interview. Someone else advised me to attend a conference organised by IRasa, where I represented the *University of Pretoria*, providing me a great networking

⁶⁵ See: www.ananzi.co.za [accessed 11 June 2003].

⁶⁶ For example, Marlene Roefs provided me a useful list of well-informed contact persons. She had obtained her PhD degree at the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* in 2003 and was then still affiliated with the *Human Sciences Research Council* in Pretoria.

⁶⁷ On 28 June 2003, 14 August 2003, 3 December 2003, and 9 May 2004.

opportunity.⁶⁸ At the IRasa conference, Marius Meyer of IODT invited me to the fifth Annual Institute for Organisation Development and Transformation Conference, which took place in Boksburg in November 2003. That's where I met Mrs Mpho Letlape, Managing Director of Eskom's Human Resources Division; a direct and rather 'natural' way to ask her for an interview, to which she agreed promptly.

Besides individuals, who (had) (potentially) played a significant direct role in the debate itself, people were identified who dealt with issues, closely related with the research subject. For instance, in May 2004 I interviewed Marcus Moses, a management consultant, based in Johannesburg. My former supervisor, Professor Koot, had met him in 2002 and he was impressed with his critical views on business and management in South Africa. Moses is not particularly a proponent of 'African management' philosophy and his comments cannot be literally marked out in this thesis, but his views helped to further shape my ideas.

In the same category, an interview was conducted with Linda Human, *not* because she would have produced, distributed, or utilised 'African management' ideas in any direct way, but mainly because she held a very strong opinion on 'African management', amongst others as publicised in the *International Journal of Manpower* (Human 1996b). It turned out to be a good decision to interview Human. After several attempts, amongst others an unsuccessful visit to her office in the Western Cape in February 2004, an opportunity arose to meet her at Johannesburg's international airport in May 2004. In addition to her informed opinion, she provided relevant contextual information on the circumstances at the time when 'African management' philosophy emerged and on some of the actors involved in the beginning. Moreover, she described alternative methods of dealing with cultural diversity issues in the South African workplace, other than the 'African way'. This was very helpful in terms of *contextualising* the 'African management' debate in South Africa.

Care was taken to identify informants divided more or less equally over the respective 'African management' *flows*. In the research design, a distinction was made between different 'dimensions of culture': the development of modes of thought, externalisation, and emergence, and social distribution and utilisation.⁶⁹ Concretely, this meant that the players in 'the field' were roughly categorised along one or more of these flows. Obviously, several actors fitted in more than one category. Thus, it served also as a rough indicator of the position or status of an actor in the discourse: key 'African management' advocates, such as Lovemore Mbigi, Mike Boon, and Reuel Khoza, were somehow involved in all three phases. Obviously, this made them crucial people in

⁶⁸ This was the annual conference of the *Industrial Relations Association of South Africa* in 2003 (IRasa National Conference *Social Transformation: the IR Contribution?* Rosebank, Johannesburg, 12-13 August).

⁶⁹ This was explained in Chapter 1 *Researching Afrocentric management discourse – introduction*. In practical terms, three 'African management' *flows* were identified: emergence and externalisation, distribution, and utilisation.

this research.

If initial contacts gave positive results, arrangements were made for an interview session or a series of interviews and/or on-site visits, if practically feasible in terms of timing and location. Sometimes interviews were quite swiftly arranged by phone or e-mail. In other instances, more endurance and persuasion was needed. As I interpreted it, this was not necessarily an indication of unwillingness, but could be because of busy agendas. I would show comprehension for this, but cling on until the other party agreed. The ‘personal assistant’ to a senior manager – in practice a kind of gatekeeper preventing the person in-charge to become overburdened – is often a serious obstacle. Usually, a brief research background and a few topics were given in advance, to gain trust and facilitate approval. Not in all cases, I mentioned the terms ‘African management’ or *ubuntu* explicitly to avoid inducing a bias during the interview.

Various strategies were employed in trying to get people’s cooperation, trying to be particularly ‘gentle’ and even to *please* potential respondents.⁷⁰ When I thought appropriate, I would marginally mention my past involvement with the anti-apartheid movement in the Netherlands.⁷¹ Apparently, senior managers, consultants, and business people generally appreciated to get involved by means of an interview, in spite of their busy schedules. Apparently, they enjoyed talking about their work and expressing their views on management and political and cultural changes in South Africa. One respondent became so thoroughly interested in my ‘African management’ research work that he decided afterwards to undertake his own PhD research on a related issue. Several respondents stated they found my research ‘important’ and some wondered why ‘not a South African researcher was doing this’. Having a broad general knowledge about South Africa and its history, specifically on management and organisation issues and current political and economic developments, was indeed an advantage. It makes the researcher a more serious conversation partner and it saves time, if one shares a basic common knowledge. This made it easier to ‘dig deeper’ during the limited time designated for interviews.⁷² In one instance only, an informant was particularly hesitant for a while to agree to an interview. After several attempts, he finally agreed, but refused the recording of the interview. This was probably more due to a recent change in job responsibilities than with the interview or the topics as such.

The plan was primarily *not to interview as many informants as possible*, but rather to select key

⁷⁰ Being ‘gentle’ is one out of ten “qualification criteria for the interviewer,” listed on page 148 in Kvale (1996). Supposedly, this criterion is also helpful *before* the interview, in trying to get permission.

⁷¹ Doing so, I was self-critically much aware of the principle of the strategic use of identity and ethnicisation, concepts that are also used in this thesis for interpreting the phenomenon of ‘African management’ discourse! In retrospect, I have no reason to believe that this strategy proved specifically helpful after all, but on the other hand, it did not prove harmful either.

⁷² Being ‘knowledgeable’ is also mentioned as one of the ‘qualification criteria for the interviewer’; page 148 in Kvale (1996).

persons who appeared to have a specific link to the debate on 'African management'. This was largely also a matter of reputation and significance that others attributed to them, also in literature and magazines. Moreover, if research informants and secondary sources confirmed the involvement and significant role of a specific person (or institution) in the debate – or gave negative feedback in this respect – it was taken into consideration whether or not to 'put someone on the list'. It was also a matter of comparison, as other potential informants seemed perhaps 'less relevant'. This made it to some extent a series of arbitrary but necessary decisions that a researcher makes in the field, since time is always a constraint. Pragmatism is part of this process.

The interviews

Beside intensive observational work during one whole year, specifically focussing on Prof. Lovemore Mbigi of *Rainmaker Management Consultants* and his business engagements, altogether 40 formal interviews were conducted with 34 people. Out of these 40 interviews, 13 were not recorded, for various reasons.⁷³

After every interview session, a detailed field report was written up. In doing so, I distinguished between 'field notes' and 'field reports'. A field note was usually a brief memo written up during actual research activities or in leisure time, in which I recorded impressions, described 'accidental events' or encounters, raised questions to myself, and ventilated some thoughts and initial analytical insights. Mostly, these were brief hasty notes and sometimes more elaborate notes to articulate my own questions and thoughts. For instance, I wrote up field notes while reading newspapers, magazines, or literature that triggered my thinking or occurred to me.

The 'field reports' served to document observations in detail, providing 'thick descriptions' of particular situations, atmosphere, body language expressions, language use, intonations, group dynamics, artefacts, etc. The 'field reports' were important tools in the generation of qualitative ethnographic data, in addition to textual data based on interviews and documents. This use of 'field notes' and 'field reports' is inspired by, but slightly different from Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson's suggestions in this regard. They do not distinguish between 'field reports' and 'field notes', but just used one term for it: field notes. In their words, "field notes consist of relatively concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts," which should be recorded "as soon as possible after the observed action" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1997: 176-177). This definition is also applicable to what I labelled as 'field reports'.

⁷³ A MiniDisk was used to record interviews. From the MD, the data were stored to a computer hard disk and a CD.
'African management' in South Africa Page 54 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

List of interviews conducted between June 2003 - June 2004				
No.	Date	Name	Affiliation(s)	Remarks
1	28 June 2003	Lovemore Mbigi	RMC; AIR	1st interview out of 4
2	31 July 2003	Nick Binedell	GIBS (ex-Wits)	1st interview out of 2
3	1 August 2003	Sehoai Santho	LeaRN	Not recorded (field report) ⁷⁴
4	8 August 2003	Hennie Cronjé	CLD	1st interview out of 2, not recorded (field report) ⁷⁵
5	14 Aug. 2003	Lovemore Mbigi	RMC; AIR	2nd interview out of 4
6	25 Aug. 2003	Hennie Cronjé	CLD	2nd interview out of 2, not recorded (field report)
7	28 Aug. 2003	Jan Nel	Consultant, CLD	Not recorded (field report) ⁷⁶
8	2 Sept. 2003	Nick Binedell	GIBS (ex-Wits)	2nd interview out of 2
9	2 Sept. 2003	Gavin Andersson	LeaRN	
10	14 Nov. 2003	Willem de Liefde		
11	3 Dec. 2003	Lovemore Mbigi	RMC; AIR	3rd interview out of 4
12	3 Dec. 2003	Wilhelm Crous	Knowledge Resources	
13	5 Dec. 2003	Willem van Niekerk	Kumba Resources/ Zincor	Not recorded (field report) ⁷⁷
14	5 Dec. 2003	Themba Manana	NUM	Not recorded (field report)
15	5 Dec. 2003	Oubaas Oosthuizen	Kumba Resources/ Zincor	Not recorded (field report)
16	5 Dec. 2003	Gideon Basson	Kumba Resources/ Zincor	Not recorded (field report)
17	5 Dec. 2003	Tommy Liebenberg	Consultant	Not recorded (field report)
18	9 Dec. 2003	Mpho Letlape	Eskom	
19	27 Jan. 2004	Jonathan Cook	WBS	Not recorded (field report) ⁷⁸
20	10 March 2004	Mandi Rukuni	WFFK	1st interview out of 2
21	11 March 2004	Joe Matsau	Eskom	
22	13 April 2004	Mike Boon	Consultant (Vulindlela Network)	Not recorded (field report) ⁷⁹
23	28 April 2004	Peter Christie	Consultant (Not The Bored Room - Storytelling in Organisations)	
24	4 May 2004	Taddy Blecher	CIDA City Campus	
25	5 May 2004	Linda Human	Consultant (Linda Human & Associates)	
26	9 May 2004	Lovemore Mbigi	RMC; AIR	4th interview out of 4
27	11 May 2004	Mike Bendixen	WBS	Not recorded (field report) ⁸⁰
28	11 May 2004	Eric Mafuna	Africa Now	
29	12 May 2004	Mandi Rukuni	WFFK	2nd interview out of 2
30	12 May 2004	Monhla Hlahla	ACSA	
31	18 May 2004	Simon Lumikuyu	IPM's People Dynamics (Eagle Publishing Company)	Not recorded (field report) ⁸¹
32	20 May 2004	Maggie Davey	Jacana Media	
33	20 May 2004	Kobus Prinsloo	Consultant (Siyavuma Systems)	
34	21 May 2004	Demos Takoulas	Vukani Ubuntu Community Projects	
35	24 May 2004	Marcus Moses	Consultant (Ndawo Consulting)	
38	26 May 2004	Peet van der Walt	First National Bank	
39	23 June 2004	Ronnie Lessem		
40	26 June 2004	Albert Koopman		

⁷⁴ The interview with Sehoai Santho was not recorded. At the time of the interview, the circumstances in his office seemed somewhat chaotic. I decided it would be better to keep the interview 'low profile' and to avoid the visibility of a MiniDisc recorder.

⁷⁵ The interviews with Hennie Cronjé were not recorded, because he was not considered a key informant. The interview was meant to learn more about the Leadership Academy and about LeaRN.

⁷⁶ The interview with Jan Nel was not recorded, because he was considered a resource person, not a key informant. The interview was meant to learn more about the Leadership Academy and about LeaRN.

⁷⁷ The interviews on 5 December 2003 at Zincor mining company in Springs with Gideon Basson; Oubaas Oosthuizen; Themba Manana; Willem van Niekerk and Tommy Liebenberg were not recorded. The sessions were held jointly with the South African PhD researcher Simon Mapadimeng of ILOS (University of KwaZulu-Natal) / University of Johannesburg (formerly called Rand Afrikaans University). Simon Mapadimeng had allowed me to accompany him and 'African management' in South Africa Page 55 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

I had imposed quite a time consuming task on myself. I made it an issue to produce good quality notes, as I was aware that they should be clear and still make sense after return from the field. The field reports comprised observational data on workshops, conferences, meetings, and lectures. In addition, I kept a separate research diary, which also contained personal notes, sometimes providing – or leading to – the ‘raw materials’ of field notes, ideas for new interview topics or new avenues for the research work plan. The research diary served to ‘live through’ and memorise fieldwork experiences, as a private platform for brainstorming, and as a means to reflect on the research process, being aware of my influence as researcher.

In addition to the field notes, field reports and a research diary, I produced ‘memos’ and ‘concept notes’. These memos were notes produced before or after the actual fieldwork period. I distinguished ‘general’ memos and memos specifically on methodological questions. ‘Concept memos’ were notes on concepts, such as globalisation, cultural diversity, identity formation, and ethnicity, to memorise what I had read or had crossed my mind and making a connection with fieldwork experiences. These data would be stored as follows: ‘Identity 030108’. This meant: a short memo on the concept of identity documented on 8 January 2003. Subsequently, all memos would be automatically stored chronologically under each concept. All memos and notes were stored systematically, creating order in the abundance of information, and as tools in analysing and interpreting the data and writing up the thesis.

Processing and interpreting data

With the writing up of field reports and field notes alongside transcribing the interviews, gradually particular insights began to develop. This creative process, which already started while still in the field, produced several preliminary interpretative perspectives. These impressions were discussed at regular intervals with my supervisors. In addition, I had regular meetings with Prof. Peter E. Franks, Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic and Research of the *University of Limpopo*, whom I regarded as

participate in the interview sessions. Therefore, the interviews were considered to be conducted primarily under his responsibility. Since he was not making any recordings, I found it inappropriate to make recordings myself. These interviews were documented in a detailed field report.

⁷⁸ The interview with Jonathan Cook was not recorded. He was not considered a key informant. This interview was held to learn more about the ‘African Business Leadership’ research project of *Africa Now*.

⁷⁹ The three-hour recording was accidentally erased due to a technical writing error by the Mini-Disc recorder. Therefore, there is no recording on MD or audiocassette. Immediately after the interview session, a lengthy and detailed field report was written up to capture the interview.

⁸⁰ The interview with Mike Bendixen was not recorded; he was considered a resource person, not a key informant; it was a meeting intended to gain more information on the role of Wits Business School in the *South African Management Project*.

⁸¹ For understandable reasons, Simon Lumikuyu was reluctant to the interview being recorded, so it was resolved not to record it. Therefore, there is no recording on MD or audiocassette.

my field supervisor.⁸²

A 6-month sabbatical leave of my supervisor Dr Harry Wels in South Africa in 2003, fortunately coincided with my field study period. This was very convenient for the facilitation of regular in-country sessions for reflection. These sessions usually took many hours in one go, for the most part the researcher doing the talking, while my supervisor gave feedback afterwards.

The phase from 'writing down to writing up' required a change of (work) mode and a change of mood (O'Reilly 2005: 175-204). From the dynamic 'field' to a sort of academic confinement was a major step, while at times the field kept seeping in via the internet, electronic journals and databases, and e-mail communication. The researcher became a prisoner, while simultaneously being his own prison guard.

In summary, the range of empirical materials comprised the following segments, which together constituted the main building blocks for data processing and interpretation:

- Verbatim transcriptions of interviews
- Field reports with observational data, field notes and memos (memos on conceptual issues and memos on methodological issues)
- A collection of secondary materials, such as annual reports, research reports, dissertations, company profiles, agreements, statements, governmental documents
- A collection of news reports; articles from newspapers, journals and magazines; book reviews; journalistic commentaries (orderly arranged by topic and date)
- A database of academic literature and publications, ordered by topics (22).⁸³

The central guiding principle in the entire research and consequently for writing up the dissertation was the notion of *cultural flows*. The 'cradle' of 'African management' discourse in South Africa was located at WBS's *The Theory of the African Firm* seminar in 1992. Having identified a specific starting point of the discourse could be seen as a misdemeanour, with the researcher apparently being guilty of 'committing' an act of social reconstruction. The main point however, was not to pinpoint exactly *when* and *where* the discourse 'started'. Rather, locating the 'cradle' was primarily meant to create a reference point, a landmark. With the 'cradle' as reference point – moving backwards and forwards in time – provided the opportunity to highlight issues of continuity and change, assumingly an important feature of discourse. Thus, it was necessary to refer to the 'pre-emergence' phase as well.

With the central research question in mind, the focus was on the way(s) in which 'African management' was defined, interpreted, and 'given meaning' – in other words the cultural idiom.

⁸² Prof. Franks had been so kind to send an official invitation early 2003 to conduct field research in South Africa. In addition to the research permit with the *University of Limpopo* allowing me a long-term stay in South Africa as a temporary resident, a subsequent permit with the University of Pretoria was requested and issued, which was required for legal reasons and because of regulations of the Department of Home Affairs.

⁸³ These were summed up at the beginning of this section.

Without detailed preconceived definitions, ‘African management’ and *ubuntu* became *queries* or, in the way as Herbert Blumer put it, ‘sensitising concepts’. These terms gave me a sense of guidance in the field.

Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look (Blumer 1954: 7).

‘Forcing’ empirical reality into a preconceived set of concepts did not seem a very helpful approach. Instead, an open and flexible conceptual attitude was chosen. Theory is not meant to make any empirical situation fit forcefully. This, however, does not mean that one enters the field with an entirely ‘blank view’.

A sensitizing concept uses the language and expression from the research participant’s perspective and sensitizes the researcher to more fruitful lines of inquiry [...] (Van den Hoonaard 1997).⁸⁴

Sensitising concepts are particularly useful in structuring and making sense of observations. They assist the researcher ‘to make possible the transition from actors’ understandings and meanings to analytic, generalising concepts’. Unquestionably, this process leads to new questions and to more questions:

In doing participant observation for ethnographic purposes, as far as possible, *both questions and answers must be discovered in the social situation being studied* (Spradley 1980: 32 [Italics in original text]).

The fact that ‘questions imply questions’ and that data – by means of ‘answers’ – give input to define new (or differently defined) interview topics and to reformulate and sharpen questions, means that relevant questions cannot be invented behind the desk. They have to be ‘discovered’ in the field: “...the ethnographer analyzes the field data compiled from participants observation to discover questions” (Spradley 1980: 33). This does not mean that observation needs to come first and then interviews follow. Rather, every source can prompt the process and feed into the other source. After every interview, your focus during (non-)participant observations or in future interview sessions will again be different. Vice-versa, interview questions, and answers will similarly influence observations. Altogether this links up with principles of Grounded Theory: generating theory from data by inductive reasoning, instead of testing hypotheses deduced from theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 6). The analogy between the notion of sensitising concepts and Grounded Theory is clearly illustrated in the following citation:

In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 23).

⁸⁴ This is taken from a description of the book by the Series Editors of the publisher (source: www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?contribId=328679&prodId=Book5961 [accessed 8 June 2004]).
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 58 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

In the research design, no a priori definition was given of ‘African management’ and *ubuntu* in relation to management and organisation in South Africa. Precisely, possible meanings attributed to these concepts were to be studied. A combination of the ‘snow ball’ method (as previously described) and the use of sensitising concepts, opened up interesting avenues of research and resulted in the generation of a wide variety of data.

Subsequently, the challenge was to look for significant relationships, commonalities, and patterns. Simultaneously, however, instead of looking for verification and confirmation of patterns found, the aim was to identify variations, deviations, and falsifications of assumed patterns. Both patterns and significant variations were identified, for example through the comparison of biographical narratives and life histories, generated by means of in-depth interviews and searching the web.⁸⁵ Relationships, patterns, and variations were categorised by means of ‘opening up the text’ and by ‘open coding’:

To uncover, name, and develop concepts, we must open up the text and expose the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained therein. [...] ...data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences (Babbie 2007: 385).

This process required sorting the data, careful reading, specifying relationships, repeated regrouping, and interpretation until a coherent framework was established. Probably, the power of an ethnographic approach in qualitative research is the ability of showing the diversity of phenomena that occur. An ethnographer is expected to describe the untypical as much as the dominant message. This type of interpretative analysis involves:

...a recognition of, and sensitivity to, the ambiguities of human experience; researchers presuppose that meanings are negotiated and constructed, and they often deliberately investigate efforts to promulgate or resist particular meanings, at the same time that they explore the variation of meaning across context ... [...] (Schwartz-Shea 2006: 92).

Inspired by insights from Grounded Theory, the principle of obtaining ‘multiple viewpoints’ was therefore appreciated in this research (e.g. Babbie 2007: 296). Organisational anthropologists should then ask themselves, for instance, on what particular occasions different attitudes and

⁸⁵ The method of biographical analysis had its limitations in the context of this research. For instance, life histories could often not be verified and credentials were difficult to check, specifically if the locations for verification were outside South Africa. Lovemore Mbigi for instance provided many insights about his upbringing, his adolescent life, education, his role in the independence struggle, professional experiences in Zimbabwe and abroad, and international exposures to the USA and the UK in the early stages of his career. This information, his life history, constituted an important feature in the social construction of Mbigi as key actor in ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. He quite often referred to claimed prior ‘successes’ co-creating and constantly reinforcing – consciously or not – the image of a successful entrepreneur, change agent, and ‘African management’ guru (although he personally never used the terms ‘change agent’ or ‘guru’). Much of the provided information, however, could unfortunately not be verified. Nevertheless – be they true stories, constructed and slightly altered or largely invented – supposedly, it was an important observation in itself to point out how he (and others) used life histories creating these great images of themselves.

opinions are expressed, how these utterances are constructed, in what contexts they are included, and what functions they possibly fulfil (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000: 202-206). This approach contributed to mapping the field and displaying a range of interpretations. So doing was an important research finding in itself. The results of this part of the analysis were presented in Chapter 5. I transcribed the interviews myself and repeatedly – while transcribing and re-reading – it occurred to me that certain remarks had been made said that I had missed or understood differently when the interviews were actually taking place.⁸⁶ Writing up notes, while doing the transcribing, was already an act of data processing. It involved making lists with keywords, adding short labels and clear references for easy retrieval, covering all possible sorts of data – from interviews, observational data as documented in field reports and field notes, and secondary (mostly textual) data, such as publications, news reports, and documents.⁸⁷ Specific statements, themes, and narratives became increasingly noticeable the more data were examined and sorted; in the course of this particular phase, the coding became apparently more obvious, though never quite self-evident.⁸⁸

...qualitative research can be seen as a fundamentally interpretative activity... (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000: 8).

After reading and re-reading materials already with certain concepts or themes in mind, the processing was swiftly reaching a concluding stage. The data were categorised according to a number of key themes and concepts as most distinctive features for further interpretation. The result of this exercise was actually bringing the data down to five categories or themes, as presented in a table in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in section 5.1 *Themes*:

Themes in 'African management' discourse in South Africa
(1) Humanistic aspects
(2) Participatory decision-making
(3) 'Eccentric' organisational principles
(4) Afrocentric management, 'Africanness' and Africa
(5) Personal life stories & political engagement

In subsequent sections of Chapter 5, these general themes were 'unpacked' and broken down into specific aspects, and – importantly – breaking through and cross-cutting the order of how data were

⁸⁶ Recurrently, I replayed the interviews, put my headphones on and cycled on my way to the university and again when going home at the end of the day, listening over and again. More often than I actually wished, I wondered why some statements had just slipped my attention during an interview and why I had not gone into certain issues more. The only excuse I could think of was that I must have been concentrating already on the next interview topic or was experiencing time pressure, being anxious to cover most relevant topics.

⁸⁷ In the course of the process of data processing and interpretation, I was exposed to a software programme especially developed for qualitative research (Atlas.ti). By that time, most of the data processing had already been completed.

⁸⁸ The initial phase of data processing and interpretation was actually most difficult and most time consuming. When the themes became increasingly manifest, it was easier to decide on categorising and identifying relationships and deviations from dominant patterns.

presented in chapters 3 and 4, which was largely based on chronological order, focussing on specific events, individuals and institutions. Through a detailed discussion of all five categories respectively, the foundation was laid for deconstructing ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. Eventually, there was not just one definite central element, to which all other codes could be related. If there were, it would have been the *ubuntu* concept, but that alone did not adequately capture the various elements that are discursively associated with ‘African management’, but *not necessarily* enclosed within the *ubuntu* concept in a general sense. Thus, the concept had to be dissected into various components and analysed in relation to each other.

Using *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ as sensitising concepts, did not imply the application of Grounded Theory Method in a very strict sense. When preparing the research design for instance, it was actually quite clear from the start that *identity formation* (identification) and *globalisation* were key concepts in the research, although the former became more pronounced in the course of the research than the latter concept. The fourth central theme in the overview – namely ‘Africanness’ (mentioned along with ‘Afrocentric management’ and ‘Africa’) – is *all about identity*. However, *not everything* is about identity (and belonging) alone, as argued in Chapter 10 *An interpretative framework*.

Two additional issues demand further consideration in this chapter on research methodology. These are (a) questions about ontology and epistemology, and (b) ‘African management’ as discourse.

Questions of ontology and epistemology

After all, *what* can we know about ‘African management’ in South Africa? This is a question of ontology, articulating the *essence* of the academic enquiry (Mason 1996: 10).

Ontology asks what sorts of things there are in the world that we can know (O’Reilly 2005: 49).

In brief, the essence in this case is the cultural idiom; the ways people define the phenomenon and attribute meaning to it. The next question is *how* we can get to know about the sort of things we want to understand about ‘African management’ in South Africa. Can we only know about this phenomenon by means of what people say and write about it? This is a question about theory of knowledge: “How it is we can know anything about the world?” (O’Reilly 2005: 47). In other words, *what might represent knowledge* of the entities or social ‘reality’ to be investigated? In epistemological terms, written and spoken texts represent knowledge about ‘African management’ discourse, as they count as ‘evidence’ demonstrating knowledge. In other words, discourse can be considered *as data* (Wetherell; Taylor & Yates 2001). Thus, discourse analysis concerns the study of text, both in written and spoken forms:

Discourse theory and analysis cover the study of all types of written text and spoken interaction (formal and informal), with particular attention to the functions served by language and the implications of particular linguistic constructions. It asks how categories are flexibly articulated in the course of certain sorts of talk and writing to accomplish particular goals such as exclusions, blamings, or justifications (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 350).⁸⁹

A similar description of discourse analysis was applied to this research, as the study considers extensively both books, articles and interviews published and spoken words in interviews, at presentations, workshops, and speeches. Text, however, was not all that counted. In conjunction with texts, ideas, utterances relating to belonging and identity, narratives and discourse as carriers of knowledge and meaning, however, simultaneously social actions, behaviour, habits, values, symbols, and artefacts have to be considered.

Assumingly, text alone leaves much room for interpretation and speculation. When you consider language in context, as enacted, as lived, as expressed and experienced – for instance observing gestures, body language, manner of speech (e.g. loud/soft, hesitant/firm, slow/fast, accent), physical environment, decoration, clothing, art, etcetera – data are brought to life, which provides further focus for interpretation.

Text needs contextualisation in various forms when trying to ‘get to the meaning’ of what is said and written, understanding ‘human meaning making’ in relation to this particular issue. Words (language), physical objects and deeds (acts and interactions) are symbolic manifestations of identity, culture (sense-making) and power (Kamsteeg & Wels 2004: 10). In ontological terms, ‘African management’ discourse is ‘a sort of thing’ that we can know, or at least (try to) examine and understand by exploring and interpreting cultural manifestations that are apparently associated with ‘indigenous’ Afrocentric perspectives on management and organisations in South Africa. Labelling ‘African management’ as discourse calls for a brief elaboration on this concept, as applied in the context of this research.

‘African management’ as discourse

The concept of discourse is often associated with the work of Michel Foucault, who noted that to be able to speak and write ‘properly’ is highly regarded in contemporary society (IJsseling 1979: 71). Spoken and written words are not only respected, but also feared. Words are related with power and with the notion what is ‘normal’ or what is not. Language thus understood intends to *consolidate* or *change* a given situation. Discourse therefore has ideological and political implications: when what is being said or written is believed not to be in accordance with accepted rules and norms, it can be

⁸⁹ The authors draw here on Parker (1992) and Potter & Wetherell (1987). The latter’s definition has been widely accepted, as asserted by Grant; Keenoy, *et al.* (1998a) on page 2, adding that ‘semiotic forms’ (e.g. cultural artefacts) are in this regard increasingly combined with language.

considered suspect. Not so much *the words* matter, but *the meanings* ascribed to these words. In Foucault's view, meanings have 'an expiry date'. In a different timeframe or in another context, they may take on completely different connotations. Discourse is constantly being constructed and leads to new events, situations, or realities. There is no beginning and no end. No one 'controls' a discourse, nobody is able to oversee it as a whole, or to predict to where it leads. It can be imagined as a network of interrelated statements and articulations with certain truth claims, as discursive formations that constitute elements of a discourse. The author of a text has no control over how his or her words will be discursively used or appropriated. The discursive impact of text depends largely on dissemination, in which the media play an essential role. From this follows that 'African management' discourse could impossibly be identified with one author only, for instance with Lovemore Mbigi. Moreover, Mbigi too draws on many sources in a long discursive historical development of ideas. Many texts along similar ideological lines have been produced before his texts. With this in mind, it makes this research an attempt of deconstruction, in the sense of dissecting the main significant streams of influencing that Mbigi and fellow 'African management' protagonists have been drawing on. An ethnographic approach of deconstructing 'African management' discourse requires critical questioning and thorough empirical research, inspired by what Achille Mbembe wrote, lamenting over a lack of 'radical questioning' in African studies:

Ethnographic description, distinguishing between causes and effects, asking the subjective meaning of actions, determining the genesis of practices and their interconnections: all this is abandoned for instant judgment, often factually wrong, always encumbered with the off-the-cuff representations (Mbembe 2001: 9).

A great deal of this deconstruction effort concerns an ideational history or, in Foucauldian terms, a genealogy of ideas.⁹⁰ On the face of it, 'African management' can be characterised as a (management) philosophy, or rather as a philosophical concept in relation to management, leadership and organisation. However, considered in specific South African contexts and as part of broader Afrocentric discursive formations, it can be best approached as discourse. A (management) philosophy would be a rather neutral term, even too much 'middle-of-the-road'-like, as if it did not really matter. 'African management' philosophy or discourse is however not entirely 'risk-free'. Rather it is *a statement*, with specific truth claims and demands, contesting a tacit consensus over dominant perspectives on management and organisation in South Africa.

⁹⁰ Perhaps, also the term 'archaeology of ideas' is applicable here, following the explanation on pages 50-51 by Vintges (2003) of Foucault's archaeological period (1960-1969) and his genealogical period (1970-1976). In his former work, Foucault chronologically analysed the history of knowledge and the evolution of sciences, drawing attention to discontinuities in seemingly stable structures, suggesting "how rhetoric can be studied and understood in its relationship with power and knowledge" (page 6 and back cover text in Foucault (2006 [1969])). In the latter period, Vintges asserts, Foucault investigated the origins of particular social phenomena in relation to modern forms of power and the role of the sciences in this context.

Discourses help test the truth claims of opinions (and norms), which the speakers no longer take for granted. [...] Because of their communicative structure, discourses do not compel their participants to act. [...] The output of discourses [...] consists in recognition or rejection of problematic truth claims. Discourses produce nothing but arguments (Habermas 1973: 168).⁹¹

All speech is oriented towards the idea of truth in Habermas's view, and every speech act implicitly makes a claim to validity. As Jürgen Habermas put it, "discourses do not compel their participants to act." They are materially founded, though not determined. Habermas might have dreamt of an ideal community and 'an ideal form of life' without domination. This would allow for forms of discourse with a genuine degree of symmetry between concerned participants, in which there is no other compulsion but the compulsion of argumentation itself. This ideal community however does not exist. Control of discourses and 'discursal practices' is integral to the reproduction of inequalities (Wright 1994: 25). In line with theories of critical discourse analysis, ideology is seen as "an important aspect of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations" (Wodak 2001: 10). As noted in chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis, 'African management' discourse has been repeatedly ridiculed. Partially, this could be interpreted from a hegemonic position:

It requires constant discursal 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).

Discourse and social practice can be "considered as two sides of the same coin," shaping each other (Pijnenburg 2004: 34). Therefore, this research is only valid as a momentary account, since 'African management' discourse is evolving further. It may eventually become a dominant perspective, or taken over by other developments or it may even cease to exist at some point.

In addition, time and location, in which the researcher places himself, definitely biases observations and hence eventual interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. In this case, the 'field' concerns a huge country with a vast corporate sector, public sector, and non-governmental sector with numerous organisations that may somehow affiliate with 'African management' discourse, to varying degrees. Among all these potential research participants and target organisations for research, there are gigantic differences, in terms of cultural orientations, historical backgrounds, organisational objectives, operational scale, financial position, staffing, gender balance, average age, educational levels, networks, etcetera. This thesis merely concerns the results of a collection of data and observations during a limited period, in a relatively small crosscutting section of the entire field.

⁹¹ As cited on page 201 in Bernstein (1976).

The political economy of 'African management' discourse

Power is an indispensable factor in interpreting 'African management' discourse, in different forms and time-frames: power relations in a historical perspective, power relations in a 'post-apartheid' context in the political domain and in the economic sector, and power at an organisational level.

Firstly, it is important to consider the impact of power relations under colonialism and apartheid, as argued in Chapter 6. From the 17th century onwards, particular concepts and principles 'from outside' were brought to South Africa. These became – not seldom forcefully and with adaptations to varying degrees – common practice in South African social and political life and also in the domain of formal organisations, strongly influenced by colonial administrators, landowners, entrepreneurs, and apartheid ideologues. Colonialism and apartheid have shaped social divisions between 'haves' and 'have-nots' a great deal and have shaped labour relations, often coinciding with (fabricated) ethnic lines of division. This had far-reaching cultural and psychological consequences, on identities, on notions of being 'European' or 'white' and on notions of being 'native', 'Bantu' or 'black', and subsequently on organisational cultures, both on workers and on management. The impact of 350 years of 'unfree labour' has – among many other factors – eventually led to a massive liberation struggle. In this context, new ideas emerged of how a 'post-apartheid' society would look like: politically, economically, culturally, and in terms of management and organisation. Consequently, notions of an 'African management' philosophy were conceived as part of this forward-looking exercise. Arguably, the historical dimension of colonialism and apartheid is very relevant in interpreting 'African management' discourse, and yet in contemporary scholarly studies on this issue largely ignored. Therefore, it is important to envision also the 'pre-discourse' era, before 'African management' was launched in South Africa, and before it might ever become 'the dominant':

...what we have to observe is in effect a *pre-emergence*, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be more confidently named (Williams 1977: 126).⁹²

Secondly, in the post-apartheid era power comes into play in other forms. When it became clear who would seize political power after the demise of apartheid, it was still to be seen how economic power would be divided under the new dispensation and how the new political elite would react. After 1994, the business community had to adjust to the new political realities in the country.⁹³ Clearly, the outcome of these power struggles would have major consequences for the national economy, labour relations and – most likely – for firms and organisational cultures as well. Beside

⁹² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999) discussed in Chapter 4 of her book "the history of the present as differentiating event" and "a power-analysis of cultural dominants," pointing at "the repression of emergent heterogeneity" (Spivak 1999: 312, 314). In this context, she also cited from Williams (1977).

⁹³ Chapter 7 of this thesis deals specifically with the process of business transformation.

the quest for economic power, 'affirmative action' became a big issue.⁹⁴ The South African government took measures in an attempt to proactively redress inequalities in the labour market. This touched on a number of sensitive issues of the past: on notions of 'race' (ethnicity) and (reversed?) racism. How these processes relate to the emergence and evolution of 'African management' discourse is analysed in the following chapters.

Thirdly, when 'African management' perspectives are considered within organisational contexts, there is a focus on power at a micro level. How do South African firms for instance deal with the legacies of the past, with a 'neurosis of victimisation', with cultural diversity, and with challenges and threats of globalisation and liberalisation? How can these issues be addressed from an 'African management' perspective, and in whose interest it is to do so? 'African management' consultants, who managed to attain a particular niche in the South African market of management consultancy, claim to have the answers. This makes management consultancy (and management *gurus*?) in this regard an interesting field of research.

In reply to the question why particular business leaders, top-managers, and management consultants adhere to an 'African management' approach, this research identifies rather differentiated patterns. In several instances, life histories and particularly a person's political affiliations play can be a factor in identifying with such an approach.⁹⁵ In other cases, becoming part of an 'African management' community seems to be primarily an identity-related affair, sometimes with a touch of spiritual and religious motives.⁹⁶ Otherwise, and sometimes simultaneously, business opportunities, and other strategic and opportunistic considerations are important pull factors.

In a Foucauldian sense, identification with 'African management' philosophy is arguably only to a limited extent a matter of free individual choice. Rather, it corresponds with power processes beyond the individual and institutional level. In other words, a discourse can be attributed a certain power that as it were compels individuals. One does not just 'pick' a discourse voluntarily, but a discourse absorbs its followers. Furthermore, it is important to note that 'African management' discourse is not necessarily 'a black thing'. For instance, various ('white') entrepreneurs and management 'visionaries' of Afrikaner origin have been 'triggered' by Afrocentric management discourse. For certain reasons, which will become clear in this thesis, the discourse has got hold of them as well.

In this thesis, a variety in terminology was chosen and the various terms are used almost

⁹⁴ These issues are discussed in 6.2 *Transition and the role of business* and 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid*.

⁹⁵ This point is reviewed specifically in Chapter 10, section 10.2 *Management strategies for business transformation*.

⁹⁶ The identity-related motive is examined specifically in 10.3 *'Africanisation' and post-apartheid identity formation*.

interchangeably – for example, ‘African management’ *discourse*, ‘African management’ *philosophy*, ‘African management’ *thought*, etcetera – acknowledging but not over-emphasising the ideological notion, which is often affiliated with the term discourse. When defining the latter concept, I sympathise with Foucauldian interpretations, reading discourse in terms of dominance and resistance (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000: 154). Additionally, prominent notions of hegemony and antagonisms that Laclau and Mouffe associate with discourse are likewise helpful in understanding the concept further, underlining its strong ideological quality (Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Laclau 1988).⁹⁷ However, I do not constantly use the concept of discourse in this thesis in a highly ideological sense, as I chose not to exclude other approaches beforehand. For instance, ‘narrative’ could be a practical term as well, as it is apparently more flexible in use, offering space for multiple interpretations in writing ethnography. On the other hand, the ideologically neutral character of ‘narrative’ could pose limitations. Instead, then ‘critical tales’ should be a better form:

...it is increasingly difficult to argue that fieldwork alone is sufficient to properly grasp the life situation of a studied group. Much criticism of ethnography has, in fact, been directed at what is seen by some as its parochial, romantic, and limited vision – its blindness to the political economy in which all groups must swim to survive (Van Maanen 1988: 127-128).

This thesis pays attention to the political economy of ‘African management’ discourse, considering its material basis, and the cultural and the symbolic (Mbembe 2001: 5-6). The endeavour of deconstruction could thus be understood as a ‘critical tale’.

In addition to a self-reflexive examination of the research as a whole, three important aspects have been discussed in more detail: the problem of non-anonymity of informants and data; problematising the role of an ‘associate’ of the key research participant, and more generally the research process. With this rather elaborate discussion, the reader will hopefully have a thorough insight into how the research was conducted and be sufficiently assured that the particular methodological challenges were dealt with in a qualified and responsible manner.

In the following four chapters, the empirical findings with regard to ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa are presented. In chapters 3 and 4 these are presented by way of *flows*, through three ‘dimensions of culture’: (1) emergence and externalisation, (2) distribution and (3) utilisation. Subsequently, Chapter 5 discusses a number of general themes that characterise the discourse and some variable features, which leads to the observation of inconsistencies and contradictory elements.

⁹⁷ A very helpful introduction to the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe is *Laclau and Mouffe’s Theory of Discourse* by Howarth (2000). Furthermore, Gillian Hart (2002) gives an interesting discussion of Laclau’s notion of hegemony, in Chapter 2 *Re-Placing Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa*.

Chapter 3: ‘African management’ *flows*: emergence and distribution

Introduction

In this chapter and the next, the concept of ‘African management’ is explored as *process*, in which its very own ‘cradle’ is located, subsequently following its *flows* through the South African world of management and organisation.⁹⁸ Furthermore, its ‘pre-emergence’ phase is considered, looking at power relations and processes, before the concept was known.

Since the early 1990s this subject has received quite some attention from media and academia. Yet, the presence of ‘African management’ approaches is thus far relatively marginal. As will be argued, this particular management vision could be understood as a counter-discourse, denouncing a colonial mindset, contesting mainstream perspectives to management and leadership in organisations in South Africa and challenging institutional orthodoxies in many ways. Furthermore, it can also be seen in the context of a long historical process, as a response to power and labour relations and corresponding social and organisational climates since the 17th century. This historical dimension will be discussed in Chapter 6 *Colonialism, apartheid and transition*.

This chapter shows the capacity of this Afrocentric management vision to operate within the context of a modern capitalist business environment. Striving towards integration and assimilation with dominant mainstream management approaches is a feature that seems inherent to this particular vision. As the reader will see later more clearly, the search for recognition and integration can be linked to processes of identity formation. Whether or not this would make ‘African management’ practices very different or more effective is probably not the biggest concern: its appeal to one’s sense of belonging and ‘Africanness’ seems far more relevant to its followers.

In my view, ‘African management’ philosophy has evolved into the construction of a symbolic community around the themes of ‘Africanness’ and management/leadership, as “symbolism does not so much carry meaning as allow people to impute meaning to it” (Cohen 1985: 71). Thus, the possibility arises of sharing similar “symbolic forms for the expression of belief [...] and yet each [person] be expressing quite different things” (Cohen 1985: 73). The apparent paradox of a counter-discourse has not proved counterproductive to an almost simultaneously emerging *ubuntu* industry, as a significant niche in the market for management consultancy, a subcategory of what could be labelled as ‘otherness industry’ (Schipper 1995: 9).

⁹⁸ The introduction of Chapter 1 explains how ‘African management’ discourse can be seen in terms of ‘flows of culture’, as described in terms of ‘dimensions of culture’, using the terminology of Ulf Hannerz (1992).

There is a whole range of values, assumptions, narratives, and leadership conceptions that are associated with ‘African management’ philosophy, such as humaneness, spirituality, optimism, emotionality, equity, and liberation. However, people’s utterances generally lack definite, un-ambivalent conceptions, values, and behaviour. Exploring variations in people’s statements on a certain issue can be an even more exciting task than speculating about the ‘real’ idea. It is only fair to expect that people are somewhat inconsistent. The interesting question here is on what occasions the different attitudes are expressed, how and in what contexts utterances are constructed, and what functions they fulfil (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000: 202-206).

This chapter about ‘African management’ discourse as process is divided into three parts. The first section deals with the phase of emergence and externalisation. A reconstruction is made of how an ‘African management’ vision came into existence.⁹⁹ Subsequently, section 3.2 describes the social distribution of ‘African management’ discourse. Here, the major ‘distributors’ are presented that played a role in disseminating and popularising this particular approach.¹⁰⁰ Subsequently, the third part deals with utilisation, with a focus on the central role of Prof. Lovemore Mbigi.

In Chapter 5, the various themes and deviations as observed in this chapter will be assessed and analysed, and in addition, critiques on ‘African management’ philosophy will be discussed.

3.1 Emergence and externalisation

When looking at ‘African management’ discourse as process, three dimensions of culture can be distinguished: (1) emergence and externalisation, (2) distribution and (3) utilisation. This section deals with emergence and externalisation, and section 3.2 with distribution. Utilisation is considered in Chapter 4.

The headlines of the South African newspaper Sunday Times on 21 March 1999 brought a somewhat unusual report: *‘Darkies’ and ‘Boere’ slug it out*. The subtitle read “...motivational speaker gets lifelong racists to kiss and make up in Post Office’s mass bonding session.” The concerned motivational speaker was Professor Lovemore Mbigi. Born in Zimbabwe, from age three to sixteen years old he was largely brought up by his grandmother who lived in the rural areas. She happened to be the Shona Rain Queen, a medium of the spirit of Dembetembe, responsible for the well-being of the Vahera people (Mbigi 1994: 78). From his grandmother he received his ‘tribal training’ and learned about local Shona traditions and oral histories.¹⁰¹ Mbigi has become one of the

⁹⁹ Admittedly, this is my interpretation of how ‘African management’ discourse came into existence in South Africa, based on a variety of primary and secondary sources. Therefore, I refer to it as a reconstruction.

¹⁰⁰ The logic of these ‘dimensions of culture’ was explained in the introduction of Chapter 1.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 28 June 2003.

best-known representatives of ‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa. The following sections describe how he and fellow creative thinkers became involved in this ‘business’.

3.1.1 The South African Management Project

Besides Lovemore Mbigi, Ronnie Lessem was a key person in the emergence of an ‘African management’ perspective. Ronnie was a son of Abraham Lessem, who had founded a manufacturing company in the mid-20th century in what then was Rhodesia. He studied at *Harvard Business School* and obtained his PhD at *City University* in London. Lessem became a lecturer at the *University of Zimbabwe*, where Mbigi was his ‘brightest student’ at the time. Mbigi liked to engage in fierce debates, displaying his scepticism about ‘western management’ and challenging Lessem to consider African concepts. This inspired Lessem to develop African management ideas. Approximately, in 1991 after moving from Zimbabwe to South Africa, Lessem got involved in a ‘think tank’ on management issues, which was called the *South African Management Project* (SAMP). He desperately wanted to invite Mbigi to this ‘think tank’, because of the latter’s unconventional views on management in an African environment and perhaps even more because of his experimenting as director and business consultant in Zimbabwe, allegedly inspired by his traditional Shona upbringing and his background as ‘a peasant boy’. Apparently, Mbigi is proud to be called ‘a tribesman’.

Search for a contextual approach

SAMP was initiated at *Wits Business School* (WBS) of the *University of Witwatersrand* in Johannesburg. Its purpose was:

...to articulate and develop approaches to management that are relevant to the context in which South African business leaders are and will be managing their operations in the future (Binedell 1994: 11).

SAMP organised several activities such as workshops, lectures, debates, and research. Peter Christie was one of the initiators. His motivation concerned the search for a contextual approach to management in South Africa. Previously, he had worked with *Liberty Life* (financial services) and *Ford Motor Company* in South Africa. At some point, in about 1984, the *Ford* head-office in the United States sent over American consultants to teach South African managers about ‘Japanese management’ techniques, such as *Kaizen* and *Quality Circles*. Christie: “We had a bunch of Americans coming to teach a bunch of South Africans how to be like a bunch of Japanese.”¹⁰² He found this rather bizarre and inappropriate; at the same time, many workers of *Ford Motor Company* in Port Elizabeth were losing their jobs.

¹⁰² Interview with Peter Christie on 28 April 2004.

Why should we, the workers argued, solve your quality of work problems while you cause a few quality of life problems in return! [...] Certainly, the management of our company did not seem to show much interest beyond the retrenchment packages offered to the retrenched workers. So much for the wisdom of Americans telling Africans to be Japanese (Christie 1996: 7-8)!

Christie felt that the possibilities of developing a locally embedded management approach should be looked into that would fit a specific South African situation. He was inspired by the work of the anthroposophists Rudolf Steiner and Bernard Lievegoed, who basically believed in spontaneous development in organisations, not too much bothered with strict rules, procedures, and formal structures. Around 1987, Christie and Lessem became befriended through their ‘anthroposophy network’.¹⁰³ As a part-time lecturer at WBS, Christie had several discussions with colleagues, especially Nick Binedell, who became director in 1992. Binedell was immediately interested, since “the management of African organisations has traditionally been largely neglected by the mainstream business literature” (Christie; Lessem *et al.* 1994: Preface).¹⁰⁴

Well, you know, at least I know British management, and I know American management and I studied a bit of Japanese management. These are three completely different management systems. What is ours? What is the southern style? And what drives the southern style?¹⁰⁵

Binedell managed to raise some funds and then the ball started to roll. *Gemini Consulting*, a global management consulting firm, and insurance company *Southern Life* extended financial support to the initiative.¹⁰⁶ As Christie and Binedell described it in retrospect, the SAMP initiative came into existence ‘almost by coincidence’, at a time when the business community was very confused.¹⁰⁷

In the 1980s, Binedell joined the *Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee* (JODAC), an affiliate of the UDF. This was quite an unusual thing to do for a faculty member of a prestigious business school. Furthermore, he used to be a member of the *Social Issues Task Group*.¹⁰⁸ This group looked particularly at political issues in relation to organisational dynamics, connecting politics to managerial theory, and talked about union strikes and the crippling of the economy. They discussed possible solutions to deal with the emergency situation in South Africa, for example the introduction of ‘share schemes’ and participative management methods. According to Binedell, to some extent business was ahead of government at the time, realising that there had to be some sort

¹⁰³ Interview with Ronnie Lessem on 23 June 2004.

¹⁰⁴ More recently, this was also acknowledged by Stella Nkomo (2006), in her inaugural lecture at the *University of South Africa*, 7 March 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Nick Binedell on 31 July 2003.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Nick Binedell on 31 July 2003 and with Peter Christie on 24 October 2003.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with Nick Binedell on 31 July 2003 and 2 September 2003 and with Peter Christie on 24 October 2003 and 28 April 2004.

¹⁰⁸ Other members of this group that Nick Binedell mentioned were Peter Brews, Norman Chorn, Loet Douwes-Dekker, Linda Human, and Ellen Zimblar.

of engagement with the unions: “Our concern was more about corporate management and conscientising South African executives, white managers, about how to engage in a South African or an African reality.”¹⁰⁹ These personal experiences – with JODAC, the *Social Issues Task Group*, and the *Consultative Business Movement* (CBM) – probably largely explained Binedell’s enthusiasm for the *South African Management Project* (SAMP).

Initially not culturalist

The need for a contextual approach to management and organisation in South Africa was to Peter Christie a leading idea to initiate SAMP. In his view, it was not necessary to make it ‘an African thing’. That came in later. Somewhat ironically, it was a small group of mostly white liberal South Africans who launched SAMP, from which eventually a specifically ‘African’ or Afrocentric perspective on management and leadership emerged.

For me, it was not so much a question of [African] culture initially. [...] ...why are we constantly copying from what is being done overseas [...] Now I do not know whether that had something to do with my whiteness as a South African [...] and the fact that I was white was completely incidental. [...] It was not out of a sense of injustice either. [...] It was not me thinking: I must do something good for these poor blacks [...].¹¹⁰

Therefore, initially the idea was to take aspects of ‘African culture’ into consideration, but not to the extent of developing a culturalist perspective on management and organisation.¹¹¹ However, that idea was to be inserted soon, once the *Theory of the African Firm* workshop was held.

3.1.2 Theory of the African Firm workshop

In 1992, a two-day workshop was organised in Johannesburg, called *Theory of the African Firm*. Supposedly, Nick Binedell came up with this title.¹¹² He felt that it was time to rethink

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Nick Binedell on 31 July 2003.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Peter Christie on 28 April 2004.

¹¹¹ The concept of culturalism in relation to ethnic identity discourse is discussed in chapters 8 and 9.

¹¹² Peter Christie thought that the title came from Binedell (interview 28 April 2004). The title shows striking resemblances with the titles of two novels. For instance, it reminds of *The Story of an African Farm* written by Olive Schreiner, first published in 1883. The novel is about a romantic affair between a British woman and a German shepherd’s son, which was against moral convention of the time: “*The Story of an African Farm* (1883) marks an early appearance in fiction of Victorian society’s emerging New Woman. The novel follows the spiritual quests of Lyndall and Waldo, who each struggle against social constraints in their search for happiness and truth: Lyndall, against society’s expectations of women, and Waldo against stifling class conventions. Written from the margins of the British empire, the novel addresses the conflicts of race, class, and gender that shaped the lives of European settlers in Southern Africa before the Boer Wars” (Source: www.broadviewpress.com/bvbooks.asp?BookID=600 [accessed 16 June 2006]). In addition and with some imagination, *Theory of the African Firm* could also be associated with *Animal Farm* of George Orwell (1946), as there are clearly allusions to management and organisation issues with a sense of togetherness (‘collectivist zeal’). However, things turned out for the worse in this novel: “When the downtrodden beasts of Manor Farm oust their drunken human master and take over management of the land, all are awash in collectivist zeal. Everyone willingly works overtime, productivity soars, and for one brief, glorious season, every belly is full. The animals’ Seven Commandment credo is painted in big white letters on the barn. Too soon, however, the pigs, who have styled themselves leaders by virtue of their intelligence, succumb to the temptations of privilege and power. ‘We pigs *‘African management’ in South Africa* Page 72 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

fundamentally organisation and management concepts in South Africa, emphasising the question of 'contextual relevance':

...what was very clear at the time was [...] that the dynamics of South Africa and African culture were not really being addressed in organisations.¹¹³

In his view, South Africa's economy could only be successful, if "society approves of the actions and role of business" (Binedell 1994: 9). The *Theory of the African Firm* workshop can be seen as the 'cradle' of the Afrocentric management debate in South Africa, a landmark in the establishment of an emergent local management discourse. The seed of 'African management' philosophy was sown and SAMP was its nursery. SAMP brought together a unique group of people with different backgrounds – academics, managers, and business consultants from South Africa and Zimbabwe – exchanging new ideas on 'how things could be done differently' in South African organisations. There were discussions about how changes in South African society would affect business and organisations, pleading for a (South) African way of leading organisations and managing people, inspired by 'African culture' and 'African philosophy'. Among the main contributors were Reuel Khoza, Albert Koopman, Ronnie Lessem, and Lovemore Mbigi.



Picture 1 Wits Business School in Johannesburg, allegedly the 'cradle' of 'African management' discourse in South Africa (Photo by Henk van den Heuvel)

SAMP invited Albert Koopman and Christo Nel, because they were known for their leading role in the *Consultative Business Movement* (CBM) that was engaging with the *African National Congress*

are brainworkers. The whole management and organisation of the farm depend on us. Day and night, we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples' " (Source: Amazon.co.uk Review on <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Animal-Farm-Fairy-George-Orwell/dp/0140126708> [accessed 17 July 2006]). If the latter association is correct, it leaves room for speculation why this title was chosen. Yet, another association is possible, namely with *Theory of African Literature*, a book written by Chidi Amuta about realism in 'the African novel', interpreted as being oppositional to imperialism, according to Gaylard (2005), pp. 19.

¹¹³ Interview with Nick Binedell on 31 July 2003.

in the late eighties.¹¹⁴ & ¹¹⁵ Binedell felt, that “Albert Koopman was really the originator of ideas that I thought really resonated authentically the South African story.”¹¹⁶

In 1991, Koopman published the book *Transcultural Management*, in which he described how he had tried in the 1980s to transform his company *Cashbuild*, a wholesale cash-and-carry retailer in building materials, by introducing participative management principles and changing its management philosophy. Ronnie Lessem described this philosophy as ‘industrial democracy’ (Koopman 1991: Foreword). Coming from an autocratic management style, it meant gradually opening up to employees and sensitising oneself as a manager with the workers’ concerns, frustrations, beliefs, and aspirations, while accepting the principle of equity between employers and employees. This aimed at increased intra-organisational trust levels by painstaking efforts of trial and error, divulging relevant information, joint responsibilities, responding to the demands of local communities, and sharing profits and losses.

‘Industrial democracy’ and ‘transculturalism’

As a self-made Afrikaner entrepreneur with hardly any formal education, Koopman identified himself as a ‘White African’.¹¹⁷ He was very eager to learn about ‘African culture’ (Koopman 1991: 60). Above all, so he claimed, this was merely because of personal interest, initially for his own personal evolution and enlightenment.¹¹⁸ Possibly, a crisis within his company *Cashbuild* in 1983 urged a different approach as well (Koopman; Nasser *et al.* 1987: 3; Bondi 1996: 180). Koopman wanted to know how workers were behaving and why and what work actually meant to them, trying to understand their motives.

With reference to culture, we are being forced to take account of the aspirations, expectations and relationships among people within a particular society rooted in its own value systems, rather than simply superimpose our value systems onto theirs. We are also being forced to recognize the difference between free enterprise, as an ideology, and the freedom to be enterprising, as a spiritual human value manifested in the nature of work within communities (Koopman 1991: 87-88).

For instance, Koopman wanted to know why his employees frequently visited a traditional healer and what they would experience there. Therefore, he decided to spend several days with a traditional healer. At the time, this was highly unusual. His (Afrikaner) family, for instance, strongly disapproved of such incidents.

Ubuntu is not simply a ‘bridge between cultures’, as it is ‘more of a spiritual process’,

¹¹⁴ Koopman and Nel were partners in the consultancy firm *Interdependence and Transformation in South Africa* (ITISA).

¹¹⁵ Chapter 6 of this thesis, section 6.2 *Transition and the role of business*, provides more background information on the *Consultative Business Movement* (CBM).

¹¹⁶ Interview with Nick Binedell on 31 July 2003.

¹¹⁷ In Chapter 5 of this thesis, section 5.1 *Themes*, the term ‘White African’ is discussed in more detail.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Albert Koopman on 26 June 2004.

Koopman said at a conference in 1991 in Midrand, organised by the *Black Management Forum* (BMF), the *Institute of Directors SA* (IODSA), and the *Economic Community of Southern Africa*. Koopman commented: “It is concerned with what is fair and unfair, rather than with what is right and wrong” (The Daily News, 11 November 1991). On 31 October 1991, Business Day reported about this conference: “African ethos should permeate business,” and a headline in the Sowetan of the same date said that it was a ‘call for humane business’. Koopman’s interpretation of ‘humane business’ – as tapping into the human consciousness of workers, sensitising to their basic assumptions and values, and then articulating these into ‘freedom of enterprising’ – expressed what he meant with the term ‘transculturalism’. Respectively, he despised the ‘us’-and-‘them’ divide between workers and management in his company. Trade unions did simply not offer what workers valued most, in Koopman’s view.

I wanted to offer an alternative to the trade union bureaucracy [...] The hearts of people [...] is not trade unionism. It is not power. Their search for identity is greater than the voice they have. [...] People are interested in how I can grow, what freedom I can have, what influence I can bring to bear, how I get respected as a human, how my dignity is preserved as a human, and unions do not give that. Unions do not talk of respect and dignity. “Hey man. More wages!” As if the whole world is a wage?¹¹⁹

Through ‘transcultural management’ and equity, Koopman wanted to bring ‘the purpose of work’ and ‘work as purpose’ together, giving meaning to people’s lives and their work, while recognising their values and needs.¹²⁰ The concept of ‘transcultural management’ suggested *universal applicability*, a universal principle of management, not exclusively designed for South African contexts. Others also talked of the importance of developing an ‘authentic genre’ of local management, and of the need to create an ‘own business identity’ (Lessem & Nussbaum 1996: 13).

The connection between Koopman and Mbigi a useful bond. Allegedly, Mbigi embodied the ‘southern spirit’ and Koopman showed practical applications.¹²¹ Lessem assessed *Cashbuild*’s experiences as ‘a truly South African company’ and the ‘most profound fusion of North and South’ that has never been repeated ever since.¹²² Symbolically speaking, ‘the Afrikaner’ would have the potential of bridging the gap between ‘North’ and ‘South’ in South African business, according to Lessem:

There is no English South African, who has a real feel for Africa. [...] They [i.e. ‘English’ South Africans] are constitutionally incapable [to have a real feel for Africa], I find.

To Lessem, the renowned storyteller Laurens van der Post was the best example to illustrate that Afrikaners – as opposed to ‘English’ South Africans – would be able to appreciate the richness

¹¹⁹ Interview with Albert Koopman on 26 June 2004.

¹²⁰ Koopman insisted on the term ‘equity’: “Equality is a myth,” so he stated (interview 26 June 2004).

¹²¹ Ronnie Lessem claimed to have brought Koopman and Mbigi together (interview 23 June 2004).

¹²² Interview with Ronnie Lessem on 23 June 2004.

of cultural diversity and capable of reconciling northern and southern cultural orientations. Van der Post profoundly treasured the ‘wonderful inheritance of other cultures’ in South Africa: “[It is] my excitement of getting to know new idioms of beauty, as I call it. Every race is a new exercise in beauty.”¹²³

SAMP’s *Theory of the African Firm* workshop in 1992 was principally the starting point of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. Particularly, once publications started entering the market of business and management literature, one could say that the ‘African management’ concept was made public in South Africa.

3.1.3 The concept is launched

With the publication *African management: Philosophies, Concepts and Applications* coming out of the 1992 *Theory of the African Firm* workshop, ‘African management’ was launched as a ‘new’ concept. The edited volume was first released in 1993. A book review in *The Natal Witness* (27 July 1994) with the title *Dealing with an African problem in African ways*, stated:

The book deals with some of the knotty problems every company hits its head against such as worker productivity – what makes some workers inspired and motivated and others not? – the cultural clashes that we constantly encounter in our workplaces; and the strange synthesis we have in this country of American business practices, German and Japanese ideas and the underlying layer of African humanism.

This was exactly the way, in which Reuel Khoza approached the issue. To him, the notion of ‘African culture’ was pertinent in the search for a contextual approach in leadership and management. He justified this as follows:

Europeans would be crazy to behave as though they were not European; Americans and Japanese would come across as both funny and phoney if they tried to be anything other than American and Japanese respectively. Similarly Africans, in our particular case, South Africans, had better stop behaving as though they were an outpost of Europe or somebody else. We have to get to know ourselves and begin to use our existential reality as a departure point (Khoza 1994: 118).

An underlying characteristic in this description is the idea that each country has – or should have – a clearly distinguishable national management approach. In other words, Khoza seemed to assume the notion of bounded culture. This view is, however, questionable.¹²⁴ As probably the first one in South Africa, Khoza introduced the idea of *ubuntu* in relation to management, in an attempt to establish a connection between ‘African philosophy’ and management practice in South Africa.

¹²³ This is a citation from Laurens van der Post in *The Global Businessphere*, a video produced by Knowledge Resources (1994). J.D.F. Jones (2001) wrote a book on his life and work: *Teller of Many Tales: The Lives of Laurens van der Post*. This critical publication puts Lessem’s abundant admiration for the Afrikaner storyteller in a quite different perspective. Chapter 7 in *From Hunter to Rainmaker: The Southern African Businessphere* by Ronnie Lessem (1996) is dedicated especially to Van der Post; Chapter 8 deals with Koopman’s idea of ‘transcultural management’.

¹²⁴ The notion of bounded culture(s) is reviewed in relation to ethnicity in Chapter 9 of this thesis, in section 9.1 ‘Race’ and ethnic identity discourse.

The COMMUNITY CONCEPT of management has a strong philosophical base in the concept of *UBUNTU*. *Ubuntu* is a concept that brings to the fore images of supportiveness, cooperation, and solidarity, i.e. communalism. It is the basis of a social contract that stems from, but transcends the narrow confines of the nuclear family to the extended kinship network, the community. With diligent cultivation it should be extendable to the business corporation (Khoza 1994: 118).

Mbigi produced at least two books featuring *ubuntu* and management in their titles (e.g. Mbigi & Maree 2005 [1995] and Mbigi 1997). Later on, Mbigi claimed that he had actually introduced and branded this concept, although he acknowledged Khoza for bringing up the Zulu term.¹²⁵ Mbigi has vigorously attempted to bring *ubuntu* to life in a management context; he became publicly associated with the term. Judge Albie Sachs even tried to turn it into a verb, as in “*Ubuntuizing* business practice and business life” (Sachs 1996: 153). However, using the *ubuntu* concept in the latter way has not found many followers. Other African terms, such as *isivivane* (partnership) or *inhlonipho* (respect and dignity), would similarly represent important values in ‘African management’ thought (Mthembu 1996), but have not been accepted as key concepts in ‘African management’ vocabulary with a similar recognition and popularity as *ubuntu*.

In 1996, two more books came out of the *South African Management Project*. One was *Sawubona Africa: Embracing four worlds in South African management*, edited by Ronnie Lessem and Barbara Nussbaum. Sponsors were *Eskom, Gencor, Murray & Roberts* and *Nampak* (Lessem & Nussbaum 1996: 13). The other publication was *From Hunter to Rainmaker: The Southern African Businessphere* (Lessem 1996). Once SAMP had secured a fair amount of funding from the business sector and the SAMP research team could be expanded, it was possible to produce and release these two publications. Then, Barbara Nussbaum joined the team.¹²⁶ Beside her, the research team consisted of Christie and Lessem, with the endorsement of Binedell as WBS Director. Mbigi had met Nussbaum when he worked with a company called *Nampak* in South Africa. He wanted to involve ‘a creative person’ in the team who did ‘not buy into the business model’.¹²⁷ Nussbaum worked at WBS between 1994 and 1997, doing research and editorial work for the project.

The two additional publications of 1996 elaborated on issues discussed at the 1992 workshop, to which Ronnie Lessem added his ‘four-world model’. In his view, this reflected corporate cultures and business realities in South Africa, where ‘southern’ and ‘eastern’ orientations would be less prominent than ‘western’ and ‘northern’ orientations.

...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 & Nussbaum 1996: 13)

¹²⁵ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 14 August 2003.

¹²⁶ Nussbaum was born in Zimbabwe and studied at the *London School of Economics* and completed a Masters in *Creative Arts Therapies* in the USA. Her area of expertise concerned music and dance, which she tried to integrate with leadership development.

¹²⁷ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 14 August 2003.

Lessem referred to *rationalism* as ‘the mind’ that he associated with the ‘northern world’; to *pragmatism* as ‘the body’ that he associated with the ‘western orientation’; to *integration* and *holism* as ‘the heart’ that he associated with the ‘eastern orientation’; to *humanism* as ‘the soul’ that he associated with the ‘southern perspective’. Together, the mind, the body, the heart, and the soul, constituted the four elements that management systems are made of, and which should be in balance in the ideal situation. According to Lessem, embracing all ‘four worlds of management’ – an integration of ‘western’, ‘northern’, ‘eastern’ and ‘southern’ – was something that not only the South African business community should take note of, but the whole world, in order to achieve a ‘full cultural heritage’ (Lessem & Nussbaum 1996: 38-43; Lessem 1996: 40-58).

Christie’s book *Stories from an Afman(ager)* (1996) can be seen as an off-shoot from the same initiative. He qualified it as a ‘storybook’ and not as a management textbook, emphasising the role of storytelling in organisations. He questioned ‘white male domination’ in enterprises, criticising ‘corporate culture vultures’ particularly among white male business leaders. The book referred abundantly to ‘African management’ ideas, such as Lessem’s ‘four-world model’ and the development of a ‘southern style’, principally taking local circumstances in South Africa as a starting point for thinking about management and organisation. This was simply demonstrated with the slogan: “Support *Orlando Pirates* instead of *Leeds United*” (Christie 1996: 146). This statement was an expression of the popular South African phrase ‘local is *lekker*’, favouring local over foreign, while playing jokingly with the general notion that soccer used to be seen as a ‘black man’s sport’ in South Africa.

Emergent management ideas on *ubuntu* do not halt at a national border. American media also noticed this phenomenon. For instance, when Barbara Nussbaum moved to the United States, she continued writing about ‘African management’ issues, introducing the *ubuntu* concept to an American public, e.g. by contributing to *Perspectives* and *Merchants of Vision*. These journals are affiliated with the *World Business Academy* based in California (Nussbaum 2003c; 2003a). Nussbaum’s articles were also published in *Resurgence* and *Reflections* (Nussbaum 2003b; 2003d).¹²⁸ She has set up her own website with, amongst other things, selected readings from *Sawubona Africa. Embracing four worlds in South African management* (Lessem & Nussbaum 1996).¹²⁹

¹²⁸ *Reflections* is published by the *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* and the *Society for Organizational Learning*. Peter M. Senge was a founding member of this society. He has promoted the concept of the ‘learning organisation’ that used ‘systems thinking’ as the main principle in organisational change and business strategy.

¹²⁹ See: www.barbaranussbaum.com [accessed 9 February 2006].

3.1.4 'Zulu versions' of 'African management' philosophy

Ever since 'African management' was established as a 'new concept' in South Africa's management, some authors also referred to it as the '*ubuntu* style of (participatory) management' (Prinsloo 1996) or 'the *ubuntu* system of management' (Versi 1998). Moreover, the term 'African management *movement*' was used, sometimes with a sense of admiration or – quite the opposite – in a rather disdainful way (Thomas & Schonken 1998; Maier 2002), or '*ubuntu* movement' (Jackson, T. 2004: 250).¹³⁰ The management '*ubuntu* movement' has grown bigger than just the organisers and participants of the SAMP workshop in 1992, and bigger than the readership of the books resulting from it.

Although Mike Boon was not one of the presenters at SAMP's *Theory of the African Firm* workshop in 1992, undoubtedly he can be identified as a member of the '*ubuntu* community'. Boon has definitely contributed to the promotion of *ubuntu* as a management concept in South Africa. He attended one of SAMP's seminars at *Wits Business School* in 1993, where Christie and Mbigi presented, as Christie later recalled. Christie was curious to get to know Boon, because he was one of the few people in the audience, who seemed outspokenly sympathetic to what they were talking about.¹³¹ In the following, Boon's concept of 'Interactive African leadership' is explored, and a few other perspectives, which could be characterised as 'Zulu' versions of Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa.

Interactive African leadership

Boon's personal experiences, particularly in the South African army, have supposedly had a large impact on the crystallisation of his leadership views. In his early twenties, he served in the army on and off from 1973 until 1980, fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with black soldiers. As a young officer, he was often engaged in combats in neighbouring countries, such as Angola, fighting Angolan forces and Cuban troops. This created a strong sense of interdependency, trust, and comradeship within the combat unit; in Boon's perception, 'race' became a far less important issue than in civilian apartheid society at the time. Upon his return to South Africa, he was increasingly getting upset with existing segregationist policies. Boon started having serious disagreements with family and friends, back home in Estcourt (Kwa-Zulu Natal).

When I got home, I got so angry with my own people that did not treat black people with respect. It was very confusing to me, that in the army you were fighting should to shoulder with fellow black soldiers,

¹³⁰ This thesis is appreciative of using the term 'movement' or 'community' – as in '*ubuntu* community in management' – because it matches the notion of the discursive (instead of rigid) use of 'African management' and *ubuntu* in relation to management and organisation in South Africa. Thus, 'African management' discourse can be treated in terms of 'communities of meaning'.

¹³¹ Interview with Peter Christie on 13 April 2004.

and in society, nobody knew about the war. That made me so angry. You were not supposed to talk about it. Then you could not even relate to black people in a normal way. I got so emotional about it, that I even started beating my old friends because of that. Gradually, I got disconnected from my own community. But I needed people.

Eventually, he broke with his community and went to see Zulu-speaking people in townships around Johannesburg. Boon felt more at ease with these people than with former friends and family 'back home'. This is how he came to learn more about Zulu people and their ways of life in the township. In the early 1980s, Mike Boon started his own marketing company after having worked for three years with a local branch of the German firm *Henkel*. They specialised in marketing in 'white areas' and in rural areas and other places where black people were living. Whenever *Henkel* could not get anybody to go into these areas, Mike Boon would volunteer to go there. His philosophy was that you have to get to know the local people and really have to try to communicate with them, to be able to sell a product. Boon called this 'face-to-face communication'. With this in mind and with just three years of marketing experience, he started his own company, which he later named *Group Africa of the Amavulandlela*.¹³² Marketing was its main thrust, based on the idea that you have to learn about the habits and values of your (potential) customers, and genuinely make contact with them. Boon called this 'experiential communication'.

This means you need a very diverse team, where everybody contributes from his own culture. The management only knew what it didn't know, so dependent on what the others had to contribute. However, that was something unknown in South Africa, where people were used to hide what they got. [...] While the townships were burning and the inhabitants were boycotting local businesses and burning cars if they found out that they were owned by whites, we moved in there to do business. In all that time, we lost only two vehicles.¹³³

Group Africa became a successful company (Boon 2003: 26). Within 17 years, it grew to about 20.000 employees worldwide, in Africa, Asia, North America, and in Europe. In the late 1990s, the company was taken over by the American firm IXP. In the year 2000, Boon established *Vulindlela Network*, a small-scale consultancy firm. *First National Bank* became its first major client.

Boon wrote a book about his leadership experiences that was published in 1996. He actually felt that it should have been published much earlier, since he felt at the time that there was 'a big need for it' among business leaders. He intended to introduce them to his perspective, giving "a bit of background on history and culture, but not too much, just enough to make them curious." In the book, Boon used 'African terms' (in Zulu) in relation to management, in addition to *ubuntu*, such as *umhlangano*, meaning discussion group, or interactive forum. The term *umhlangano* is a key concept in Boon's notion of interactive leadership.

¹³² AmaVulandlela is a Zulu word, which means 'pathfinders'.

¹³³ Interview with Mike Boon on 13 April 2004.

These groups involve everyone in the department, including managers and union officials. No one is exempt and nothing has greater priority. During these discussions, rank does not exist. All the participants are simply human beings bearing their humanity and listening to each other with dignity (Boon 1996: 90).

Despite the participatory and communalistic character of this approach, leadership can be a lonely affair, as Boon described it. Ultimately, the leader is supposed to take a decision, as everybody expects him or her to do so, but eventually very much on his own.

Leadership is lonely in any context, also in an African '*ubuntu*' setting. You are elected as a leader, you are given trust, but you are on top and have to take the responsibility, although you are surrounded by your councillors and advisers, people to help you, always people will look your way when some decision has to be taken. If you are not doing well and lose the trust of people, or if you misuse the powers that you have, the people will put you out of power and your place will be taken by someone else. But yes, it is lonely being a leader.¹³⁴

According to Boon's own information, altogether 22,000 copies of his book have been sold. Considering the limited size of the South African market for business and management literature, this is a quite impressive quantity. Next, the work of Phinda Madi will be considered that received considerable attention in the context of Afrocentric management visions in South Africa.

Shaka Zulu's lessons

Like Mike Boon, Phinda Mzwakhe Madi is generally associated with the '*ubuntu* community' in management. His book *Leadership lessons from emperor Shaka Zulu the Great* is often listed in the range of 'African management' literature (Madi 2000). There are, however, no records of Madi participating in SAMP activities, or any similar events, in which issues of local conceptions of leadership and management were debated.¹³⁵ Madi is a management consultant who is eager to "observe and learn from the best of South Africa's business leaders from all backgrounds" (Madi 2000: xi). Like many other 'African management' thinkers, such as Mike Boon, he longs for recognition of the 'heroes' of Africa's history:

I am simply a businessman and a writer who wants to serve some of the glories of Great Africans with the world (Madi 2000: xi).

Madi's book is not a management textbook, but rather a novel, and actually, like Peter Christie, Madi presented himself as a *storyteller* in the domain of leadership and management. In a foreword, the then Deputy-President of the Republic of South Africa, Jacob Zuma stated meaningfully:

There has been a noticeable albeit minute increase in literary contributions by African writers in the fields of leadership, strategy and aspects of management (Madi 2000: xiii).

¹³⁴ Interview with Mike Boon on 13 April 2004.

¹³⁵ No records i.e. no information was found in this research that gave reason to assume that Madi has been an active participant in public debates on 'African management' or related issues. Despite repeated efforts to establish contacts with Mr Madi, the researcher was not able to arrange an interview with him.

The book is about a diary that his great-grandfather had kept when he was a young journalist in the early 20th century. He had written down the memories and stories of a very old, lonely woman called Nobelungu, who was in fact – so the story goes – Princess Mnkabayi, Shaka Zulu’s aunt and daughter of Jama. Jama was Shaka Zulu’s grandfather (Madi 2000: 4). She lived in the same village as Madi’s great-grandfather. The diary’s story is recounted in the book. Finally, by coincidence, he talks about the diary with an important client, a chief executive officer of a large South African company, who happened to have the only other existing copy of the diary. In a subtle manner, the client was left with the tacit counsel to follow Shaka Zulu’s leadership lessons, and thus improving his performance and corporate reputation. Each chapter summarises an important leadership lesson, supposedly valid for today’s business practice and mostly phrased in warrior-like terms, such as “Know the battlefield (better than the enemy)” (Madi 2000: 93). Any reference to critical reflections on the potential dark sides to Shaka Zulu’s (style of) leadership is entirely absent in Madi’s narrative.¹³⁶

Zulu nationalism in management

Besides Mike Boon and Phinda Madi, a third author in a lineage of ‘Zulu versions’ of *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ philosophy could be mentioned, namely Mfuniselwa John Bhengu. Of the various books published since the early 1990s dealing with *ubuntu*, his work is in this regard noteworthy as well, as he paid special attention to introducing *ubuntu* in business practice (Bhengu 1996: 33-46). As a trained journalist and management consultant, the author paid his respect to Robert Sobukwe, the first president of the *Pan-Africanist Congress* (PAC). In 1959, the PAC broke away from the *African National Congress* (ANC) (Thompson 2001: 210-211). Bhengu seemed to position himself as a Zulu nationalist and unreserved Africanist, also by explicitly honouring Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the *Inkatha Freedom Party* (IFP). He committed himself to the promotion of *ubuntu* as a ‘nation-building concept’, preferring cultural diversity to ‘universal sameness’. Although Bhengu seemed less directly connected with ‘African management’ debates going on in Johannesburg at the time of writing, he drew a lot on Lovemore Mbigi, specifically where it concerns the issue of *ubuntu* in organisations, and mainly on other Afrocentric intellectuals, such as Ali Mazrui and George Ayittey. Bhengu’s book was published in 1996, in a period when a significant number of ‘African management’ publications were brought out. In this

¹³⁶ The potential dark sides to Shaka Zulu were, for instance, discussed in the book *The Ghost of Despotism: Shaka Zulu and the Psychology of Tyrannic Power* by Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries (2004). Kets de Vries argues that everyone has a dark side, which may particularly surface when acquiring a powerful position. Shaka Zulu features in the book as a model of despotic leaders of all times. Despotic behaviours may not only be harmful to leaders themselves, Kets de Vries argues, but to ‘the culture’ of an organisation as a whole. In Chapter 10, the author presents 15 ‘leadership lessons’ warning against the ‘destructive use’ of ‘terror’ and ‘narcism’ in organisations.

light, also Bhengu belongs, at least partially, to the ‘*ubuntu* community in management’.

Right at the heart of South Africa’s economic powerhouse Johannesburg, SAMP’s *Theory of the African Firm* workshop offered a unique platform in 1992 for proclaiming ideas that later became designated as ‘African management’. There were similar or alternative forms of externalisation in the same period, such as the conference in Midrand in October 1991, attended by approximately 200 delegates, where among others Albert Koopman and Junior Potloane (*Development Bank of Southern Africa*) spoke about incorporating *ubuntu* into management practices (Business Day, 31 October 1991). This event was a sign that ‘African management’ discourse was on the verge of being born. It had eventually a lesser weight, since there was not yet a tangible and lasting output in terms of papers and books. One could reasonably argue that the 1992 SAMP workshop constituted the cradle of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. Until that point in time, simply nobody else in business and academia had found it opportune to externalise such ‘unusual views’, although they may have been lingering for a while as internal ideas, ‘modes of thought’ and ‘entities and processes of the mind’, without being made public as yet (Hannerz 1992: 7). Apparently, before 1991 nobody had seriously attempted to start a debate on the topic of local management:

I think that most people did not understand the issue. So, it was not that people disagreed. It is that no one really ever thought about that. There was not so much controversy. There was scepticism, I think, and there was uncertainty, because no one raised this question much before. [...] *It was unusual* (Interview with Nick Binedell on 31 July 2003; italics added).

Once ‘African management’ philosophy had been externalised and made public, it created the ground for other developments in this field. The next interesting thing to see is how these views were further elaborated, amended, and how the distribution and utilisation of these new insights evolved.

3.2 Distribution

After a reconstruction of the emergence and externalisation of ‘African management’ discourse in the previous section, subsequently the dimension of distribution will be described. Three categories of actors can be distinguished in the distribution of ‘African management’ ideas to a wider public in South Africa, and beyond.

In the first place, universities and business schools have played a very prominent role. In this regard, the role of philosophers is highlighted as well. Philosophers, such as Johann Broodryk, Es’kia Mphahlele, Erasmus Prinsloo, Mogobe Ramose, and Augustine Shutte have certainly contributed to a discourse on *ubuntu* philosophy in South Africa, intermittently drawing attention to the application of *ubuntu* to management and organisation.

Secondly, the media are crucial in the distribution process: both the written press (newspapers, journals, and magazines), radio and TV; and publishers are instrumental in disseminating views and ideas.¹³⁷ According to Hannerz, for a long time the role of the media and its technological tools has been underestimated as a means, through which ‘the flows of meaning in societies’ pass and in matters of ‘contemporary cultural complexity’ (Hannerz 1992: 26).

Thirdly, the business sector itself and associated professional and social networks have been involved in disseminating ‘African management’ ideas. It may sometimes be problematic to draw clear lines between business schools and professional and business networks, as they tend to be aligned in various ways. Entrepreneurs and CEOs, who are doing an MBA course or following an executive programme at a business school, may also be members of some sort of business association or editorial board of a professional magazine. Clearly, there is a constant interplay between different dimensions of culture. Subsequently, the dimension of social distribution easily extends into the dimension of utilisation, i.e. where the users of ‘African management’ ideas are found. Users assumingly implement these very ideas in their own business practice, or they *intend*, *pretend*, or *attempt* to do so.

In a cyclical way, practical experiences and reflection thereupon may again feed into the process of producing, reconstructing, fine-tuning, polishing, and revising ‘African management’ ideas. Cultural production is directly related to social action; it is a continuous process. In this regard, culture can be described as a model *of* reality to be able to interpret social reality, but also as a model *for* reality, meaning a set of instructions and guidelines for adequate effective human action (Geertz 2000 [1973]: 93). Likewise, instructions and guidelines for managerial action could be derived from ‘African management’ thinking.

3.2.1 Universities, business schools, and philosophers

Universities and business schools have provided a very important platform for launching ‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa, flanked by several initiatives that go along the ‘winds of change’ in management thinking. However, several tertiary education institutions in the 1980s and the 1990s may have realised that something was in the air. Thus, thus some started using similar trendy labels, such as ‘African management’, but not quite meaning the same thing as the *South African Management Project* intended to promote. For example, modules of the ‘African Management Programme’ of the *Centre for Business Economics (University of South Africa, UNISA)* were recommended to ‘managers of a winning nation’ by Jan Scannell, managing director

¹³⁷ E.g. *Ubuntu/botho – a Management Strategy* in Agenda Newline on TV1 in South Africa, 20 August 1995 (Sunday Times, 24 September 1995).

of *Oude Meester Brandy* as an opportunity to ‘unlock the wealth of management potential’, following the ‘momentous events’ of 1994.¹³⁸ The module, however, mostly dealt with conventional issues of business economics. The only salient features were boxes of information about upcoming successful black entrepreneurs and managers. In one of the modules, a special item on Reuel Khoza was included, presented as the (then) managing director of *Co-ordinating Management Consulting* (CMC), founded in 1981.¹³⁹

In particular circumstances, the corporate sector is potentially a ‘force of change’, “maximising the local resources that can be marshalled to support the competitive position of the country and, more especially, the country’s firms” (Kaplan 1997: 69). When universities and the business sector strengthen their ties, it may indeed have the potential of bringing about a “free flow of ideas and knowledge between academia and wider society, especially business,” for instance new perspectives on business and management. As such, this may also be an indication of a change of culture within South African universities, from ‘keeping science in the ivory tower’ towards “linking universities more effectively to developmental processes – and in a capitalist society that inevitably means business enterprises” (Kaplan 1997: 69). Parallel to this, a tendency can be observed of South African MBA programmes focusing increasingly on ‘local expertise’. As Narendra Bhana, principal of *Regent Business School* explained:

There is a very important need to develop an African MBA. [...] We need to produce MBAs that meet the needs of our region. The leadership and business skills are different in Africa from anywhere else in the world (Sunday Times – Business Times, 1 February 2004).

Linda van der Colff, director of the *Milpark Business School* added:

We are training students from Africa to operate in Africa. Africa is where we do our business, not Europe (Sunday Times – Business Times, 1 February 2004).

Universities and business schools have helped distributing ‘African management’ philosophy in various forms and through different intersecting social networks. Besides the seminars, workshops and conferences, as organised by SAMP and others, electives and guest lectures were performed at various places. Professor Lovemore Mbigi was a (guest) lecturer or (honorary) professor, for instance at *Wits Business School* (WBS), UNISA’s *School of Business Leadership* (SBL), *Rhodes University Investec Business School* and *De Montfort University*.¹⁴⁰ In 2005, Mbigi was appointed director of *CIDA Graduate School of African Leadership and Transformation*

¹³⁸ Accompanying letter by Jan Scannell to Module 2 of UNISA’s *African Management Program*, February 1995.

¹³⁹ *African Management Program*, Centre for Business Economics UNISA, Module 3, pp. 68.

¹⁴⁰ In 2003, Mbigi was appointed head of the department of Organisational Development at *De Montfort South Africa* in Sandton, a subsidiary of its mother institute in the United Kingdom. In 2004, it decided to withdraw from South Africa, when the Higher Education Quality Committee did not reaccredit its MBA programme (Source: page 35, *Annual Report 2003-2004*, CHE (2004)).

(GSALT).¹⁴¹ In the 1990s, Mbigi's lecturing assignment at WBS coincided more or less with the period that SAMP running at WBS, until 1996 approximately. In one of his lectures at SBL, Mbigi would have stated the following.¹⁴²

Afrikaners should learn to speak English to use it in the workplace and Afrikaner civil servants should stop thinking they were European. They should recognise that they are Africans (Beeld, 11 September 1997).

Some found such statements very disturbing.¹⁴³ At another occasion, Mbigi had declared: "South African management practices are too Eurocentric." The section on 'utilisation' in this chapter will give a more detailed account of Mbigi's role in the disseminating and using 'African management' ideas.

On a more serious note, Professor Mzamo Mangaliso has argued that by learning from *ubuntu* "world management discourse can evolve more holistic, inclusive, and emancipatory theories," without compromising on global competitiveness (Mangaliso 2001: 23). The author was born in South Africa, but has been living and working in the United States for a long time. Mid 2006, he was appointed as President and CEO of the *National Research Foundation* (NRF) in South Africa.

Besides business schools, particularly the discipline of philosophy in South Africa has played a significant role as well, initially in studying and publishing on the concept of *ubuntu* philosophy, and gradually making a connection between *ubuntu* philosophy and the workplace. It is plausible that these developments contributed to the dissemination of 'African management' philosophy in South Africa.

The role of philosophers

A number of philosophers have contributed to differing degrees to disseminating ideas on *ubuntu* and 'African management' philosophy in South Africa: Johann Broodryk, Es'kia Mphahlele, Erasmus Prinsloo, Mogobe Ramose, Augustine Shutte, and Lesiba Joe Teffo. It is noted that these philosophers do not all have a similar academic standing. Probably, Mogobe Ramose is generally acknowledged as a principal authority particularly on *ubuntu* as regards 'African philosophy'. He has been widely cited with regard to his philosophical interpretations of the *ubuntu* concept, as confirmed by other experts in this field (e.g. Van Binsbergen 2001; Louw 2002; Kimmerle 2006).

At UNISA, the *Research Unit for African Philosophy* organised the seminar *Decolonizing the*

¹⁴¹ GSALT is part of *CIDA City Campus* in Johannesburg, also known as the '*Ubuntu University*'.

¹⁴² Around 1997, Karl Hofmeyr would have invited Mbigi to lecture at SBL (interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 14 August 2003).

¹⁴³ Professor K. Landman (UNISA) felt that Mbigi's statements had caused anguish. According to Professor P.J. Vorster (UNISA), Mbigi had just wanted to call for mutual understanding and respect for each other's traditions (Beeld, 11 September 1997). Literal citation in Afrikaans in Beeld: "Vorster het gesê die opmerking van Mbigi moet beskou word as 'n oproep tot begrip vir mekaar. 'Mense in Afrika moet met empatie na mekaar se tradisies kyk'."

mind in October 1995 (Malherbe 1996). At that occasion, Erasmus Prinsloo spoke about the ‘*ubuntu* style of participatory management’ (Prinsloo 1996). A chapter by Prinsloo, called *Ubuntu culture and participatory management* was included in *Philosophy from Africa. A text with readings*, edited by P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (Coetzee & Roux 1998). In this essay, Prinsloo reflected on the application of *ubuntu* in business management, largely following Reuel Khoza’s views on *ubuntu*, understood as ‘African humanism’ and Lovemore Mbigi’s views on *ubuntu* relating to business. Prinsloo stated that negative feelings on the part of the workers would be ‘likely to be eliminated’ in the *ubuntu* system, because of ‘co-responsibility’ in the negotiation process between workers and management (Prinsloo 1998: 48). However, in its practical implementation the *ubuntu* concept and related value principles would be ‘systematically ambiguous’. Another problem for Prinsloo is that there is no clarity on ‘consensus procedures’ (Prinsloo 1998: 49). Notwithstanding his critical remarks, Prinsloo’s contributions on this topic helped distributing ‘African management’ perspectives, using philosophy as a medium. Two years later, an almost identical interpretation appeared in the *Journal of Business Ethics* (Prinsloo 2000). This journal does not have a readership of philosophers only, but includes business people, consultants, and human resource practitioners as well.

In Pretoria, Dr Johann Broodryk was the first person to obtain a doctoral degree in this field with a dissertation, called *Ubuntuism as a worldview to order society*. At the time, Broodryk found few written materials on the concept.¹⁴⁴ For his PhD research, he conducted interviews in KwaZulu Natal and in Kenya. In October 1995, he contributed to UNISA’s *Decolonizing the mind* colloquium on African philosophy with a paper called *Is Ubuntuism unique?* (Broodryk 1996). In 1993 Broodryk established the *Ubuntu School of Philosophy*, which published *Ubuntu: Life Lessons from Africa* in 2002. In this book, the author criticised management practices in South Africa that he compared with ‘an army approach’ (Broodryk 2004: 56). Instead, Broodryk would like to bring about a paradigm shift from ‘selfish autocratic to a democratic leadership style’. In this regard, he considered Nelson Mandela as a role model for a ‘shepherd type of management or leadership’.

He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble to go on ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind in an informal but disciplined way (Broodryk 2004: 57-58).

An *ubuntu* management style is in Broodryk’s view characterised by openness, freedom, and a ‘friendly discipline’.

¹⁴⁴ Conversation with Johann Broodryk, on 27 October 2006 in Pretoria, one day after the launch of the book *Ubuntu: Life-coping Skills from Africa* by Broodryk (2006).

...free movement and contact and discipline is vested in the openness of this style [...] The employees are supposed to enjoy this freedom and openness in a responsible way. [...] Friendly discipline is therefore created by the commitment of the participants (Broodryk 2004: 58-59).

The principle of ‘caring and sharing’ would instruct a business leader to share “extra surplus of profit [...] with the suffering masses on grassroots levels” (Broodryk 2004: vii-viii). More recently, Broodryk has developed a specific management focus on *ubuntu* philosophy, with an ambitious globalist claim of ‘exporting ancient African wisdom into the global world’. The publisher raised high expectations with its following announcement.

In the book, managers are challenged to implement *Ubuntu Management Philosophy* for improved staff performance, higher productivity, and excellent service delivery.¹⁴⁵

Broodryk portrayed former State President Nelson Mandela as a leader ‘in the true *Ubuntuist* sense’, using Mandela as a ‘cultural icon’ and trademark for ‘*Ubuntu Management Philosophy*’.¹⁴⁶ The backcover of two of his publications on *ubuntu* philosophy showed photographs of Broodryk in ‘ethnic dress’, suggesting a particular sense of ‘Africanness’ (Broodryk 2004; 2005). This is quite similar to how Lovemore Mbigi was visualised on the back cover of some of his publications (e.g. Mbigi 2000; 2005).

In 2006 Broodryk started doing workshops on *ubuntu* for managers ‘to supplement my income’. To make this known, he had fliers printed with advertising texts, for example:

Exciting bush & wildlife experience of a lifetime! Have fun! Be surrounded by the sound of 47 roaring lions. Pose for a photo sitting next to a live cheetah. Smile at the buffaloes. Learn about ancient *Ubuntu* wisdom. Sleep in luxurious bush huts or tree hut.

This seems a modest yet serious attempt to commercialise *ubuntu* management knowledge. Occasionally, Broodryk sensed ‘resistance’ among – especially white – managers as to ‘decolonising’ their minds. This ‘resistance’ was mostly shown in rather tacit ways, for instance by small negative comments, sometimes with a racist undertone. Though small-scale and somewhat amateurish Broodryk’s undertakings may seem, he has been involved with the Department of Social Development for at least 10 years, where he has applied *ubuntu* philosophy in the field of youth development. Magdalene Moonsamy, Deputy Director Youth Development (Department of Social Development) commented:

Ubuntu is the value base of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, part of the vision and mission of the transformation of the new public service, policy of various government departments and

¹⁴⁵ E-mail announcement “Indigenous African Knowledge and Management Publications!!!” by *Knowledge Resources*, 26 March 2006.

¹⁴⁶ The tendency of ‘African management’ advocates using Nelson Mandela as role model in order to ‘sell’ their management vision is discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in section 5.2.1 *Conceptual vagueness*.

the business philosophy of various companies. It is here that the imperative components of *Ubuntu: Life Coping Skills*, become operational.¹⁴⁷

As part of a juvenile justice approach, young criminal offenders receive a training and learn about 'life skills' and community values in trying to get them on the right track again. Furthermore, they are encouraged to take up a small business. Broodryk discusses *ubuntu* values with them and liaises with corporations to make their business knowledge available to these youngsters. In his view, *ubuntu* values are therefore very practical, also in the sense of creating a working environment, in which people 'feel at home'.

In addition to Johann Broodryk, another philosopher with an Afrikaner background, Augustine Shutte, has gained authority in South Africa with his philosophical writings on *ubuntu*. Although he has not looked into (views about) the application of *ubuntu* in management specifically, he considered *ubuntu* in all aspects of social life, including work: "Work is such a far-reaching and all-inclusive part of life that almost everything else in our lives is affected by or influences our work" (Shutte 2001: 105). Reasoning from an *ubuntu* ethic, work is not seen as an end in itself, but as an expression of creativity and a means to the development of personal growth and community.¹⁴⁸

Another major impulse from the philosophical domain came from Es'kia Mphahlele, known as writer, teacher, and critic. Lovemore Mbigi commented that his autobiographical book had a major impact on his life (Mphahlele 2006 [1959]).

Then, I came across the work of Ezekiel Mphahlele when I was, I think, in my upper primary school. He had written a book called *Down Second Avenue*. That book was very important in my turning, because it described *our real situation* [emphasis added].¹⁴⁹

Mphahlele was a political activist and a supporter of African nationalism and Pan Africanist ideology during the apartheid years. He went into exile from 1957 until 1977. Upon his return, he changed his name from Ezekiel into Es'kia. Later he became critical of 'tribalist tendencies' in the new post-1994 South Africa, blaming the ANC government of favouring particular ethnic groups over others. Mphahlele is a passionate advocate of African humanism, and he strongly feels that

¹⁴⁷ Address to the book launch of *Ubuntu: Life-coping Skills from Africa* (Broodryk 2006), on 27 October 2006 in Pretoria.

¹⁴⁸ Shutte's interpretation of *ubuntu* has been criticised for its 'ahistoricity', in the way he as well as other philosophers treated the concept, stated Christoph Marx (2002), pp. 52; 60. Moreover, his reading would represent the point of view of a 'European' with an influential Christian background, according to Ramose (2003), pp. 326-327. This point was also stressed by Heinz Kimmerle (2006), on page 90. Using the same citation from Ramose, Kimmerle argued that "...*ubuntu* cannot be interpreted easily from outside." A similar critique could concern the use of *ubuntu* in the context of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, as asserted by Richard Ashby Wilson (2003): "Some members of the South African *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* argued that reconciliation demanded too much of victims, that it was excessively infused with Christian connotations of 'turning the other cheek' and 'love thine enemy'" [...] (Wilson 2003: 189). Thus, one could argue that *ubuntu* became "the Africanist wrapping used to sell a reconciliatory version of human rights talk to black South Africans," in the view of Wilson (2001), page 13.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 14 August 2003.

‘African humanism in the business world’ needs to be debated urgently. He would insist that – in view of the average literate level among adults in South Africa – “papers be written in simple English,” to keep texts as accessible as possible (Mphahlele 2002: 129). It would take a lot of debate and education in convincing people to introduce ‘African humanistic principles’ in business:

Difficulty may arise where, as is so common among academics, we lack leadership that can steer such an information programme with the knowledge of African culture and history from precolonial times through to the present. What may also aggravate things is the scepticism, even in knowledgeable academic circles concerning these themes and the validity and relevance of African Humanism. [...] Africans in this country, especially urbanized Africans, are *confused about matters of culture*. They are unwilling to participate in such discussions, lest they lower their self-esteem as sworn enemies of tribal cultures of Verwoerd’s invention (Mphahlele 2002: 128; italics added).

Apparently, Mphahlele and Mbigi share the opinion that ‘Africans’, meaning black African people, would be ‘confused about matters of culture’. In the last sentence of the citation, Mphahlele touched on a sensitive but significant issue: the fact that many black African people tend to turn away from debates on ‘African tradition’ and ‘ethnic identity’ for its associations with apartheid policies.¹⁵⁰ Mphahlele has a high regard for Reuel Khoza’s community concept in business, as expressed in Khoza’s *African Humanism: A Discussion Paper* (1994). In a summary of this paper, it was emphasised that “While Africans tend to create a world made up of people; the corporatist worldview surely does violence to such a perspective...” (Mphahlele 2002: 126). This suggests a contradiction between the notion of *ubuntu* and ‘African Humanism’ on the one hand, and capitalism and the business sector on the other hand. Therefore, Mphahlele was supportive of the project to ‘adapt African humanism to the corporate world’ and he seemed almost pleasantly surprised that Khoza was trying to articulate strategies how to do so.

Allegedly, the process of mutual influencing between Khoza and Mphahlele dates back a long time. In 1971, Khoza had already cited from Mphahlele’s work on ‘African humanism’.¹⁵¹ Thirty-five years later, Khoza referred in his book *Led Africa Lead* to Mphahlele, who would have told him that his book “breathes the spirit of *Ubuntu* and speaks for itself” (Khoza 2006: xix).

Publications that service a wider readership, like Khoza’s book *Led Africa Lead*, are valuable vehicles for divulging ideas on leadership and management, in particular if the readership is aligned with influential political and business networks, media, or academic institutions.

3.2.2 The role of the media

In this section, the role of the media is considered with regard to the distribution of ‘African

¹⁵⁰ This issue is explained in detail in Chapter 6 *Colonialism, apartheid and transition*, particularly section 6.1 *A long history of coercive labour* that deals amongst other things with ‘the Native Question’.

¹⁵¹ Source: www.weforum.org/site/knowledgenavigator.nsf/Content/S12166?open&country_id [accessed 7 February 2006].

management' discourse in South Africa. Relatively modest actors, such as the publisher *Knowledge Resources*, have played a crucial role in this regard. Furthermore, some of the underlying motives for publishers are highlighted why they chose to get involved with this type of management literature. In the following, the role of newspapers, journals, and magazines in the distribution of 'African management' philosophy is examined, and of two prominent publishers in this regard: *Knowledge Resources/Knowres Publishing* and *Jacana Media*, both based in Johannesburg. Actually, *Zebra Press*, the publisher of *The African Way. The power of interactive leadership* (Boon 1996) and *Sawubona Africa. Embracing four worlds in South African management* (Lessem & Nussbaum 1996) should have been taken into account as well, but no research data could be generated on this topic.¹⁵²

Newspapers, journals, and magazines

Newspapers, journals, websites, e-mail, e-news services, and magazines are all vehicles of information and communication. Of these, the magazine *People Dynamics* has published in more than a decade regularly articles written by Lovemore Mbigi.¹⁵³ In these articles, Mbigi explained his views on 'African management' philosophy, *ubuntu*, and the 'African business renaissance'.

The *Institute of People Management* (IPM) in Johannesburg is publisher of *People Dynamics*, but it has outsourced its production to the *Eagle Publishing Company*. The monthly coverage is 5000 copies, of which 3000 to IPM members. IPM is a service organisation of human resource practitioners. It is a member of the *African Federation of Human Resources Management*, which is affiliated with the *World Federation of Personnel Management Associations*. A meeting room in the IPM office showed portraits of all IPM Presidents; before 1994 all white males, and after mostly black people, of whom quite a number of females.¹⁵⁴ In 2004, Mrs Shirley Zinn was serving as IPM's President. Mrs Mpho Letlape was its former president. Letlape is also director of the *HR Division of Eskom*, of which Reuel Khoza is non-executive chairperson. *People Dynamics* publishes on 'burning issues' and new trends in management relating to human resources, for instance regarding recruitment, skills development, mergers, and employment equity: "Basically it is

¹⁵² In August 2000, *Zebra Press*, an imprint of a major player in the South African publishing industry, *Struik Publishers*, moved from Sandton (Johannesburg) to Cape Town. *Zebra Press/Struik Publishers* is one of the major publishing agencies in South Africa. It is a division of *New Holland Publishing* (South Africa) and a member of *Johnnic Communications*, a Black Economic Empowerment company in the field of communications. As a result, they no longer employed publishing staff that had dealt with Boon and Lessem in the mid-1990s, when they were still based in Johannesburg. Therefore, it was impossible to assess in retrospect for what reasons *Zebra Press* decided to publish Boon's and Lessem's work (e-mail correspondence with *Zebra Press*, Cape Town, 22 January 2004 and 2 February 2004).

¹⁵³ For instance, in *People Dynamics* issues of October 1992, January 1993, February 1998, November/December 2000 and March 2003.

¹⁵⁴ Observation at IPM head office in Rivonia, Johannesburg (Field report 18 May 2004).

everything that affects workers in the workplace,” Mr Luyikumu explained, former deputy chief editor and marketing director at *Eagle Publishing*.¹⁵⁵ He observed that employees in South Africa were treated better than in the past. As it seems, the South African workplace is being ‘humanised’.

It not only has to do with government policies. There is a general trend to look better after personnel, to respect people and treat people as special. I would say it is about ‘humanising the workplace’.

IPM does not aim specifically to promote Afrocentric management perspectives. Though its scope is much broader, there is an interest in publications on – what Luyikumu called – ‘the African thing’:

The African thing has been a trend especially from the African Federation of Human Resources. That is also a trend now because of the African Union. The magazine must not only deal with HR issues in South Africa, but should also take the African experience into account and the global experience. In the category ‘Lessons from Abroad’, we try to get the experience from outside Africa, different perspectives on reality.

Luyikumu placed a general interest in ‘African management’ discourse in a broader regional and continental context than just South Africa. In particular, the mentioning of the African Union suggests a connection with the ideological and developmental project of the African Renaissance and the *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*.¹⁵⁶

Journals in South Africa, as well as radio and TV, have repeatedly paid attention to ‘African management’ issues, for instance reporting on conferences, lectures or by means of book reviews. The Natal Witness reviewed for instance *African management. Philosophies, Concepts and Applications* on 27 July 1994, and The Economist had a feature with the title *Ubuntu, and other management tips* (18 March 1995). The article contained a few noteworthy observations.

Long rigidly hierarchical and paternalistic, South African companies have started to experiment with new management methods such as performance-related pay and decentralisation. [...] The trouble is that *ubuntu* seems to mean almost anything one chooses. [...] A cynic might say it just means treating blacks less badly.

The sceptical notion of ‘treating blacks less badly’ would arguably be a rather reductionist reading of *ubuntu* in relation to management. Book reviews can be instrumental in the distribution of cultural flows. Numerous magazines and journals, both in the English language and in Afrikaans, published regularly book reviews of ‘African management’ literature. In the following, a few more examples are given.

The financial and business weekly *Finansies & Tegniek* even facilitated a media debate in June/July 1995 on *Ubuntu – bestuurstyl van die toekoms?* (*Ubuntu – management style of the future?*), in which *Ubuntu: The spirit of African transformation* by Mbigi and Maree was reviewed.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Simon Luyikumu on 18 May 2004.

¹⁵⁶ These issues are discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis, in section 7.3 *African Renaissance*.

Moreover, Beeld reviewed Boon's *The African Way* (7 October 1996) and Christie's *Stories from an Afman(ager)* (18 March 1997). More recently, on 16 October 2003, Die Burger reviewed De Liefde's *Lekgotla. The art of leadership through dialogue* (De Liefde 2003). On 2 October 2006, Pretoria News published a book review of *Ubuntu Management Philosophy* (Broodryk 2005): *How to use Ubuntu as a business tool*. These are a few examples of regular (though rather marginal) media attention to 'African management' issues and publications reaching out to a broader South African public.

Interestingly, also foreign media picked up new cultural and management trends in Africa, which entailed an interest in 'African management' philosophy and related concepts. For instance, Lovemore Mbigi appeared in a documentary *Aangenaam, Afrika* ("Pleased to meet you, Africa") in the Netherlands, broadcasted by VPRO television in January 2000. The theme was 'product Africa', i.e. the prospect that – mostly contrary to common opinion – Africa appeared to be finding its own 'unique selling points' to connect again with the global economy.¹⁵⁷ Interviewed in his Johannesburg-based office, Mbigi told about his management views, explaining Africa's need for a 'cultural renaissance', and for an 'African management' vision. In November 2002, the monthly magazine 'IS' on international cooperation of the *Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, published an interview with 'management guru' Mbigi (Muskens 2002).¹⁵⁸

Newspapers, journals, websites, and magazines are rather common means of information and communication, through which 'African management' ideas reach a wider audience than just academia. Moreover, a few publishers have made an important contribution to the process of distribution. Two South African publishers are examined more closely: *Knowledge Resources* and *Jacana Media*; the former being specialised in management and business literature, and the latter with a much broader profile.

Knowledge Resources/Knowres Publishing

Unquestionably, *Knowledge Resources*, in recent years also referred to as *Knowres Publishing*, has been the most active publisher in disseminating 'African management' literature in South Africa (e.g. Christie; Lessem *et al.* 1994; Christie 1996; Lessem 1996; Mbigi 1997; Madi 2000; Mbigi 2000; Broodryk 2005; Mbigi 2005; Mbigi & Maree 2005 [1995]). The main driving force behind

¹⁵⁷ VPRO – *Aangenaam, Afrika* (50 minutes DNW documentary), produced by Bregtje van der Haak (2000).

¹⁵⁸ This interview took place in September 2002, when Mbigi gave a guest lecture at *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* at the occasion of the launch of the *South Africa Vrije Universiteit Strategic Alliances* (SAVUSA) initiative to promote joint (South African – Netherlands) academic publications. Some attendants had perceived Mbigi's colourful appearance and 'unusual' lecture as somewhat trivial, as there would not have been enough 'academic substance' to his lecture. This should be viewed against the background of longstanding yet considerably contested relationships of the *Vrije Universiteit* with universities in South Africa, particularly because of the apartheid issue in the 1970s and 1980s. See for a detailed historical reconstruction *De Vrije Universiteit en Zuid-Afrika 1880-2005* by Gerrit Schutte (2005).
'African management' in South Africa Page 93 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

this enterprise is Wilhelm Crous. He was mostly interested in something different from the ‘usual’ management books, with a keen interest in developing ‘local knowledge’ and not “the typical stuff that comes from the United States or Europe,” as he described it. The *ubuntu* concept was particularly appealing. Crous explained:

We came from a very harsh society, almost a civil war. *Ubuntu* appealed to everybody: the humaneness character. [...] In the early nineties, late eighties we developed a very harsh capitalist business environment, where greed was the overriding sort of driving force. [...] It is really very natural for Africans to be much more inclusive, to use a much more democratic [...] participative philosophy and operations than the typical autocratic, almost the American type of stuff.¹⁵⁹

For the South African market of business and management books, *Ubuntu: The spirit of African transformation management* was in Crous’ view a major seller: approximately 7,500 copies were sold (Mbigi & Maree 1995). This was a fair result in this segment of the South African market. The readership consisted according to Crous predominantly of human resource managers, academics, and people involved in the transformation process in business. Personally, Crous felt inspired by ‘African management’ philosophy at the time, but nowadays he is ‘not so sure’. It definitely offered ‘something different’, but he wondered: “Whether we will apply it here – that is another question.” Although a number of the books published in the 1990s on ‘African management’ issues got out of print, *Knowledge Resources* continued to be active in this field. Their representatives often turned up with *Knowledge Resources* publications on display, when Lovemore Mbigi appeared as a speaker on *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ issues, for instance at *Old Mutual Business School* in Cape Town in July 2003.¹⁶⁰ In 2005-2006, there seemed to be a sudden resurgence in the proliferation of *ubuntu* management books: Mbigi and Maree’s 1995 publication was re-printed (‘10th Anniversary Edition’), Broodryk’s *ubuntu* management philosophy book came out (Broodryk 2005), and Mbigi released a new book on African leadership (Mbigi 2005). *Knowres Publishing* Managing Director, Mrs Cia Joubert confirmed the argument of a resurgence:

At some point it seemed to have died out, but now people want to read about it more. Managers realise that they have to deal with diversity. Before they were aware of it as well, but they did not now how to deal with it. People are keen of the type of ‘How to...’ books on management.¹⁶¹

Impulsively, a bystander reacted to Joubert’s comments: “So, *ubuntu* for dummies?”

Anthroposophical influences

Both Ronnie Lessem and Peter Christie, chief initiators of the *South African Management Project*

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Wilhelm Crous 3 December 2003.

¹⁶⁰ Field report 3 July 2003.

¹⁶¹ Comments at book launch in Waterkloof Ridge in Pretoria on 26 October 2006.

and the *Theory of the African firm* workshop, said they had been part of an anthroposophical network, influenced by the work of Rudolf Steiner and Bernard Lievegoed.¹⁶² Apparently, there is a connection between ('western') anthroposophical views and Afrocentric perspectives on management. For example, *Novalis Press* in Cape Town, the publisher of Bhengu's book on *ubuntu*, is related to *The Novalis Institute*, which is funded by the *Von Hardenberg Foundation*. This foundation was established by "a group of people inspired by the Austrian scientist, educationalist and spiritual researcher, Dr. Rudolf Steiner" (Bhengu 1996: 59). Do 'African management' advocates

Novalis staff have also been inspired by contemporary thinkers such as Fritjof Capra, Maurice Berman, Stephen Covey, Peter Senge, Vaclav Havel and South Africans Adam Small and Steve Biko, all of whom have striven to expose the inadequacies of the Cartesian or western materialistic view of the world (Bhengu 1996: 59).

It appears that Bhengu does not conceal the European anthroposophical affiliations of his publisher. However, the use of the dichotomy of 'Afrocentric' versus 'Eurocentric' management seems to deny hybridisation in the construction of both 'western' and 'non-western' management approaches, and the consequences of 'a mutual colonial encounter'. Analysing this as such, it would imply a return 'from binarism back to hybridity', acknowledging that,

...the history of management and organizations should include the fusion between the colonizer and the colonized and their mutual effects of each other (Frenkel & Shenhav 2006: 855).

Recognition of the principle of hybridisation and mutual influencing in the construction of local Africa-centred management knowledge in South Africa would largely shatter the assumption of a totalising opposition to 'Eurocentric' management knowledge. The following section is not only another illustration of the 'Africa-Europe link' in Afrocentric management thinking, but also demonstrates its global (and glocal) character. Could we therefore perhaps speak of 'glocalising' *ubuntu* in management and organisation?¹⁶³

Jacana Media: 'indigenous perspectives' on business and management

Besides *Knowledge Resources*, *Zebra Press*, and *Novalis Press*, *Jacana Media* has made an interesting contribution to the distribution of 'African management' ideas in South Africa, especially because of a somewhat exotic publication in this particular field – 'exotic' in the (reversed) sense of coming from outside of Africa – *Lekgotla: The art of leadership through dialogue* (De Liefde 2003). Willem de Liefde is a Dutch retired executive, who was a skipper at a

¹⁶² This was described in section 3.1 of this chapter, *Emergence and externalisation*.

¹⁶³ This is the theme of the volume *Prophecies and Protests. Ubuntu in Glocal Management* edited by Van den Heuvel; Mangaliso, *et al.* (2006).

younger age. From his experiences on board of a ship, and later in senior management positions, he developed his own leadership ideas. Openness, straightforwardness, and dialogue are keywords in his philosophy, and above all 'meaning in life and work'. De Liefde moved to Johannesburg when he worked for *Dräger*, a German company in medical equipment. He was responsible for marketing in Europe, in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of America. In about 1997, he read one of Mbigi's articles in *Sawubona Magazine*, a monthly magazine of *South African Airways*. He was instantly interested and requested his secretary to invite Mbigi for a meeting. Mbigi came over for dinner and soon after that, he held a talk for the South African branch of *Dräger* in Johannesburg. Thus, he learned about *ubuntu* and 'African management' philosophy. De Liefde is convinced that *ubuntu* has survived in Africa as a basic value or attitude, although he believes that it is 'disappearing rapidly'.

The sharing in that culture is something we have entirely lost. Instead, we have put social systems in place, but as a result, everybody ends up lonely.¹⁶⁴

In a stunning simplification, De Liefde explained the cause of all this, analysing two millennia of world civilisation from ancient times to the modern corporate world, in just a few sentences.

All those communities since the Greeks and the Romans, you name it, Descartes, is since the Greeks about "I think" or "I am because I think." So, from the Greeks onwards the model of egoism has emerged. The corporate system thrives on shareholders' values only, fraud, controlling the workers through *espionage*, with a total lack of trust, concealing the truth. [...] The Greeks wanted to conquer the world. The Romans wanted to conquer the world. So, this means, from then onwards things went wrong. Then we had Napoleon. Basically the same thing. And we also had Hitler, and he thought "I will do things better." Look at America, which is in fact an extension of our culture. They think, "Only we know how to lead the world."

In De Liefde's exposés, he uses the term *lekgotla* and 'African tribal leadership' more often than *ubuntu*. An architect from Botswana, Lemmy Khama, taught De Liefde (and his wife Jansje) about these concepts. Khama designed De Liefde's garden at their luxurious Dainfern residence in Johannesburg. He recreated a 'traditional *lekgotla* meeting place', with a fireplace.¹⁶⁵ On Khama's invitation, Willem and Jansje De Liefde visited Botswana to see 'traditional villages'. This inspired De Liefde to articulate his own leadership ideas. He saw a connection between the concept of *ubuntu* and *lekgotla* and, on the other hand, based on his own experiences, life on a ship, where everybody depends on one another. Sailors constitute a close community, a tight harmonious collective. On a ship, everybody has a specific set of tasks, working closely together, trusting each other in order to survive on rough seas, De Liefde explained. He made this his management philosophy. Suddenly, he 'recognised' this as it were in the concept of *lekgotla* and 'African tribal

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Willem de Liefde on 14 November 2003.

¹⁶⁵ The equivalent of the Tswana term *kgotla* (*lekgotla*) would in Sesotho be *kgôrô* and in isiZulu *indaba*, as explained on page 31 in Ross (2001).

leadership’: “For many years I have applied the principles of Lekgotla in my own style of management without even knowing the term.”¹⁶⁶

After a public talk in Rotterdam about sustainable development, the then State Secretary (Deputy Minister) of Economic Affairs and Trade of the Netherlands, Gerrit Ybema, challenged De Liefde to write a book about his experiences and leadership ideas.¹⁶⁷ With some delay this eventually led to publication of a book in 2002, written in Dutch (De Liefde 2002).¹⁶⁸ One year later, through the Johannesburg-based publisher *Jacana Media*, a version in English appeared on the South African market that was reviewed amongst others in the South African Journal of Public Administration (Van den Heuvel & Wels 2004). Why did *Jacana Media* decide to publish a book on management issues and why a book authored by a retired Dutch skipper alias businessperson?

Dr Maki Mandela, anthropologist and daughter to Nelson Mandela, wrote the foreword to De Liefde’s book. She had served on the Board of Directors of *Dräger* for some time, which resulted from De Liefde’s contacts with Lovemore Mbigi.¹⁶⁹ Dumani Mandela, Maki Mandela’s son, had published a manuscript through *Jacana Media* under the title *African Soul Talk. When Politics is not Enough* (Mandela & Goldstein 2003). Subsequently, Maggie Davey, publishing director of *Jacana Media* met De Liefde through Dumani Mandela. Davey became curious, because De Liefde’s book seemed to fill a gap in the market.¹⁷⁰ One year later, *Jacana Media* launched the book onto the South African market in a slightly revised version (De Liefde 2003). It would expose the ‘value of old wisdom’ (Beeld, 23 July 2003). Why was *Jacana Media* interested in publishing it? Maggie Davey sensed a demand for ‘indigenous perspectives’ and ‘non-corporate views’ on business around the globe. She thought De Liefde’s book fitted in this category and she liked the ‘inner transformation’ in his management thinking that he explained through the world of *lekgotla*, instead of ‘him speaking from on high’ explaining the notion of ‘African leadership’. She found the book ‘insightful’.

Davey: It is a big picture always he is looking at, and it is a holistic approach and it’s *imaginative* [emphasis added]. He does not have these tight boundaries and horizons. He’ll go wherever his mind takes him and that seems to be a trend. People are saying in business that you got to be imaginative and less corporate.

Researcher: What made you decide to publish it? What was the feeling?

Davey: If there is a particular gap in the market – there *was* – nothing like that had ever been published here. Secondly, I had seen books like *The Zulu Principle* and [...] a few other books talking about how you can take lessons from indigenous society and transpose that

¹⁶⁶ Original citation in Afrikaans: “*Ek het vir jare die beginsels van die Lekgotla in my bestuurstyl toegepas sonder dat ek die term geken het*” in Beeld, 23 July 2003.

¹⁶⁷ Ybema occupied this post between August 1998 and July 2002.

¹⁶⁸ A book review by Van den Heuvel & Wels (2003) was published in a Netherlands journal on management and organisation issues.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Willem de Liefde on 14 November 2003.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Maggie Davey on 20 May 2004.

on to business models. I saw that was an established kind of genre. Willem is very compelling and intense. You know, he sold me this great story of his book and [...] I decided to publish it.

A few other (American) publishers were also interested, such as *Berrett-Kohler* and *Texere*. The latter published Jim Slater's *The Zulu Principle* and this made Davey realise the demand for such books. Davey was apparently not much aware of the obvious parallels with Mbigi's thinking. The packaging of De Liefde's book was well done, and visually more attractive than Mbigi's, Christie's and Lessem's books, published by *Knowledge Resources*. It is a relatively high cost publication, with eye-catching artwork. Maggie Davey assumed that mainly business people would buy it.

Lovemore Mbigi did not seem to mind that De Liefde 'copied' at least some of his core ideas of 'tribal management'. On the contrary, he saw this as recognition of his own work and felt that it's good to have 'followers' that kept the discourse on 'African management' going.¹⁷¹ Of course, the pupil did not do better than the master did: personally, Mbigi characterised the book of De Liefde as 'weak in contents', but he admitted that it was packaged very well.¹⁷²

As a publishing director with 'a left-wing bias', Davey emphasised that she preferred primarily insightful and provocative books, dissenting books even, books that 'tell a different story', as she argued in a speech about the changes in the local book industry in South Africa between 1994 and 2004 (ThisDay, 22 April 2004).

We publish provocative books, books that cause an argument. [...] We have the Mail&Guardian as a common background and I have been in oppositional publishing for fifteen years. I was with *David Philip Publishers*. [...] That's where I started. That was the whole anti-apartheid, oppositional publishing tradition, which defines how I know publishing. We still have an agenda, which is a left agenda, or a more radical agenda.

Davey illustrated two major aspects in Afrocentric management discourse, namely emphasis on local perspectives instead of consuming what the global players ('big media conglomerates') offer, and the aspect of provocation. Although the book sells quite well – about 1,200 copies by May 2004 – which is good for the publisher, *Jacana Media* may have published it for the 'wrong' reasons. First, Slater's *The Zulu Principle* did not particularly seem to be an exemplar of an 'established kind of genre' that takes "lessons from indigenous society and transpose that on to business models," as Davey assumed. In fact, *The Zulu Principle* had nothing to do with such a genre whatsoever.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Statement made at the 2-day seminar *Afrocentric management approaches in South Africa*, organised by SAVUSA and the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, 24-25 June 2004.

¹⁷² Field report 22 August 2003 on the *Grant Fellows Leadership* training programme 12-18 July 2003 in Benoni.

¹⁷³ Although the book title suggests otherwise, *The Zulu Principle* by Slater (2000) has nothing to do with 'African management' philosophy whatsoever. The preface is the only site in the book where the title is explained, although in a most puzzling way: "I gave the book its title after my wife read a four-page article on Zulus in Reader's Digest. [...]" *'African management' in South Africa* Page 98 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Secondly, it is questionable whether De Liefde, a former businessperson, would identify himself with *Jacana Media's* left-wing, oppositional profile. Nevertheless, the publisher decided to release De Liefde's book, which resulted in another addition to 'African management' literature in South Africa.

3.2.3 Business and road shows

In the distribution of 'African management' discourse, three types of actors have been identified: (1) universities, business schools, and philosophers; (2) the media, and (3) the business community. The business community comprises (potential) 'end-users' of the discourse and helps distributing the discourse. One method in this regard concerns the phenomenon of 'road shows'.

After the *Theory of the African Firm* workshop in 1992, the company *Nampak* approached the organisers to do a 'road show'. This meant a tour to visit several cities such as Durban, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town, organising debates and talks about 'African management' issues for varying audiences of *Nampak* managers throughout the country. The concerned *Nampak* representatives were among others Neil Cumming, Rex Tomlinson, and Peter Gamble.¹⁷⁴ As a result, Mbigi was appointed in *Nampak* as a human resources manager, on rather flexible terms, so he could still do other consultancy work. Mbigi described Neil Cumming as being extraordinarily supportive to the promotion of 'African management' philosophy. *Nampak* is a South African firm specialised in industrial packaging. It has branches in South Africa, in other African countries, and in several European countries, amongst others in the UK, the Netherlands, and in Belgium.

When SAMP was running at *Wits Business School*, the chairperson of the South African motor dealers association attended one of Peter Christie's 'African management' electives. The association cooperated with *Wesbank*, which provided credit to finance car sales. Both *Wesbank* and the motor dealers were interested in a promotional 'road show'. They were preparing a conference and wanted to 'do something' on 'African management'.¹⁷⁵ At the conference, a sort of industrial theatre was performed, staging the video *The Global Businessphere*. Publisher *Knowledge Resources* had produced this video in order to promote 'African management' ideas and the publication of *African management. Philosophies, Concepts and Applications* (Christie; Lessem et

The study of this noble people might not have been profitable, but there are many other specialised subjects that would have been very rewarding financially." The reader is left with the question what this 'Zulu principle' entails. The book is merely about stock market investment and portfolio management: "How to make extraordinary profits from ordinary shares?" It became a bestseller. Yet, there is nothing 'African' about it. Amongst other things, the success of this book by an American author inspired *Jacana Media* in Johannesburg to publish the book *Lekgotla. The art of leadership through dialogue* by De Liefde (2003).

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 14 August 2004. Cumming is still a board member of *Nampak*, at least up to the time of writing this thesis in 2006.

¹⁷⁵ *Wesbank* is an affiliate of *FirstRand Bank*, which is a division of *First National Bank* (FNB).

al. 1994). Ronnie Lessem remembered this as a very stimulating event.

We did not just show the video. It was a theatrical event and Mbigi was also part of it. So, we had the video in the background and then we went in, in this enstagement, myself, Mbigi and so on. We were all part of the stage performance, to these 500 motor dealers. As you can imagine, they were a bit *amused* by it all. They were just interested and he [i.e. the chairperson of the motor dealers association] loved the 'Four Worlds' [...] so he resonated with it. He just saw it as something interesting and exciting. He could not have honestly thought that these motor dealers would respond to it, but it would just be *something exciting* to do [emphasis added].¹⁷⁶

It not only dealt with management, but also with political issues. Different scenarios of South Africa's future were discussed, making managers more aware of the problems and challenges in the country, and of the need for business transformation.

Mbigi: We did a road show on what is the possible scenario for South Africa and how can it be achieved. I enjoyed it. We addressed all major towns, their clients, executives, and key role players. What is the possible scenario and what is going right in South Africa? [...]
Researcher: What was their motivation to fund this initiative?
Mbigi: They wanted *to be different* and *encourage creativity* [emphasis added].¹⁷⁷

The dissemination of 'African management' philosophy through road shows seems to have been a mix of serious messages, awareness building, confrontational debate, creative thinking, and entertainment.

Concluding remarks

This chapter makes clear when this local management discourse emerged in South Africa and who the main roleplayers were in externalising and distributing it. In retrospect, several actors in this regard, commented that the search for a contextual approach to management and organisation was a major driving force. Initially, it was not intended to produce necessarily a particular culturalist management perspective. In the early 1990s, there was a vague idea that a time for change had come, in terms of 'industrial democracy' and more participatory ways of management. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Afrocentric management perspectives apparently responded to a demand for imaginative and 'non-corporate views'. There was even an element of entertainment, in a somewhat peculiar combination with awareness raising about a need to transform the business sector. In the next chapter, the 'end-users' of 'African management' ideas are considered. These users implement Afrocentric management perspectives in their own business practice, or they *intend*, *pretend*, or *attempt* to do so. How and why they do so, will be illustrate through a description of five different cases that will show a variety of interpretations.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Ronnie Lessem on 23 June 2004.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 28 June 2003.

Chapter 4: ‘African management’ *flows*: utilisation

Introduction

With utilisation is meant the implementation of ‘African management’ ideas and principles, its discursive use, in the sense of how organisational leaders talk about this and give meaning to it. In the field research, six cases have been studied: *Rainmaker Management Consultants* (RMC); *Vukuni Ubuntu Community Projects*; *CIDA City Campus* alias the ‘Ubuntu University’; WKKF’s *Leadership Regional Network* (LeaRN), and *Eskom Holdings Limited*. The sixth case concerns the *Airport Company of South Africa* (ACSA). This one illustrates the possibility of using concepts such as *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ philosophy in a more tacit and personal way, without exhibiting these labels continually. The sixth case show the degree of differentiation when it comes to utilisation. To begin with, five cases are discussed briefly. Subsequently, in section 4.2 one case is presented in greater detail: Lovemore Mbigi’s *Rainmaker Management Consultants*.

4.1 Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users

Vukuni Ubuntu Community Projects

Demos Takoulas is one of the readers of *Lekgotla: The art of leadership through dialogue* (De Liefde 2003). He is a Greek South African, or if one wishes, a South African Greek, a casual and humorous man. Takoulas is founder of *Vukani Ubuntu Community Projects*, registered as a not-for-profit ‘section 21’ company. Without hesitation, he stated that he was impressed with De Liefde’s book: “A lot that was written in the book was quite accurate.”¹⁷⁸ It was not just ‘recognition’; the ‘*lekgotla* ethic’ inspired Takoulas in his leadership approach. *Vukani Ubuntu Community Projects* comprised several components, such as jewellery projects, a ‘skills lab’, an art-glass project, and a tourism project. These had all been set up for young mainly black unemployed people, to train them and encourage entrepreneurship. As a managing director, Demos Takoulas focused on business management and community development. His business has been described as “*Ubuntu* at work: business can empower a rich vein of talent while keeping shareholders happy.”

Takoulas’s proposals are based on author Willem H. de Liefde’s adaptation of the term *lekgotla* to mean a community-based philosophy of doing business. Takoulas is busy placing *Vukani-Ubuntu* at the centre of a cluster of businesses in which major companies will be able to deliver real empowerment – and be able to account for it in terms of equity/mining-charter accounting as well as in the financial bottom line (Business Times, 12 October 2003).

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Demos Takoulas on 17 May 2004.

Takoulas explained that he was very grateful to South Africa. He had a very difficult youth: “This country has done so many good things to me. Now I felt obliged to do something in return.” Especially, the ‘warmth and friendship of the people’ he worked with in the township of Atteridgeville, and the ‘overwhelming sense of community’ were very rewarding to him. He used to be very keen on money and fast cars, but it did not make him happy. Now, there was ‘something more profound’, namely sharing with other people: “Making other people happy was making me happy.” However, it took Takoulas a lot of ‘patience and trust’ to find out how things worked among people in Atteridgeville township. For instance, people in townships tended to be very forgiving. If somebody stole something, there were ‘no immediate sanctions’. By giving somebody “another chance” without forcing the other person to make an apology in public to the community, the offender would feel that he or she had ‘an obligation to the project’. Thus, from a managerial point of view, being ‘soft’ can have particular advantages.¹⁷⁹ He described himself as ‘a tough guy’, a person who wanted to have power and take decisions. Consulting everybody who might have something valuable to contribute in their own right, would simply cost ‘too much time’ and it might not quite give the desired results, although this seemed to contrast with ‘*lekgotla* principles’.

Demos Takoulas has constructed his own differentiated version of an Afrocentric management vision, based on his ideals and unique life story, as a human being and as a managing director, in the context of a South African township. In a rather unassuming and pragmatic way, Takoulas is almost a living icon of *ubuntu* in business.

The ‘Ubuntu University’

CEO Taddy Blecher is one of the initiators of the *Community and Individual Development Association* (CIDA) in Johannesburg. He is a dynamic and optimistic man, who believes in the magic of life and in the interdependence of human beings. *CIDA City Campus* was established in 2000 and offers disadvantaged, young talented students from townships and rural areas, who could otherwise not afford tertiary education, an opportunity to study at a low fee. It is primarily a business school; ‘African leadership’ is part of the curriculum. Weekly magazine Mail&Guardian reported:

Cida has attracted a fair share of media coverage, all of it for good reasons. It has been called the ‘miracle university, ‘*ubuntu* university’ and ‘the university of hope’ (Mail&Guardian, 31 October 2003).

At a crucial point in his life, a sudden change of mind made Blecher decide to ‘put something

¹⁷⁹ The ‘soft elements’ of organisational culture – knowing that “you are surrounded by loving and caring people” who show “compassion when you have failed” – might fit in an rational functionalistic approach, in a version that could be phrased as “exit bureaucracy, enter norms and value,” as phrased by Ten Bos (2000), on page 102.

back into the country' instead of emigrating abroad.¹⁸⁰

What we wanted to do was to create a pilot something here and if it could work here it could work in an African-style business, it could work in creating new kinds of communities again, revitalising this old spirit of African togetherness and connectedness, and so on.

Not African philosophy, but eastern philosophies and transcendental meditation brought the three founder members Richard Peycke, Thembinkosi Mhlongo, and Taddy Blecher together. From 1995, Blecher worked for three years in townships in primary education.¹⁸¹

We started working in townships together. This is where I really started to understand these African principles. We started to realise that these things really expand inside of us deeply down, through expansive consciousness. This is exactly mirroring the same as on a manifest level how African society was traditionally structured, where everyone is united, everyone is connected, everyone is part of a whole, you know? [...] What that person is experiencing inside is infinite connectedness to everything else, where you cannot harm anything else, because that everything else is you, and that is how African society works. If you harm somebody else, you are really harming yourself.¹⁸²

Blecher pointed at the parallels between yogi meditation and the principles of 'traditional African society', which he described as a merger between two value systems. In Blecher's view, the 'way that African people love' and the practising of transcendental meditation, which helps expanding a person's consciousness, come together precisely in the notion of 'connectedness to everything'. Once, the noble principle of transcendental meditation gave cause to protests at the *Ubuntu* University. Some students and their parents feared that the university was trying to impose foreign religions, allegedly turning students 'into Indians or Hindus'. The issue was resolved by making meditation not obligatory, but to have special moments of silence built into the schedule. The idea is to encourage 'inner reflection'. Because of colonialism, Africans would have largely lost their own religious notions. Therefore, many are anxious to express (pre-colonial, non-Christian) religious values, such as ancestral worshipping. Students were by no means expected to give up their religion if they were Christian, but to 'unbuckle rigid Christian moral conventions'.

The challenge for us is not 'Do African people buy into this?' but 'How does one get the Christian out of the African?' to allow people to experience something more fundamentally natural to their own tradition.

Hence, Blecher assumed that it was possible to extract an essence of 'Africanness' out of black South Africans.¹⁸³ Moreover, the dominant 'system' was no longer considered relevant to the local context, although Blecher did not label CIDA's underlying philosophy as necessarily 'anti-western'.

¹⁸⁰ The Guardian, 30 November 2002 (Source: education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,,850880,00.html [accessed 20 February 2006]).

¹⁸¹ Innova. Electronic Voice of the Centre for Public Service Information (Issue 3) November 2002, pp. 7.

¹⁸² Interview with Taddy Blecher on 4 May 2004.

¹⁸³ The concept of 'Africanness' and related notions about an assumed 'essence' of 'Africanness' will be reviewed in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

The system is very hierarchical, very bureaucratic; there is a whole kind of academic law, and so on. What we felt first is now that kind of expensive old-fashioned system is not appropriate for Africa, you know? We must find something that is relevant for *our* context, it must be African, it must be lower cost, it must work on African value systems and principles.

There was also the suggestion of exporting ‘African-style business’, quite similar to what Broodryk and De Liefde alluded to as well (De Liefde 2003; Broodryk 2005).

Maybe it is something that we can export. Maybe we can invade Europe later on and then we can take our ideas there. I believe that African ideas are going to invade Europe and the US, because a lot of that thinking is tired, it is old. [...]

At a conference in March 2004, Blecher asked rhetorically: “Throughout every culture and religion there is truth and soul. So why are people not living ‘soul in business’?” He linked this to the terms ‘enlightened education’ and ‘enlightened self-interest’.

What we say to a company such as FNB is we will help you grow the market for you, capture market share in your name and give you the people you need to staff your branches in rural areas.¹⁸⁴

SA companies have to come to understand that they need to widen their consumer base. “If you don’t have meaning in your life, and economic value in your life, you can’t be my customer.”¹⁸⁵

Investec, *First National Bank*, and several other companies have contributed large sums of money. They realised that large-scale poverty and lurking social unrest was not in their business interest. Blecher argued: “*Investec* and others cannot do business in a vacuum. If we educate all 45 million people who will start businesses, it will be good for our economy.”¹⁸⁶

In order to promote the idea of ‘African leadership’ *CIDA City Campus* encourages students to study *The Spirit of African Leadership* (Banhegyi & Banhegyi 2003). Steve Banhegyi, partner of Eugenie Banhegyi, is a consultant, specialised in change management. He approached *CIDA City Campus* with the proposal to create an African leadership school, and subsequently the idea was readily accepted.

...I felt that time was fast running out and this generation of students was probably the last that could research the essence of African Leadership. I also suggested that the Western models of leadership might need to be re-valuated and confirmed in the African context (Banhegyi & Banhegyi 2003: 7).

Since 2005, Lovemore Mbigi is director of *CIDA’s Graduate School of African Leadership and Transformation* (GSALT). In the meantime, several friends and associates that he had come to know through the *South African Management Project* (SAMP) have joined him, either as a lecture or as member of the Board. Asked how Blecher established contacts with Lovemore Mbigi to lecture on ‘African leadership’, he replied: “Through the Kellogg Foundation.”

¹⁸⁴ Sunday Times Business Times, 10 November 2002.

¹⁸⁵ Financial Mail, 18 November 2002.

¹⁸⁶ Taddy Blecher at *The Soul of Business in SA Conference* organised by The Alternative School for Business (Johannesburg, 9 March 2004).

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Leadership Regional Network

The *W.K. Kellogg Foundation* (WKKF) is one of the numerous sponsors of *CIDA City Campus*, which is part of its strategy to promote an ‘African leadership paradigm’. WKKF’s home base is Battle Creek, Michigan, USA.¹⁸⁷ The regional head office of the Africa Program was in Pretoria, which coordinated and sponsored activities in Lesotho, Mozambique, Botswana, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. WKKF receives funding from the world-famous breakfast cereal manufacturer. The company has quite a record of accomplishment in South Africa. Kellogg’s manufacturing has been in South Africa since 1948. Under apartheid, the head office in Battle Creek imposed stringent moral obligations on its local operations.¹⁸⁸ It was the first company in South Africa to recognise a black trade union.¹⁸⁹ At times, Kellogg’s local management openly criticised the government’s labour policy:

The effect of this decision [a registration certificate to trade unions preventing some race groups from bargaining officially] is that these unions are prevented from representing the workers of their choice and we sympathise with them.¹⁹⁰

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Kellogg’s used to grant managerial awards for ‘excellent achievements’, in cooperation with the *Black Management Forum*.¹⁹¹ Already before that, WKKF provided grants for bursaries to undergraduate black African students in South Africa.¹⁹² W.K. Kellogg’s slogan ‘helping people to help themselves’ continued to be a central guideline for WKKF’s Africa Program. In 2000, the latter’s offices moved from Harare to Pretoria, which would make travel within southern Africa much more economical and easier.¹⁹³ Currently it is probably one of the most diligent distributors and users of ‘African management’ philosophy in southern Africa. The influence of Program Director Professor Mandivamba Rukuni, initially in charge of agricultural development, seemed to include policy development, execution, and supervision of the overall programme, comprising three main components: IDEAA (agricultural development), IRDP (rural development), and LeaRN, the *Leadership Regional Network*. Like Lovemore Mbigi, Rukuni was born and raised in Zimbabwe. Both are Shona, and they are close with each other, calling each other by their totem (*mutupo*) names or praise names.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁷ This was the situation in the period of the field research, 2003-2004.

¹⁸⁸ The Star, 6 September 1986.

¹⁸⁹ The Star, 20 August 1979.

¹⁹⁰ Rand Daily Mail, 29 February 1981.

¹⁹¹ Daily Dispatch, 5 July 1989; Sowetan, 7 July 1989.

¹⁹² E.g. Post Natal, 25 October 1986.

¹⁹³ The Citizen, 15 June 2000.

¹⁹⁴ *Mwayondizvo* is a subcategory of the Soko totem (baboon). Mbigi’s praise name is ‘Mbizi’ and is a subcategory of the Dube totem (zebra). The ‘Zim connection’ between two very influential persons in the WKKF Africa Program is notable. Zimbabwe has often played a significant role in intellectual debates, probably mainly due to Zimbabwe’s relatively well-developed education system during the 1980s.

The Mbire people are Masters of the Land. You hear me when I speak to Rukuni I refer to him as *Mwayondizvo*, the clan name of the ruling Mbire people. You see, he is proud when I call him that. [Loud laughter] He was very proud. It acknowledges his governance.¹⁹⁵

LeaRN was created to focus more specifically on leadership development in southern Africa.¹⁹⁶

It was a regional network with experts at universities and NGOs to line up with local LeaRN initiatives. Its regional office used to be based at the *University of Pretoria*. Selected students follow intensive training programmes to become familiar with various issues concerning leadership, entrepreneurship, community development, philosophy, and – crucial in LeaRN’s philosophy – with ‘African values’, before they pursue their studies in the USA. These students are trained to become the future elite of southern African leadership.

We expect you to be a star trooper. We expect you to be in the forefront. We are not looking for foot soldiers. You must be the elite. Community work is mandatory. [...] You can become who you want but be distinctively African. There was a time black people were using AMBI [i.e. a cream product to lighten the skin]. We tried to be like whites. There are too many expats in Africa, ill advising our governments. We want you to be African and cosmopolitan.¹⁹⁷

Upon completion of their studies abroad, the ‘grant fellows’ are expected to commit themselves to community development work. LeaRN was linked to the *Leadership Academy*, which was a sort of think-tank. It was created and funded by WKKF, aiming to be:

...a critical contributor to the change strategy that infuses into modern and globally accepted leadership theories, African values, leadership philosophies, and practices that will be the product of intellectual engagement and practical application. The Leadership Academy will engage with African thought leaders on the subject of Contemporary African Leadership.¹⁹⁸

‘Contemporary African Leadership’ and ‘Transformative Leadership’ were vital concepts in LeaRN’s vocabulary. The latter is allegedly about “leadership that is ethical, enabling of creativity and growth, and that has the will and competence to work for a society characterized by socio-economic justice.”¹⁹⁹ Audacity, in the sense of ‘courageous and ethical leadership, particularly at community level’ is supposed to be an element of ‘Transformative Leadership’. LeaRN recognised a need “to strengthen the cadre of middle managers in business, civil society and government organisations,” while criticising “the tendency to see leadership as emanating from a few ‘leaders’ at the apex of organizations and societies, in contradiction to the spirit of *ubuntu*.” LeaRN evaluated African values critically and recognised that their “original meaning has been distorted through the colonial and postcolonial experience, or otherwise put in service of particular viewpoints or vested

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 14 August 2003.

¹⁹⁶ Information provided by Ms Thandi Molefe of the *Academy for Educational Development* (Field report 22 August 2003).

¹⁹⁷ Lovemore Mbigi at the *Grant Fellows Leadership* programme in Benoni, 12 July 2003.

¹⁹⁸ Source: cover page of *Leadership Academy Program – Thesis and Dissertation Awards* [no date].

¹⁹⁹ Source: LeaRN brochure *Leadership Development programmes* (2001).

interests.” Therefore it would be necessary to “disentangle positive or progressive African values and beliefs from the web of illusion spun over time” with the ultimate aim of accomplishing ‘re-humanisation’.²⁰⁰ Apparently, the term ‘Contemporary African Leadership’ implies a rather critical view on terms, such as ‘African culture’ and ‘traditional values’. It seems to be eclectic in its outlook, seeking to conceptualise a leadership approach that suits the present context and challenges in South Africa. Sehoai Santho, acting director of LeaRN’s *Leadership Academy* explained:

‘Africanness’ has to do with *contemporary* [emphasis] African leadership, with the African leadership ethos that is time-competent: past – present – future, in particular the future. The past refers to the cultural reservoir, the African roots. What kind of values can we harvest from the past to use for the contemporary leadership? The issue is *not* [emphasis] to glorify everything from the past. We have to judge its relevance and what kinds or elements we can use for the objective of transformation we are looking at. Some parts of African culture can be quite problematic, with regard to gender for instance. The past systems are patriarchal and hierarchical. The leader as a ‘father figure’ comes from the past. Now we see that the first generation of post-colonialist leaders can be problematic. They lack a sense of common good. What values are important for us today? Now we have to look how these values can be functional.²⁰¹

In 2003, WKKF decided to restructure LeaRN, including the *Leadership Academy*. The activities of the Africa Program had to be decentralised, with a far lesser role for the ‘regional hub’ in Pretoria. Rukuni and Mbigi judged the restructuring as a logical and necessary step, ‘just a next stage in our development’. Rukuni felt that WKKF had to carry on making the work ‘more effective’ on community level. It was no longer useful to have large institutional structures in Pretoria. Principally, the ideological legitimisation for the restructuring was that ‘the African paradigm could never get through’. Concerned staff members in senior management positions, however, complained that there had been ‘no prior consultation’. Allegedly, the whole process had been a straightforward top-down exercise, actually quite the opposite of a participatory ‘African way’. A ‘necessary restructuring’ of WKKF’s Africa Program resulted in a marginalisation of leading persons within LeaRN and the *Leadership Academy* that adhered to more contemporary versions of ‘African leadership’. Moreover, as feared by some, the ongoing conversation on ‘Contemporary African Leadership’ would come to a halt. This could give more room to more dogmatic, traditional interpretation of ‘African leadership’. As a result, Rukuni succeeded in reinforcing Mbigi’s position at the forefront of the WKKF Africa Program in order to convey the message of the ‘African paradigm’. Rukuni explained this as follows:

...politicians, businesspeople; it is just amazing. I found that in many cases most Africans just like it. It is seen as self-assertiveness as Africans, rediscovering our African culture and heritage, celebrating African culture and how we apply it to leadership. That is how it is usually depicted. The ones who are

²⁰⁰ Source: *An African leadership paradigm for the 21st century – Appendix 1 to the Proposal to the WKKF on LeaRN Phase II* (2003), page 1 (Field report 22 July 2003).

²⁰¹ Interview with Sehoai Santho on 1 August 2003.

hostile to it are the ones who have been scarred by racial discrimination to an extent that they then think it is a way of separating blacks from the whites. I have seen [frightened] South Africans who get very uncomfortable because they just say, “I am colourless. I have no colour, no history. I am just a South African. [Laughter] I prefer to be outward.” They have been scarred so badly, they cannot even afford to try to be proud that they are different and that [the] other person has a right to be proud of his heritage.²⁰²

The liaison between Lovemore Mbigi with WKKF and LeaRN turned out to be a very important link with regard to the distribution of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa and neighbouring countries. The access to considerable financial resources from WKKF in the United States was a crucial factor in creating a new leadership elite for southern Africa, equipped with an ‘African paradigm’. In addition, it meant a substantial source of income to Mbigi’s office.

Eskom’s ‘African business leadership’

In his capacity as non-executive chairperson of *Eskom Holdings Limited* – ‘Africa’s largest electricity utility’ – Reuel Jethro Khoza has been promoting the incorporation of ‘African values’ in the workplace since a long time. At the *Theory of the African Firm* workshop in 1992, he spoke about *ubuntu* in relation to management and organisation, which later was branded as Mbigi’s trademark. Khoza continued to be an active producer and distributor of ‘African management’ philosophy, although he uses a slightly different term: ‘African business leadership’. Already in 1986, Khoza drew attention to ‘the merit of indigenizing management and business enterprise’. Khoza felt that African values should be incorporated into management.

Corporate South Africa must also come round to acknowledging imperfections of western conceptions of management. Corporate South Africa must also come to realize that South Africa is in Africa. A magnanimous corporate South Africa would also be willing to explore and possibly incorporate aspects of indigenous African value systems in this country’s art of management (Khoza 1986: 4).

Khoza’s posture is generally determined and his language is strident, revealing a notable degree of masculinity, e.g. by showing a strong sense of self-confidence.

For too long, we as Africans have externalised the blame for our predicament. We have blamed everyone, from the colonial powers to today’s world financial agencies, to pestilence and other acts of God. We believe ourselves captive to and victims of the environment. [...] We render ourselves powerless (Khoza 2003b: 1-2).

In general, masculinity is a salient feature in ‘African management’ discourse, as can be construed from an overemphasis on self-confidence and frequent references to strong leaders, such as Shaka Zulu, as Phinda Mzawakhe Madi demonstrated (Madi 2000).²⁰³ Khoza is a frequent speaker at conferences and business meetings. The launch of the book *Let Africa Lead. African*

²⁰² Interview with Mandivamba Rukuni on 12 May 2004.

²⁰³ Chapter 10 of this thesis, section 10.1 *The historical dimension*, will reflect – amongst other things – on the ‘colonial ideology of hyper-masculinity’ and the redefinition of masculinity and femininity as a result of the ‘colonial encounter’. *‘African management’ in South Africa* Page 108 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

transformational leadership for 21st Century Business has further reinforced his efforts to advertise the concept of ‘African business leadership’. According to Khoza, the *ubuntu* would facilitate teamwork and innovation. Moreover, it would imply integrity and humbleness, create a sense of self-esteem, encourage self-actualisation of people, and promote decentralisation of power.

One way of understanding and applying *ubuntu* in the corporate environment, for instance, is to see it as the source of effective teamwork. It provides modern business with a means of attaining a shared vision to drive efficiency and spur innovation (Khoza 2006: 12).

So African wisdom insists that leaders are ordinary people who should express humility and not arrogance (Khoza 2006: 23). [...] My central theme is that the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, or African humanism, can save Africa and help to steer the world on a better course. [...] Africa may show the world a better way to develop its human potential (Khoza 2006: 5).

The claims made in view of *ubuntu* in the domain of management are far reaching, underlining the general idea that ‘Africans have relied for far too long on western models of leadership’.

We as Africans have so far shamefully neglected to disseminate our leadership ideas to the world, or even to assimilate them ourselves. [...]...we must write our own history and seek a future in line with our own values (Khoza 2006: 26).

[...] I strongly believe that *Ubuntu* is both uniquely African and exportable; indeed the world will need it because *Ubuntu* recognises human commonality as fundamental in place of the religious and ethnic divisions that bedevil many organisations and are also destroying hopes of world peace.²⁰⁴

The notion of ‘glocalising’ *ubuntu*, the aspiration to export *ubuntu* to the global management community that apparently characterises Afrocentric management views of Mbigi, Broodryk, De Liefde, Blecher, and others, is clearly also part of Khoza’s vision. ‘African business leadership’ would, however, also be connected to the notion of transformational leadership and a community-based conception of leadership aimed at establishing ‘a commonality of purpose between leaders and led’. The idea of ‘servant leadership’ is then called into play: not in the sense of a demeaning ‘master-servant’ relationship as in the days of slavery, but in the sense of service to the community. As assumed, leaders exert more influence by a form of consensus than through issuing commands. It does not involve the use of authority or force, but would entail ‘walking in front’ and ‘paving the way’ (Khoza 2006: 20).

In July 2003, the Financial Mail issued a cover story: *The African Way: Khoza plans to change SA’s leadership style. Can it fly?* The feature suggested the publication of a five-volume research report of a ‘Foundational Study’ on the *African Leadership Experience*. The study sought to answer the question: is there an African leadership style? The research report was not made public. Instead,

²⁰⁴ Source: www.reuelkhoza.co.za [accessed 22 July 2005].

it was compressed into a chapter of Khoza's book *Lead Africa Lead* (Khoza 2006: 103-128).²⁰⁵ Officially, the study was commissioned to *Africa Now*, a consultancy bureau headed by Eric Mafuna.²⁰⁶ Mafuna claimed he had personally proposed the idea to Reuel Khoza to reflect more in-depth on the notion of 'African leadership'. They both had been sharing interest in the issue for a long time.²⁰⁷ During the apartheid years, it was openly questioned – within South Africa, as well as abroad – whether black people were actually capable of managing and leading others.

A few characteristics of 'African leadership' stood out in the *Financial Mail* cover story. One was the principle of fairness: "In the quest for fairness, it is important that no party goes home empty-handed," Mafuna stated.²⁰⁸ In his book, Reuel Khoza explained this by means of 'social arbitrage', a never-ending process of adjustment and reconciliation, solving issues through brokerage and building trust (Khoza 2006: 21-23). Moreover, to achieve credibility for 'top black managers', first they would have to undo apartheid legacies.

Typically, the first generation of postcolonial African leaders displayed monarchical tendencies often expressed in conspicuous consumption and dictatorship. At corporate level, the black leadership class operates on the organisational momentum and work ethic 'inherited from generations of apartheid-sponsored leaders and managers'. The effect of this, the research finds, is a credibility problem for top black managers.²⁰⁹

Not just fairness, but leadership 'within an African ethos' needs to be encouraged to restore leadership credibility in South Africa. Another principle concerned the ability of managing paradoxes: "A good leader is someone who is able to manage the paradox of listening and consulting, then acting boldly" and "the only counter to [...] the tendency to autocracy is robust debate."²¹⁰ Although *ubuntu* is assumingly about 'African humanism' and humility, Khoza's approach to leadership is not particularly soft: "The most effective leader of all is democratic, who has a knack for listening, but who at the end, is able to give bold leadership and make hard-nosed

²⁰⁵ This was Chapter 5 *Cultures* that featured Ali Mazrui quite prominently. Mazrui is an influential Africanist intellectual and Muslim, originating from Kenya. Chapter 8 of this thesis deals with Afrocentrism, to which Mazrui's views can be linked.

²⁰⁶ Obviously, *Eskom* holds the intellectual property of the research findings. Eric Mafuna is director of consultancy bureau *Africa Now*, one of the founder members of the *Black Management Forum* (BMF), and founder of the *African Leadership Group*, which was launched in July 2006 (Source: www.africanleadershipgroup.com). Mafuna was President of the BMF from 1977 to 1987. In October 2006, Mafuna's name was mentioned in relation to an alleged fraud at *Eskom*, for "...questionable' payments that went to companies, whose directors include Fasedemi, Ekong and Mafuna." Mafuna denied these allegations (Source: Fin24, 15 October 2006). http://www.fin24.co.za/articles/default/display_article.aspx?ArticleId=1518-24_2013833 [accessed 17 January 2007].

²⁰⁷ Interview with Eric Mafuna on 11 May 2004.

²⁰⁸ *Financial Mail*, 25 July 2003, page 20.

²⁰⁹ *Financial Mail*, 25 July 2003, page 22.

²¹⁰ *Financial Mail*, 25 July 2003, page 21.

decisions.”²¹¹ In what sense is all this ‘African’? That would only show in real action: “The more attention to build leadership focus on *being* rather than *doing*, the more likely the African concept of leadership will come to the fore.”²¹² In this reading, embracing an ‘African identity’ and being mindful of ‘the values of your ancestors’ are supposedly vital ingredients of ‘African leadership’. Tradition would help to shape the identity of a cultural group, however, to “understand tradition correctly, one must look forwards, not backwards” (Khoza 2006: 11). Africa’s cultural heritage, the inheritance of past heroic kings and presidents, should inspire ‘contemporary African leadership’: “Now it is time to dip into our past for the inspiration that will feed new marketable ideas, products and processes” (Khoza 2006: 14).

Furthermore, the Financial Mail cover story went into the somewhat delicate question of the search for the mysterious ‘X-factor’, the ‘secrets’ of ethnic business success in South Africa, the unknown features of effective leadership of ‘the Jews’, ‘the Afrikaners’ and ‘the Indians’.²¹³



Picture 2: Eric Mafuna of Africa Now (Photo by Henk van den Heuvel)

Mafuna: “They all share a blending of traditional thought, leadership that is close to the people, thrown in with a bit of religious practice.”²¹⁴ Mafuna’s statements suggested that there was ‘something’ that would have made Africans indeed ‘less effective’.

We recognise that we are a multicultural society. Now if we talk about leadership that has to manage or lead a multicultural democracy, it goes by without saying that all the components, all the groups, should be encouraged or required to *contribute towards the centre* [emphasis added] [...] Your other

²¹¹ Financial Mail, 25 July 2003, page 20. Similarly, Mike Boon has given quite firm interpretations of *ubuntu* in relation to leadership and management. This seems to support the observation that ‘African management’ discourse is characterised by a high degree of masculinity in the way it is represented in written and spoken texts.

²¹² Financial Mail, 25 July 2003, pp. 22.

²¹³ It would not be the first time in global history that the Jewish community was targeted and singled out for their supposed extraordinary economic success. Parallels with anti-Semitic, or possibly even with dogmatic Occidentalist viewpoints, might somehow be plausible in this regard. However, in publications or verbal comments of neither *Africa Now* nor *Eskom* have references been found to anti-Semitic sentiments.

²¹⁴ Financial Mail, 25 July 2003, pp. 22.

compatriots around the table seem to have figured out what it is that makes them effective, to know why they are effective. The Indians in South Africa know why they are effective. The Afrikaners know why they are effective, but do black people know how to make themselves effective? [...] It is no longer a question of one race or one ethnic group that is going to dominate. Nobody dominates in this environment. [...] We are saying: black people owe it to themselves to produce leadership that is going to contribute to this South Africanness (Interview with Eric Mafuna on 11 May 2004).

‘Harvard management knowledge’ would mean nothing without contextualising it. It has to be sorted out what is compatible ‘with the African way’ and what is not. “You don’t find that in Africa right now,” Mafuna concluded sadly. Opposed to Mafuna’s point of view, Thabisi Hoena, a lecturer at *Rhodes University*, was particularly critical about the search for the ‘X-factor’:

The *Africa Now* report says Africans should learn from ‘the West, Jews, Indians, and Afrikaners’, as if the issue is a simple matter of internalising that which others have. [...] Furthermore, it denies reality by *divorcing Africans from the totality of their history and their lived experiences*, which reflect and define their current inferior status. It must be disputed whether the absence of African leadership can be explained by blaming Africans for failing to fish what they can from their primordial past or to learn from privileged segments of other groups (Sunday Times, 27 July 2003; emphasis added).

Moreover, Hoena called *ubuntu* a controversial concept: “Pegging our hopes on such base premises as *ubuntu* [...] marginalises African knowledge, placing it outside the loop of human experience.”²¹⁵ A basic assumption in the ‘foundational study’ on the *African Leadership Experience* concerns the perseverance of the concept of *ubuntu* and its value and applicability in a modern-day business setting. In other words, ‘African thoughts and ideas about life [...] have survived’, and are still useful.

Yet, in spite of the preponderance of these foreign cultural and leadership influences, aspects or remnants of African leadership principles and culture have refused to be totally eclipsed by the more superior, more urgent and current foreign influences (*Africa Now* 2003: 136).

This belief contrasts considerably with critics who seriously doubt that “any cohesive and clearly distinctive form of indigenous culture” would still exist in South Africa (Bernstein, A. 2002: 198). Nonetheless, *Eskom*’s engagement with leadership carries a very powerful symbolism, as shown by metaphorical slogans, such as ‘light up Africa’ and ‘unleashing Africa’s energy’. This illustrates Mafuna’s rather optimistic interpretation of ‘African leadership’, with reference to the idea of Africa as the ‘cradle of humankind’.²¹⁶

If Africa is the cradle of humankind, the origin of the species, then it was Africans who led humanity to start with (Khoza 2006: 26).

The latter statement implies that Africans are capable of developing new perspectives on leadership. After all, humankind emerged from Africa and the first human beings were able to

²¹⁵ *Romantic myths of a glorious past won’t help Africa get ahead today* Sunday Times, 27 July 2003.

²¹⁶ The ‘Out of Africa’ argument about the evolution of mankind is further considered in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in section 5.1 *Themes*.

develop tools to survive, to multiply, and spread over the world. The aspiration to restore confidence among Africans and the black (business) community seemed to be a major motive for this initiative. As Mafuna stated, the aim was to create a 'new South African identity', repairing the dehumanising effects of apartheid that had interfered with the people's sense of identity, so people could 'redefine themselves'. In Mafuna's view, the outcome would probably be 'an inclusive leadership style', an amalgamation of different styles and modules. In this respect, Mafuna also used the term 'contemporary leadership': you have to look at what you have, take what you need and harness that and 'strip off' what is not useful. In other words, preserve what is good and upgrade that.²¹⁷

Eskom is duly proud of its achievements in transforming the electricity utility from a largely Afrikaner parastatal into a competitive 'public enterprise'. The organisation has changed in many ways. The *Human Resources Division* has made efforts to make its personnel more diversified, both in terms of "bringing women, people of colour and people with disability into the organisation" and "working on the problems and difficulties arising from individual or group behaviour associated with race and gender." In all regions, *Eskom* introduced 'diversity structures' that determined and monitored the 'diversity status' in the company.²¹⁸ Mrs Mpho Letlape is Managing Director of *Eskom's Human Resources Division* and sits on the company's eleven-member *Executive Committee*. At a conference in November 2003, she emphasised *Eskom's* achievements in the area of employment equity, diversity management, and the need for 'high performance', stating, "Management should not be too lenient on poor performers."²¹⁹ Division managers, who had not met their business targets, she argued, should forget about their end-of-the-year bonus, but those who came up with new initiatives that turned out to be profitable, would be rewarded substantively. When asked how that related to 'African values' in the company, as promoted by Reuel Khoza, she smiled and replied: "This is very *ubuntu* to me. *Ubuntu* means everybody knows his role and knows what is expected. You have an obligation to *Eskom* as a community." What else would *ubuntu* mean in *Eskom* according to Mpho Letlape?

My understanding of *ubuntu* is "I am who I am because of who you are" and "I am who I am because of you." I will treat you the way that you would like to be treated. I will expect you to treat me the way that I would like to be treated, which says that you have to listen to me. You have to hear me. You have to know me. You have to understand me. You have to accept me. You have to be emphatic towards me and you have to accommodate me, and that is why we sit and we talk. We talk a lot in *Eskom*, but we also work a lot and work quite hard and that is why we manage to achieve what we need to achieve. In

²¹⁷ A similar view was expressed by Taddy Blecher of *CIDA City Campus* (interview 4 May 2004), as if it would be possible to distillate an essence of 'Africanness' if you peel off the outer layers.

²¹⁸ This was described in Legend (2004), the bulletin of the *Distribution Division*, pp. 11-12.

²¹⁹ Presentation *Becoming Global Power Company of the Year* by Mpho Letlape at the fifth Annual Institute for Organisation Development and Transformation Conference, Boksburg, 12 November 2003.

Eskom, it is okay to do a lot of things that in other organisations won't be okay to do, like it is okay to go out for a meal together. It is okay to do things together as a team, because we feel that by so doing you get to know each other on a different level.²²⁰

Letlape's interpretation of *ubuntu* could somehow be associated with the Ten Commandments in the Bible.²²¹ This would be no surprise, as Mpho Letlape is a Christian and an active member of the Lutheran Church. *Eskom's* leadership vision is, however, not merely a philanthropic project. Letlape argued that *Eskom's* organisational culture should be aligned with its 'strategic intent.' This could be established by raising the level of employee satisfaction and using consultative forums.

That is engaging your employees in saying: "Tell me what you think, I promise I will listen to you, and I will build it into whatever it is." [...] Before we make any major changes, we go into a - what we call - central consultative forum with organised labour and we are going to consultation forums with our management levels as well. If we make a decision that they don't like, obviously they say: "You didn't engage with us. You didn't consult with us," but that is what we do.

"*Ubuntu* is not soft," Letlape stated resolutely at the IODT conference. The notion of *bold* leadership and *hard-nosed* decisions as publicised by Reuel Khoza seemed to be clearly reflected in her own presentation.²²² In the past, Letlape worked with IBM when she became a member of the *Black Management Forum*, just like Reuel Khoza and Eric Mafuna. In 1996, she joined the *Institute of People Management* (IPM), of which she later became the President.

Interestingly, while *Eskom* pursued a strategy of advancing an 'African Leadership' approach, it engaged IBM, a multinational company of American origin, to assist *Eskom* creating a 'strong culture'. Would these external influences not jeopardise the Afrocentric character of *Eskom's* 'African Leadership' ideal? Not in Reuel Khoza's view:

...there is nothing xenophobic, or hostile to any other culture or people, in my Afrocentric approach to business leadership. [...] there is a great deal of crossover between Eurocentric ideas and my own, despite my championing of African values. An eclectic leadership approach is unavoidable, recognising that other cultures will continue to contribute to the expertise that guides business and economic development (Khoza 2006: 8-9).

Eskom wants to become 'a global organisation', and to be 'an African leader' and to be recognised as a leader generally from the global perspective. Yet, attaining an African identity should remain a key feature, in *Eskom's* point of view. 'African management' advocates, e.g. Lovemore Mbigi and Phinda Madi, are hired to support this process, also referred to as the *Vision-E* project.

²²⁰ Interview with Mpho Letlape on 9 December 2003.

²²¹ Note that *ubuntu* has more often been associated with the Christian faith, which was, for instance, said about the philosopher Augustine Shutte and about Desmond Tutu, particularly in the context of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*; e.g. see Battle (1997); Wilson (2001).

²²² The observation made before with regard to the views of Reuel Khoza, about the masculine character of the 'African leadership' approach within *Eskom*, would therefore also apply to the Managing Director of the Human Resources Division of *Eskom*.

What does 'Africanism' mean? [...] One of the things that we have done is: we make joint decisions on almost everything. It takes us a long time, but whatever decision is made, it is owned by everybody and everybody is committed to it. You cannot walk away from it. [...] We spend a lot of time sitting and talking to each other, in meetings and everything. Sometimes I wish I were back at IBM where you just decide on something and you do it. [...] One of the things we said was: previously we were isolated as an organisation; now we want to be African leaders. So that is one of the dimension in our culture metrics, if I could put it that way, and yes, so part of *Vision E* looks at African history, African practices, and when we are going to the classroom, we will spend half a day on 'What does it mean to be an African leader, for you, for different people?' Then we will have an evening, an African evening, and we will work on that. We will invite like the Lovemore Mbigis, the Phinda Madis of the world to come and host it.

In this regard, a special leadership development programme was developed, called *Breeding the Best* that draws "on African concepts of *ubuntu* (a rough translation would be 'shared humanity'). It aims for a shift for instance, from a country to a global focus, from an individual to a team-based approach, and from a management style that controls to one that leads."²²³ Although *Eskom's* Human Resources Division is involved in leadership development, it is run by the Corporate Communications Division, of which Mr Joe Matsau was the Managing Director. When asked to characterise the organisational culture of *Eskom*, Matsau put most emphasis on efficiency and 'hard work'.

The organisational culture here is: delivery, delivery, delivery, efficiency, efficiency, efficiency, and we are continuously changing our business models as necessary and the culture is for us to be efficient, to be the best. [...] That is our culture: push, push-push. Part of your question was: how do we get it right? How do you manage to get the least cost of electricity? It is efficiencies. [...] That is the culture of this organisation: we are working, working, working, and working!²²⁴

About the implementation of 'African values' in *Eskom's* management practice, Matsau explained:

We have made it our business to understand one another's culture. [...] It is not so easy. There is nothing like 'black culture', when you drill down the commonalities. [...] We recognise too that Africans have big families, extended families. If, for instance, one has to attend a funeral, this week, next week attend a funeral, we have made it our business to understand, but of course in our books we have the nuclear family that we also recognise, but the biggest thing is to allow inputs contribution by other, by other parties. [...] It is very consultative and after consulting you take a decision. We do not take decisions by consulting; we consult in order to come up with a decision. [...] They ask any question they wanted, we respond, and nobody is injured in the process.

Remarkable was Matsau's statement that there would be no such thing as 'black culture'. Rather, he put emphasis on the commonalities between the different cultural groups in South Africa. This is consistent with the proclaimed 'all inclusive approach'. In Matsau's view, 'African leadership' would in the first place be a question of morality and transparency.

Contrary to cases that explicitly display an Afrocentric focus on management and organisation

²²³ People Dynamics, January 2003, pp. 14.

²²⁴ Interview with Joe Matsau on 11 March 2004.

– such as *Vukuni Ubuntu Community Projects*; *CIDA City Campus* alias the ‘Ubuntu University’; WKKF’s *Leadership Regional Network* (LeaRN), and *Eskom Holdings Limited* – there are more tacit forms of experiencing and performing ‘African management’ principles in South Africa. Next, the leadership philosophy of Monhla Hlahla is presented.

Monhla Hlahla: a tacit ‘African management’ practitioner

There is a range of managers and organisational leaders who sympathise with ‘African management’ philosophy and supposedly implement ‘African management’ principles in their daily practices, without using this particular label. One such a manager is Mrs Monhla Hlahla, Managing Director of the *Airport Company of South Africa* (ACSA), responsible for ‘the strategic guidance, management, and performance of the company’ (ACSA Annual Report 2003, pp. 18). ACSA operates South Africa’s three international airports at Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban and six domestic airports. The company claims to be committed to ‘transformation and *Black Economic Empowerment*’ and to the *New Partnership for Africa’s Development* (NEPAD) “for the creation of a sustainable aviation industry in Africa as part of the revival of the continent’s social, political, and economic development” (ACSA Annual Report 2003, pp. 14). The South African government owns 74, 61% of the share capital, and the Italian International Airports ADR (*Aeroporti di Roma*) 20%. ADR takes four seats in ACSA’s eleven-member Board of Directors.

ACSA’s offices in Bedfordview, Johannesburg, did not show any particular ‘African’ artefacts or decorations.²²⁵ Monhla Hlahla was born and raised in Limpopo. Her father had died at a young age and her mother had encouraged her to study and to ‘lead a good life’. A defining experience in Hlahla’s life had been her engagement with political activism. *Black Consciousness* inspired her, but she was never ‘a stone-throwing type of activist’, as she wished to highlight. Monhla Hlahla became a member of the *Azanian Students Movement* (AZASM).²²⁶ At a young age, she joined one of the ‘labour advisory groups’ doing political education work in the mines, factories, and townships. She was jailed for several months because of her political work. In South Africa, she had to discontinue her studies, amongst others at *Fort Hare University*, several times because of the prevailing political situation. She managed to get a study scholarship for the United States where she stayed until after 1994. Small-scale loan schemes were her special field of expertise. After her return to South Africa in the mid-1990s, her career was skyrocketing in a short period. She worked with the *Development Bank of Southern Africa*, *Old Mutual* and she was then appointed Managing

²²⁵ Observation during visit to ACSA’s head office on 12 May 2004 (Field report 12 May 2004).

²²⁶ The *Azanian Students Movement* (AZASM) was a *Black Consciousness*-aligned student organisation, formed in 1978. One of its predecessors was the *South African Students Organisation* (SASO), an organisation of students advocating the Black Consciousness philosophy. It was heavily influenced by the American *Black Power* movement (Source: www.joburg.org.za/soweto/history1.stm [accessed 31 August 2005]).

Director of ACSA, at a rather young age.²²⁷



Picture 3: Monhla Hlahla (ACSA) in her office (Photo by Henk van den Heuvel)

In 2005, Monhla Hlahla was elected *Businesswoman of the Year*.²²⁸ When asked to describe her management style, Hlahla replied: tough and democratic. The difficult part of being a democratic leader is the balancing of all interests at stake. Hlahla's view as a managing director is that employees are in need of decisions and clear directions. That was lacking in ACSA's organisational culture before she had joined as Managing Director: "There was a fear for taking decisions."

I am a tough, decisive democrat. I deliberately use the word that I build synergy for a greater value. I respect every human being in the area and that is why you are here. And I always consult your view. [...] It is not patriotism. It is actually taking part in the heritage, we are a vast diverse society, whether he is strange, but it does not make you any less. You enhance what you have. So, that people care for each other, just because of our heritage. It is one of our values.²²⁹

'Promote our African Heritage and Diversity' was mentioned in ACSA's annual report of 2003 as first in a list of ACSA's prime corporate values. The report did not elaborate on what its precise meaning was. To Hlahla, it would mean 'taking care of each other' and treasuring South Africa's 'vast diverse society', not feeling or behaving superior to others who may be 'different'.²³⁰ Concerning her management style, she spontaneously used the word *ubuntu*, which mainly meant to her 'communication', 'reflection' and 'focusing'. To the question, how the *ubuntu* principle applied to day-to-day management in her experience, Hlahla replied:

Well, whether you do it immediately, or you do it as a concept of reflection on what you did for the day, you have got to remember that you are who you are because of others, which means do onto them what you would like them to do onto you. Never do something just for you, because you are because of other people. What usually works for me, because when you manage [...] the CEO must think purely of the maximisation of the output for everybody.

²²⁷ Monhla Hlahla was probably in her late thirties approximately at the time of the interview.

²²⁸ Source: www.bwasa.co.za/content/Default.aspx?Node=593.40 [accessed 31 August 2005].

²²⁹ Interview with Monhla Hlahla on 12 May 2004.

²³⁰ Gavin Andersson (LeaRN) referred in this regard to a rejection of 'ideologies of superiority' (interview with Gavin Andersson on 2 September 2003).

At the end of every working day, Mrs Hlahla tries to reflect on the values that are important to her, and to ask herself the question, whether these values received sufficient attention in her daily work as a managing director. She encouraged her colleagues, the (twelve) senior managers that reported to her, to do the same, without using buzzwords, such as ‘African management’ *ubuntu*, without referring to any ‘traditional values’. *Ubuntu* symbolises a universal value, in Hlahla’s view.

While *ubuntu* or goodness could be coined as South African, I think it can go anywhere at every corner of the world. You will find people with similar philosophies, so it can only be human.

Monhla Hlahla’s reading of *ubuntu* and management indicates that ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa does not constitute a monolithic body of knowledge and insights. There are various interpretations with different accents. Obviously, there are numerous common features and similarities between these interpretation, as well as disparities and even paradoxes. The next section focuses on a crucial actor in ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa: Lovemore Mbigi. From its initial phase, he has been involved in all three cultural dimensions: emergence, distribution and utilisation.

4.2 Mbigi’s Rainmaker Management Consultants: a key actor

Lovemore Mbigi is founder and executive director of *Rainmaker Management Consultants* (RMC) – alias *African Intellectual Resources* (AIR) – based in Johannesburg. Mbigi has created the impression that there was never really a need to invest in marketing his services. People would just call to hire him for a motivational talk, a business breakfast gathering, a radio or TV interview, a workshop on diversity, or some other assignment. He described his own marketing strategy simply as ‘waiting for a call’. Any call could lead to new exposures, new ‘followership’, and not at least, of course, to additional income. Mbigi has never been timid about his business success and accumulated wealth, his other house in Harare (Zimbabwe) and in Florida (USA). He often said that he was longing for an early retirement, letting others share in his business success: “After getting a new contract, I used to send money back home [in Harare] to the suffering relatives to celebrate.”²³¹ Nor modesty is a feature of Mbigi’s public image. He deliberately started charging high consultancy fees to test his ‘market value’. Likewise, students and trainees were advised ‘not to undercharge yourself’.

It is time that the world pays for African expertise. Do not under-market it because it is African.

This quotation reveals something of his underlying ideological aspirations, namely seeking recognition of anything African, in particular in the context of the new dispensation in South Africa.

²³¹ Lovemore Mbigi at WKKF’s *Grant Fellows Leadership* programme in Benoni, 14 July 2003.

In the course of years, RMC has built up a huge network with numerous clients, to mention a few important ones:

Spoornet (freight transport on rail, a division of Transnet Railway Company)
Sentrachem (chemicals industry)
Amplats (Anglo American Platinum Corporation)
Nampak (packaging)
Zincor (Zinc Corporation of South Africa, a subsidiary of Kumba Resources)
South African Post Office (SAPO)
Fedsure Holdings Ltd (financial services, insurance, affiliated with Investec)
The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (community leadership development)
TA Holdings (Investment Company in Zimbabwe)
Impala Platinum Mines
ECSA Ltd (nuclear technology)
The National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency (NURCHA).²³²

In 2006, in association with *Rhodes University Investec Business School* (RIBS), Mbigi's office won a large piece of a tender for a *Parliament Leadership Development Programme* training course to South African Members of Parliament, to obtain a degree in commerce or an MBA. This is noteworthy, because it allegedly takes Afrocentric management discourse right down to the centre of political power. In addition, the training course might be replicated at provincial level, expanding its unquestionable strong ideological contents literally nationwide. A brief illustration:

Lovemore Mbigi, who teaches at Rhodes University's school of business and at Cida City Campus, the almost-free university in Johannesburg, gave the keynote address on the first day of the course. [...] Mbigi gave the MPs a tour of some of the modules, pointing out somewhat controversially - at least as far as those Democratic Alliance members attending were concerned - that "liberal democracy is an abortion of democracy."²³³

Motivational talks and 'one-time' assignments occurred, among others, with *SA Colgate Palmolive*, *Old Mutual Business School*, *SA Paper and Printers Association*, *First National Bank* (Rural Mpumalanga Region), the Office of the Premier of Gauteng Province. An element of the *Rainmaker Management Consultants'* method is its supposedly unique large-scale tactic that Mbigi characterised as 'non-western'.

It is a mass rally approach to consulting and that is our core competence, because no western consultant can handle those numbers...for three days [...] 250 people.²³⁴

In workshops and training programmes, occasionally videos were shown of underprivileged Afro-Americans who made their 'American dream' come true and became millionaires (e.g. Les Brown's video *Fears and Failures*). Usually, the audience responded excitedly. The message was

²³² Most of the clients listed were mentioned in an interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 9 May 2004. This information was largely verified based on analysis of office documents and participant observations.

²³³ Business Report, 22 August 2006 (Source: www.busrep.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3403544 [accessed 29 August 2006]).

²³⁴ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 9 May 2004.

highly optimistic and inspirational: seize opportunities in life, overcome your fears and work hard to realise your dreams, rather than being desperate and passive.



Picture 4: Lovemore Mbigi at his residence in Johannesburg (Photo by Henk van den Heuvel)

Talk of *ubuntu* seemed to lend itself effortlessly in combination with straightforward lessons from ‘typical American’ entrepreneurship and management approaches.²³⁵ This was demonstrated, for instance, with popular video materials and literature.²³⁶ Academics, entrepreneurs, and management theorists, cited in slides that Mbigi used in his presentations, are a reflection of his extensive private library, comprising many works of popular American management authors. Obviously, Mbigi is a studious reader, with a very wide scope of interest, ranging from accountancy, management, leadership, business, history, and transformation to anthropology and political science. His library is vast and it used to be meticulously organised by subject and clearly numbered. Most books had obviously been studied, as could be observed from bookmarks and handwritten notes.

The website of *Speakers of Note* advertised Professor Lovemore Mbigi as one of the ‘highly commended speakers’ with a ‘home grown strategy’ as a special feature.²³⁷ It needs to be mentioned, that the text was produced by Mbigi’s office. However, no reference was made to ‘African management’ or the *ubuntu* concept; on the other hand, Mbigi’s rural background was particularly highlighted. In addition, his outfit was extraordinary, at least not a standard suit-and-tie

²³⁵ The expression ‘typical American’ is of course as questionable as the claim ‘authentically African’, but – somewhat ironically – reference is made here to the widespread myth of the ‘American dream’ about a newspaper boy becoming a millionaire.

²³⁶ Course materials contained references to for instance Peter Drucker (e.g. *Managing for the future: the 1990s and beyond*, New York: Truman Talley Books/Plume, 1993; *Innovation and entrepreneurship: practice and principles*, London: Heinemann, 1986), Philip Kotler (e.g. with Gray Armstrong *Principles of Marketing*, Englewood Cliffs: Pearson Prentice Hall, 1980 original publication), Tom Peters (with Robert H. Waterman *In search of excellence: lessons from America's best-run companies*, New York: Harper & Row, 1983), Rosabeth Moss Kanter (e.g. with Barry Stein and Todd Jick *The challenge of organizational change: how companies experience it and leaders guide it*, New York: Free Press, 1994), Jeffrey Pfeffer (e.g. *Managing with power: politics and influence in organizations*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1992), Alvin Toffler (e.g. *Powershift: knowledge, wealth, and violence at the edge of the 21st century*, New York: Bantam, 1991).

²³⁷ Source: www.speakersofnote.co.za/list/lovemore_mbigi.html [accessed 7 March 2006].

executive's wear. His clothing might suggest some kind of ethnic dress, although probably not quite 'African' style, but anyway somewhat eccentric, just like his management views.²³⁸



Prof Lovemore Mbigi

Born in the Zimbabwean Highfield High Density Suburbs, Lovemore Mbigi grew up in the hills and Savanna plains of Manyene communal land, herding cattle, and tilling land. It soon became clear then that this peasant boy was destined to play a key role in redefining and reshaping history, because of his curiosity and high appetite for knowledge and reading. Prof Lovemore Mbigi is a business lecturer and consultant who specialises in strategy, transformation and leadership. From his diverse knowledge, he is able to tailor his addresses, workshops, facilitation, and teambuilding sessions to address your corporate needs.

Some of Prof Mbigi's keynote addresses:

- SPIRIT OF AFRICAN MANAGEMENT
- AFRICAN HUNTER'S SPIRIT IN MODERN ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- AFRICAN SPIRIT HIERARCHY IN HARNESSING ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY
- AFRICAN SPIRIT HIERARCHY IN HARNESSING THE SPIRIT OF INNOVATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Picture 5: From *Speakers of Note* website, courtesy of Jenny von Gogh and Prof. Lovemore Mbig (RMC)

The emphasis on the facility “to tailor his addresses, workshops, facilitation and teambuilding sessions to address your corporate needs” would come down to a selection from an already existing wide arsenal of ‘modules’ on various themes (e.g. diversity training, entrepreneurship, transformation, employment equity, etc.). For specific workshops and trainings, selected modules are compiled together into a reader or ‘learner handbook’, consisting of course materials and reading material. These ‘info packs’ are written in a bullet-wise manner.

Lovemore Mbigi and by his team of *African Intellectual Resources* (AIR), conducted many of LeARN’s *Grant Fellows Leadership Programmes*, assisted by LeARN staff and external resource persons. Mbigi used the latter name instead of *Rainmaker Management Consultants* (RMC), because in his view AIR aims to ‘keep the discourse alive’. Maybe, AIR appears less commercial than RMC. He considers the *Grant Fellowship Programmes* as a means to educate ‘followers’.

²³⁸ In the previous chapter, a similar observation was made concerning Broodryk’s ‘ethnic dress’.

The project I am working now on is very...that client phoned, because they want to implement to find creative appropriate African solutions of issues as poverty, management, and development. It is also interesting, [because] it is covering eight countries. They are very serious in making a difference.²³⁹

Why I am very keen on the Kellogg programme is to produce followership, you see. If you look at all the big ideas, whoever is advocating it, one must create followership. So one of the reasons why I teach at universities and supervise dissertations is to create followership, who will keep the discourse alive.²⁴⁰

In a few years time, WKKF had become a major client of Mbigi's *African Intellectual Resources*. Rukuni confirmed that he found Mbigi one of the few, if not only one in the southern African region, who was exceptionally capable to put across the vision of 'African leadership' and 'African management'. Mbigi is not primarily a scholar, said Rukuni. In the first place, he is a *practitioner*. Mbigi's strength concerns assumingly his ability to apply 'African values' to any particular situation. That would make him exceptional. Professor Rukuni, director of WKKF's Africa Program, confirmed Mbigi's extraordinary talents in this regard.

He tries to get things done, or tries to do it so people can apply it and understand. [...] He actually operates more effectively, when he takes you out of the box. He is trying to shift the way you look at the world, a mind shift, or a paradigm shift. That is what he is aiming to do as quickly as possible. [...] That is a practitioner's approach. [...] Whereas I would approach it more cerebrally, more in terms of logical reasoning, which, if you wish, appeals to scholars, but not to entrepreneurs and change agents.²⁴¹

Usually, slides would accompany Mbigi's presentations. RMC's office staff prepares the learning materials and the slide shows. RMC's Associate Director, Wilna Thembu-Westbrook – who married Mbigi late 2005 – is doing most of the research work and preparation of presentations and slides. Wilna has an Afrikaner background and – quite remarkably – she used to work for the *Black Management Forum*. In that sense, *Rainmaker Management Consultants* is a glorious example of South Africa's business transformation. Wilna's sister, Anet du Preez, is the office manager. She is in charge of logistics, administration, and communication. The staff is very committed, often making extremely long working days. The slide presentations are considered *Rainmaker Management Consultant's* intellectual property and copyright protected. Quite often, standard hotel conference rooms are a little decorated with one or two wooden African sculptures and a few cloths with African prints in an attempt to create 'an African atmosphere'. Sometimes, in workshops the tables would be rearranged and put aside. The participants are then requested to sit in a square or in a circle. Occasionally, a CD with African music would be played before the start of a meeting. The slides contain mostly brief pointers, with a lot of text, illustrated quite randomly with pictures and drawings of African artefacts, dancers, sculptures, huts, dressings, flags, but also with images of black and white businesspersons, smiling people, casual daily scenes, and all sorts of glamorous

²³⁹ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 28 June 2003.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 3 December 2003.

²⁴¹ Interview with Mandivamba Rukuni on 12 May 2004.

items and luxury, suggesting that wealth and prosperity are just around the corner. This might invoke associations with charismatic religious movements and perhaps even with the kind of ‘Occult Economies’ in southern Africa that have become so popular over the last decades (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004).



Picture 6: One slide from RMC’s presentation on ‘equity’ for SA Colgate-Palmolive on 26 August 2003, courtesy of Prof. Lovemore Mbigi (RMC)

“The South African is more American than you think...,” Mbigi told a Dutch correspondent in an interview once, referring to the blatant display of affluence and success while doing business in South Africa.²⁴² Mbigi’s background as a ‘Shona tribesman’, living both in South Africa and the USA, while having been largely influenced by American management (guru) literature, would that perhaps have made him a cosmopolitan, in the sense of a ‘cultural broker’? A cosmopolitan is “a creature of the organization of diversity in world culture,” an individual, who “picks from other cultures only those pieces which suit himself” (Hannerz 1992: 252-253). Supposedly, Mbigi would be able to “make the formula of shared knowledge apply again:”

What is cosmopolitan can to some extent be channelled into what is local, and precisely because these are on the whole separate spheres the cosmopolitan can become a broker, an entrepreneur who makes a profit (Hannerz 1992: 254).

In other words, the Dutch correspondent might as well have written: “Perhaps Mbigi is more American than he thinks...”

The images shown during workshops did not always clearly correspond with the issue in question. Sometimes they seemed to be merely decorative. Generally, Mbigi rushed through the slides, skipping many at a time. While he told his story, he scarcely referred to the slides that were actually shown. Often he introduced himself in an informal and low profile way, for instance: “I am

²⁴² NRC Handelsblad, 8 August 2006.

not a sophisticated Professor. So, please feel free to comment and interrupt me. Take advantage of it.”²⁴³ No matter the circumstances, self-confidently he would give his account. For instance, whenever unfortunate technical audiovisual problems occurred, or when people in the audience got upset, hardly ever Mbigi seemed taken aback. The only exception could perhaps occur when there was *no reaction at all* from the audience, when passivity and apathy prevailed that might signify silent protest, a complete shut-off from the speaker. This seemed to be the case in a talk about the *Spirit of African Business Renaissance* at the annual managers’ conference of the rural Mpumalanga regional branch of *First National Bank*. The conference took place in Muldersdrift, Johannesburg, on 5 September 2003. Among the attendants of approximately 100 to 120 people, including some partners of managers, were only one or two black managers. Afterwards, one of the latter proved very enthusiastic about the talk. He seemed to be the only one, however, and commented that ‘finally’ somebody had the courage to ‘tell the truth’:

Professor Lovemore Mbigi has said what I always try to make clear. But nobody wants to listen. They want things to remain the same. They do not understand that they actually have to change.

While Mbigi had tried several jokes to break the ice, like “I am so black, you need to look for me with a torch” and hinting at the hierarchy in the ‘new apartheid state’ of South Africa today: “You have whites, cats, dogs, and only then *makwerekwere* (aliens) like me.” In addition, he made strong political statements, urging business to change. There was, however, neither laughter, nor protest or any other response: just silence.

You need a passionate middle class. Why don’t you wake up, whites? You will be the first victims! The blacks are already in power. There is no recorded case in history where a government did not translate their political power into economic power. The question is only: when and where? If we wait for the darkies, they are going to pull us down with them. So wake up! You have to create hope for yourself. [...] You can learn from other minorities that survived and became successful in a politically hostile environment. Do not become a spectator of your own history.²⁴⁴

In general, Mbigi repeatedly suggested ‘mentoring’ to be a specifically African feature. He often recommended ‘partnering’ between black and white managers and ‘mentoring’ of black upward moving managers by experienced senior white managers as a ‘survival strategy for whites’ in the South African corporate world and ‘to create hope’ for themselves. To a limited extent, it has been suggested that *ubuntu* – while mostly drawing on Mike Boon’s reading of the concept – could be linked with the idea of ‘executive coaching.’ Moreover, coaching would be innate to ancient ‘African culture’.

²⁴³ Opening of a three-hour talk about *Spirit of Leadership: an African perspective* at Old Mutual Business School, Cape Town, 3 July 2003.

²⁴⁴ Field report 15 September 2003.

The Peer Systems Consulting Group Inc's website on mentoring, states that African scholars have noted that mentors were commonplace in Africa, long before the Greek civilization. [...] The African understanding of the role of a mentor is more similar to recent definitions and principles of coaching as outlined above than to the current definition of mentoring in a business environment (Van Rensburg 2001: 26).

In other words, the principles of coaching and mentoring would be entrenched in 'African culture', however rarely interpreted as such and hardly ever applied in modern organisations.

The paradox within this line of thought is that Africans would then expect coaching and mentoring to happen automatically within the work environment, whereas the majority of middle and senior executives in South Africa, the ones who should do the mentoring and coaching, are white and male and therefore more inclined to have a competitive, non-sharing Western value system (Van Rensburg 2001: 87).

Note that, while speaking, Mbigi identified himself with the majority of the audience: white male (middle) managers.²⁴⁵ He also deployed a sense of fear to reinforce his statements. After about an hour, attendants were becoming a little restless and apparently feeling a bit uncomfortable. Nobody in the room made any remark, raised a question, or expressed any other sentiment of discontent or antagonism. Afterwards, Mbigi seemed to be in a fairly bad mood, and a bit in a rush as if he wanted to leave the scene as quickly as possible. He reacted even quite angrily, which was quite unusual:

This is a racist group! They do not want change, but once they will face difficulties with the government, then they will come back to me.

In most instances, a discussion of the *ubuntu* concept is a key issue in Mbigi's talks, usually along with related issues, such as the role of extended families as organising principle, spirituality, and ancestral worshipping, economic liberation, transformation, and diversity. Humour is a critical aspect in his presentations, in addition to deliberate controversial statements, on issues of 'race', on ethnic and cultural minority groups (e.g. Indians, Afrikaners, Jews), about politicians, on political issues and fraud cases, while equally making fun of himself. However, several people tend to perceive this style as rude, insensitive, and unnecessarily offensive, possibly partly due to Mbigi's loud voice and his often high-pitched intonation. Racism is an issue that is usually not easily talked about in formal organisational contexts. Supposedly, it would become easier to discuss such issue by making use of jokes, but in the afore-mentioned situation, humour just did not do the job. "Then, it gets really serious," Mbigi concluded.

At a workshop at *SA Post Office*, Mbigi was accused of blasphemy and inflicting racial hatred

²⁴⁵ This technique Mbigi used quite often: shifting self-identifications in the course of workshops with respective social and cultural groups in the audience – e.g. in turns with employees and trade union representatives, then with middle-management or top-management, then with 'the Afrikaners', and then again with 'blacks'. Simultaneously, he would make regularly provocative, stereotypical remarks about each group, apparently in an attempt to make participants speak out.

against whites. He was described as an ‘ANC accomplice’, stirring “the nervous system of Christianity in South Africa” (Patriot, 19 August 1999). Allegedly, Mbigi had stated in that workshop: “You whites are so stupid that you believe that a Jew, who lived 2000 years ago, can save you.”²⁴⁶ In a TV interview, Mbigi was once criticised that there would be no ‘empirical evidence’ for his ideas on spirituality and ‘African management’ philosophy. Mbigi responded that there might indeed be no scientific proof, but that he was convinced that ‘they worked’. Nor was there any empirical proof that an after-world existed, he added, and still many Christians believed that.

Of course, Lovemore Mbigi is not the only management consultant in South Africa making use of ‘African management’ ideas. Others have followed a similar path and discovered a comparable niche in the local market of advice and consultancy including products, such as management advice, ‘motivational talks’ and ‘transformation workshops’. It should be noted – once more perhaps to make this point particularly clear – that this special type of (culturalist orientation in) management consultancy, is not only privileged to black African consultants. Mike Boon and others like him have been similarly touched by African views. Although less known than Boon perhaps, e.g. Kobus *Luthando* Prinsloo is also active in this particular field.²⁴⁷ Supposedly, Prinsloo is also a member of a virtual ‘*ubuntu* community’ in management. He has a passion for African culture and nature, for Africa’s ‘ancient wisdom’. He claimed to have received an undefined ‘sense of calling’, a sort of vocation that he would possess special talents that dealt with healing.²⁴⁸ He did an apprenticeship in Swaziland to become recognised as a traditional healer, which explains his middle name *Luthando*. First, he worked as a qualified pastoral therapist and mediator in family affairs. Later on, he became a business consultant with conflict resolution and mediation as his special expertise, inspired by African perspectives on business and community. In 1995, Kobus Prinsloo established with Makoena Mazwi a consultancy firm, *Siyavuma Systems*. Prinsloo is an Afrikaner and calls himself ‘Euro-African’. His business card tells he is a business consultant, corporate *sangoma* and pastoral therapist. His mission is to develop a ‘visionary business leadership for South Africa’.²⁴⁹

Concluding remarks

Looking at ‘African management’ discourse as a *process*, it comprises emergence, externalisation,

²⁴⁶ Literal citation in Afrikaans in Patriot, 19 August 1999: “*Julle witmense is só stupid dat julle glo dat ’n Jood wat 2000 jaar gelede geleef het, julle kan red, ’n het Mbigi na bewering gesê.*”

²⁴⁷ Not to be confused with the philosopher Erasmus Prinsloo, mentioned in the previous chapter in section 3.2.1 *Universities, business schools, and philosophers*.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Kobus Prinsloo on 20 May 2004.

²⁴⁹ Shortly after the interview, Kobus Prinsloo informed me, that he was inspired to start a PhD research on ‘African management’ issues, phrased as ‘modern African leadership’, which he has been pursuing since 2004 with supervision by the *University of Utrecht* in the Netherlands (e.g. see www.siyavuma.com).

distribution, and utilisation. Of course, there is also a 'pre-emergence' phase, which is considered in Chapter 6 *Colonialism, apartheid and transition*. That chapter seeks to contextualise the emergence of 'African management' discourse, by putting it in a historical perspective.

With regard to the emergence and distribution of the discourse, Chapter 3 has made clear that universities and business schools have played a very important role in offering a forum for debate. Subsequently, the role of a couple of relatively small publishers was crucial. Other media, such as TV, radio, and written media only started paying attention after the 'new' management concept was launched, mostly thanks to a single foundational publication that established the term 'African management' in South Africa.

Whether it is plausible that an Afrocentric management technique has indeed valuable contributions to make, and whether it is actually based on the perseverance of a comprehensive indigenous cultural system in South Africa, may not be the most important questions. The question rather *who* and *what institutions* are taking 'African' management/leadership philosophy forward, and how powerful they are in political and economic terms, seems more relevant. With the *W.K Kellogg's Foundation* and *Eskom Holdings Ltd* as considerably powerful vehicles for the discourse, and assumingly with ideological backing by the present political elites in South Africa, 'African management' discourse may turn out not to be just a temporary eruption in the transition from apartheid to democracy. *Eskom*, as a 'public enterprise' is positioned close to central political power and is a big player both on a national and continental level. These characteristics make it more likely that the 'African management' movement is not just a temporary phenomenon.

Furthermore, this chapter shows considerable variations in utilisation, with quite different accents. Individual interpretations of influential persons in leading positions differ. The type of work that has to be done may differ. Moreover, institutional interests that are at issue play a role. Probably, time is a factor as well. When 'African management' philosophy was launched in the early 1990s, there seemed to be a considerable level of consensus about the core principles. As its distribution was advancing and utilisation was expanding, the range of variations and deviations from the original apparently increased. In other words, 'African management' producers in 1992 cannot be held accountable for re-appropriations and contemporary interpretations 15 years or more down the line. For instance, interpretations of *ubuntu* in relation to management and leadership by *Eskom's* main ideological talking head Reuel Khoza, sound far more 'hard-nosed' and 'business-like' than in the early 1990s. As macro economic policies change and corporate expansionist interests become more urgent, the discursive use of 'African' management/leadership philosophy may change accordingly.

In the next chapter, an analysis will be made of the central themes, a number of variations and

deviations from the 'original idea'. In addition, specific elements from the criticism on 'African management' discourse in South Africa, will be examined. This preliminary analysis in Chapter 5 will be expanded in the course of the thesis, by focussing in consecutive chapters on the contextualisation of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, especially in view of colonialism, apartheid and transition (Chapter 6) and business transformation (Chapter 7). Three additional chapters will consider the background of central notions that characterise 'African management' discourse, in particular with regard to one-dimensional versions of Afrocentrism (Chapter 8) and more fluid, open-ended approaches to identity, belonging, and identification in postcolonial African contexts (Chapter 9).

Chapter 5: Themes, deviations and critiques

Introduction

Evidently, numerous common themes can be distinguished in ‘African management’ discourse since 1992. To a greater or lesser extent, also significant deviations and paradoxes can be identified. In this chapter, I will try to show that the research subject concerns a rather diverse discourse, in which many different actors are involved. Therefore, one should be careful about making generalisations in this regard. Actually, it is quite problematic to speak of ‘African management’ discourse solely in terms of a cohesive body of knowledge. There is a variety of interpretations with regard to *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ philosophy. The common themes are obvious, at least at first sight: the use of *ubuntu* as key concept associated with the notion of ‘humanness’, with references to an interpretation of ‘Africanness’ often in rather fixed and uni-dimensional Afrocentric terms, and the idea of (South) Africa as the ‘Cradle of Humankind’. Moreover, there is a strong emphasis on consultation, consensus building, and participatory decision-making.

Furthermore, as my research findings reveal, even the common traits meet with varying nuances in interpretation. In addition, a number of salient paradoxes demand further examination, of which perhaps two are most prominent: the appropriation of ‘African management’ philosophy against the background of a capitalist production mode, and the binary position of ‘Afrocentric’ versus ‘Eurocentric’ approaches to management and leadership. In connection to the latter, related issues can be discussed as well, such as the masculine character in many discursive articulations, sometimes with almost militaristic connotations, and for instance, the search for a ‘strong organisational culture’, as the *Eskom* case showed in the previous chapter.

5.1 Themes

When overseeing available primary and secondary research data and the range of literature on ‘African management’ philosophy, a number of themes keep coming back, which could be grouped as shown in the following table.

Themes in ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa
(1) Humanistic aspects
(2) Participatory decision-making
(3) ‘Eccentric’ organisational principles
(4) Afrocentric management, ‘Africanness’ and Africa
(5) Personal life stories & political engagement

In the course of this section, all five central themes are discussed and elaborated. The next section will focus more on apparent variations, conflicts, and paradoxes within and between the mentioned themes.

First, the ‘humanistic’ aspects are examined. Obviously, the idea of *ubuntu* stands out most: being human, or more specifically ‘humane-ness’.²⁵⁰ Several noble notions tend to be variably associated with this leading principle, such as humanity (dignity, warmth, friendliness, hospitality, and respect), collaboration (trust, reciprocity, caring, welfare), spirituality, equity, fairness, and humility. *Ubuntu* or ‘humane-ness’ is commonly affiliated with collectivism, with communalism mostly believed to be a better term. Communalism would differ from collectivism, essentially because of the assumed top-down character of collectivism, as in the former Soviet system, whereas communalism would rather be a ‘natural’ and ‘authentic’ African convention. Communalism is then associated with mutual solidarity, interdependence, and a strong sense of social obligations towards the community. In workshops and presentations, Mbigi for instance repeatedly emphasised the importance of social obligations that he contrasted with the notion of ‘individual human rights’, claims that happened to be predominantly associated with ‘the west’. A person, who has sufficiently fulfilled his or her social obligations towards the community, could expect something in return from the community, such as dignity and the right to protection. Further to this, the ‘extended family’ is believed to be a vital organising principle with regard to entrepreneurship in (South) Africa up to this day.

Most of all, as part of the humanistic aspects in an ‘African management’ philosophy, employees should feel ‘at home’, and not ‘alienated’ in whatever way. In addition, a strong sense of optimism is discursively ingrained in the notion of *ubuntu*.

(1) Humanistic aspects
* <i>Ubuntu</i> , ‘humane-ness’, communalism, egalitarianism, social obligations (unconditional mutual solidarity); extended family as organising principle
* Emancipation, liberation; rid of ‘victimisation’ and ‘alienation’ (‘feel at home’); optimism, visionary management, prospect of prosperity
* Notion of ‘decolonising the mind’ (both employees and managers)
* Self-confidence, self-assertiveness (masculine aspects)

Optimism is both seen as a value in itself, and as a cry for liberation and emancipation, striving for self-confidence, giving up the yoke of ‘victimisation’. This is related to *ubuntu* to dispose of internalised feelings of inferiority by ‘decolonising the mind’. This would not only concern employees. Managers should also be prepared to change their frame of mind and conduct, either in the sense of getting rid of a sense of inferiority, or of a sense of superiority towards others,

²⁵⁰ The use of the hyphen between ‘human-’ and ‘-ness’ would emphasise more specifically the meaning of *ubuntu*, according to Kimmerle (2006), page 82.

especially when 'race' is an issue.

Reuel Khoza seems to be an outspoken representative of the 'new optimism' for Africa, in the light of his support for the idea of an African Renaissance and because of his view that Africans should 'stop blaming' others (e.g. Khoza 2003b: 1-2). Optimism could also be interpreted as a feature of 'visionary management'. In this regard, Eric Mafuna of *Africa Now* clearly distinguished between management and leadership, with management focusing on control, and leadership focusing on the broader picture, looking ahead. Moreover, optimism carries the promise of prosperity: 'a better life'.²⁵¹ As stated before, this suggests an affiliation with the rhetoric of charismatic religious movements.²⁵²

(2) Participatory decision-making
--

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Dialogue, mass rally meetings, (time-consuming) consultations, questions and answers, consensus building, emotionality, 'understanding each other', reflection (feminine aspects)* Boldness ('not soft'), firmness, competitiveness, urgent action and quick decision-making (masculine aspects) |
|---|

Dialogue is definitely a keyword, with the ultimate aim to build a broad and sustainable consensus, even if it takes protracted consultations and emotional debates. This aim may be achieved by means of a considerable deal of dramatisation, in questioning current management practices and social realities in business and society, as will also be discussed in the section on 'Eccentric' organisational principles in this chapter.

Notions that are discursively associated with participatory decision-making seem to reflect feminine aspects. According to 'African management' philosophy, ideally dialogue and consultation precede actual decision-making that would basically be a form of participatory decision-making (e.g. Mbigi 1994: 81). The considerable time investment for mass gatherings, prior consultations, and extensive dialogue with all stakeholders would be justified, as decisions supported by all would eventually be more sustainable and effective in the implementation of decisions.

A decision that is supported is considered superior to the 'right' decision that is resented or resisted by many. Unity is more valued than the utility of the decision reached. [...] However, because of the large base of support it enjoys a solution based on African *ubuntu*-style consensus decision-making will usually be more successful at the implementation stage (Mangaliso 2001: 27).

Whether a decision is the best possible and most rational one is discursively not considered to

²⁵¹ "A better life for all," used to be a famous election slogan of the ANC.

²⁵² This was mentioned in the previous chapter, in section 4.2 *Mbigi's Rainmaker Management Consultants: a key actor* and will be considered again in Chapter 10 of this thesis, in section 10.2 *Management strategies for business transformation*.

be of utmost importance. In addition, reflection is seen as an important feature of ‘African management’ philosophy, according to Mbigi.

More time needs to be allocated by companies to reflect on what they are doing. Operational efficiency is emphasised at the expense of reflection. We need to [go] beyond pragmatism and create time to dream. Strategic planning must become more than a budgeting process. People need to be paid to dream in Africa. Traditionally, the rainmaker did not work, but his/her time was spent in reflection.²⁵³

Monhla Hlahla, Managing Director of ACSA, mentioned daily reflection as an inherent aspect of *ubuntu* in relation to management and as a personal value. It was presented as an important characteristic in her own management style. This could be a quality in any management style, but it is important to note that managers in South Africa discursively attribute meaning to reflection, through or as one possible aspect in interpreting *ubuntu*. Although participatory decision-making in an ‘African management’ perspective may be considerably time-consuming, it would make implementation more sustainable and furthermore it would lay the basis for ‘urgent action’ by management, if necessary. A leader who enjoys the trust of his people can take quick decisions. His ‘followers’ would even expect him or her to be strong and bold, in case of an emergency.

You discuss, consult, and anticipate; you do your strategic planning well in advance in a smart way, and make future scenarios: “What shall we do when this happens, or that would occur?” So, when there is a crisis, everybody knows what to do.²⁵⁴

Decision-making in an ‘African way’ would thus not necessarily hamper quick decisions in situations when urgent action is required. In addition, Monhla Hlahla of ACSA did not take a soft position on decision-making: “Employees are in need of decisions,” she firmly stated. Her colleague at *Eskom*’s Human Resource Division, Mpho Letlape, would be of the same opinion, as she said, “*Ubuntu* is not soft.” The remark of *Eskom*’s Joe Matsau was also significant in this regard: “We don’t take decisions by consulting, but we consult in order to come up with a decision.” In other words, there is scope for consultation and influencing decision-making, but there is also firmness in taking decisions. These latter observations point at a specific masculine touch to discursive notions about decision-making, in addition to more feminine aspects noted earlier. Altogether, it thus creates a somewhat mixed image, leaving an undefined space between consensus building and participatory management on the one hand, and heroic ‘Shaka Zulu-style’ bold leadership on the other hand. Sceptics might add: potentially, tyrannical leadership is lurking. Khoza warned that leadership is a paradoxical challenge and ideally there should be “a combination of discipline and empathy,” just as Shaka Zulu’s rule was ‘not pure tyranny’ (Khoza 2006: 34-25). Serious anthropological work on tribal customs in Africa seems to confirm this general paradoxical

²⁵³ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi by Barbara Nussbaum on 18 July 1995 (source: SAMP archive).

²⁵⁴ Interview with Mike Boon on 13 April 2004.

image about Shaka Zulu: a belligerent ruler, but egalitarian in his style of leadership, who was not after accumulating personal wealth.

But as he raided tribe after tribe and amassed vast herds of cattle: he ate the same boiled beef as his followers, and having many cattle he gave most to his subjects for them to eat as boiled beef. He too, like his subjects, lived in a pole-and-grass hut (Gluckman 1966: 30).

Clearly, this would render *Eskom* a perfect role model for 'African leadership'. However, does a claim to egalitarianism, imagined through a collective memory of precolonial African village life, mean that village life was in fact egalitarian? By implication, does it mean that a claim to egalitarianism under the umbrella of 'African management' philosophy, as applied in a modern business context, would adequately depict real organisational life? The notion of egalitarianism, as part of the assumption of 'participatory decision-making' in 'African management' discourse, should be examined more closely. Is this not another illustration of 'the myth of egalitarianism' (Cohen 1985: 33)? In 'African management' discourse, 'checks and balances' are given importance, but how would that suit an anti-bureaucratic stance?

An oppressive communalism constitutes a derailment, an abuse of *Ubuntu*. By contrast, true *Ubuntu* incorporates dialogue, i.e. it incorporates both relation and distance (Louw 2001: 26)

Rhetorically, derailment may be 'quite unnecessary', for he or she, who remains faithful to *ubuntu* principles, will never become an abusive manager (Louw 2001: 20). Similar to the above citation, Khoza suggested that 'robust debate' would be the only adequate answer to the tendency to autocracy.²⁵⁵ In conclusion, both feminine and masculine aspects features are represented in Afrocentric interpretations of participatory decision-making. However, there is a quite precarious balance between these two sides.

(3) 'Eccentric' organisational principles
--

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">* 'De-bureaucratisation': anti-rational, anti-intellectual, anti-modernist, egalitarian; questioning organisational conventions and 'taken-for-granted' management practices* Dramatisation, emotionality, spirituality* Imaginative (non-corporate) romanticist views (e.g. Mbigi, Davey) |
|--|

Ubuntu as discursively applied to management and organisation would largely imply a denunciation of 'unnecessary' bureaucracy, rationality, and formality. These could be regarded as 'eccentric' organisational principles, meaning unconventional or alternative counterdiscursive codes. For instance, why should men always wear a suit and tie at the office? Why send a written memo to the manager sitting in the room next to yours, rather than having a quick chat? Bureaucratic behaviour in organisations would disturb respectful human relations. Human

²⁵⁵ Financial Mail, 25 July 2003, pp. 21.

interaction should come first, while bureaucratic rules and formal hierarchical relations are often seen as demeaning obstacles to human dignity. “Rational management systems only assist,” is a very clear statement on the issue (Mbigi 1994: 82).

We should bear in mind that a suit and a tie was at one time regarded as authority, and authority meant trouble for the people (Boon 1996: 90).

Bureaucracy and authority tend to be discursively associated with ‘trouble’, fear, alienation, and enforcement, implicitly bringing back images of township residents being brutalised by the police. Koopman asserted that ‘debureaucratisation’ was a requirement to establish ‘a performance-based culture’ (Koopman 1991: 41-45). All this suggests a challenge to dominant management practices in South Africa, practices that are usually ‘taken for granted’.

Maybe it would stretch this point too much when saying that ‘African management’ philosophy is not only inherently anti-bureaucratic, but also anti-intellectual. From this point of view, it takes only a small step to characterise the discourse as anti-modernist and romanticist. A number of remarkable statements seem to confirm ‘anti-intellectual’ tendencies, again in particular when considering Lovemore Mbigi as prominent ‘African management’ protagonist: “I am not a sophisticated Professor. So, please feel free to comment and interrupt me. Take advantage of it.”²⁵⁶ Was such a statement merely meant to break the ice and create a relaxed atmosphere, so all could feel at ease, or was there also an implied contempt for a coldly one-dimensional, rational-intellectual worldview, in other words a (modernist) ‘Eurocentric’ worldview?

Illustrious ‘African management’ consultants, such as Lovemore Mbigi and Mike Boon, deliberately use dramatisation as a technique in workshops. Mbigi applies dramatisation in at least two ways: as a means to explain organisational complexities and management theory in plain words, and secondly, to encourage employees and workshop participants to get involved, to speak out, especially on issues that they would not easily talk about in a normal organisational context, on taboo issues. Dramatisation could for instance include discussing highly sensitive issues relating to experiences (and perceptions) of (racial) discrimination, deprivation, humiliation, violence, anger, etcetera, but it would also include humour, although opinions may strongly differ on the latter issue. Humour is a highly subjective matter, a matter of personal taste, and to some extent a cultural affair. Humour can serve as a regulator in diverging group tensions, but things might as well get out of hand. Supposedly, it aims at attaining ‘mutual understanding’ and contributing to improved organisational climates, amongst others by giving air to resentments long suppressed. ‘Eccentric’ organisational practices could also bring spirituality into play, talking about matters such as

²⁵⁶ Opening of a three-hour talk about *Spirit of Leadership: an African perspective* at Old Mutual Business School, Cape Town, 3 July 2003.

‘ancestral worship’, dance, (industrial) theatre, and other atypical organisational aspects. This could be linked with imaginative ‘noncorporate’ views on management, including ‘indigenous’ perspectives on leadership. Specifically this feature prompted *Jacana Media* to publish De Liefde’s book (De Liefde 2003).

(4) Afrocentric notions, ‘Africanness’ and Africa
<p><u>Elements of purification:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Search for authenticity; ‘excavating’ an essence of ‘Africanness’ (e.g. ‘Japanese model’) * Fear for ‘foreign’ concepts (fear for cultural ‘contamination’) <p><u>Elements of hybridisation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Contextualisation (of global management) and indigenisation * Anthroposophical influences (participatory ‘people-oriented’ management) * Search for ‘strong organisational culture’ (e.g. <i>Eskom</i> with assistance from IBM) * Integration: embracing cultural diversity, notion of ‘unity in diversity’ (e.g. focus on commonalities Africans and Afrikaners) * Incorporation of ‘Christian’ interpretations of <i>ubuntu</i> (in relation to management) <p><u>Elements of homogenisation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Narrative of the ‘uniqueness’ and ‘unity’ of Africa; the theme of ‘Cradle of Humankind’ * Claims of exporting (‘glocalising’) <i>ubuntu</i> and Afrocentric management approaches <p><u>Analogy with Afrocentric political discourse:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ideology of African Renaissance & NEPAD; business interests in the realm of regional and continental corporate expansion; need for ‘common language’ (e.g. <i>Eskom</i>, MTN) * Intersecting social networks in circles of political and economic elites (private and public sector)

Various aspects that characterise ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa deal with notions relating to the question what ‘Africa(n)’ means. In narratives around these notions, elements of purification and hybridisation can be distinguished and elements of homogenisation. The search for authenticity, for the essence of what is typically African, exemplifies the principle of purification. Next to that, the principle of hybridisation and indigenisation is at work: elements of global management are discursively incorporated and contextualised; anthroposophical influences, mainly from Europe, are discursively incorporated and contextualised; integration of other cultural orientations within South Africa are discursively incorporated and contextualised. For instance, the inspiration that distinguished ‘African management’ representatives such as Lessem and Christie drew on the work of anthroposophists like Rudolf Steiner and Bernard Lievegoed, illustrates this. Another example is the reference in Bhengu’s book on *ubuntu* to the *Von Hardenberg Foundation* that was strongly influenced by Steiner (Bhengu 1996: 59). In addition, *Eskom*’s desire to grow a ‘strong organisational culture’ refers specifically to American management conceptions. All these elements add to hybridisation and constitute simultaneously in concert ‘African management’ discourse, which is presented as uniquely ‘African’, while ‘foreign’ elements tend to be downplayed altogether. The principle of homogenisation is illustrated by notions around the assumed uniqueness and unity of Africa, which is exemplified by the idea of the ‘Cradle of Humankind’ and the aspiration of exporting *ubuntu* in relation to management, by claiming that the ‘*African management*’ in South Africa

world has lessons to learn from Africa. This again is linked to humanistic aspects: the notion of self-assertiveness and the idea of ‘decolonising the mind’. Finally, the analogy with Afrocentric political discourse, in which business interests are involved – in South Africa and the continent as a whole – needs to be recognised in a typology of ‘African management’ discourse. Explicit references to the ‘Japanese model’ in fact reinforce the purification principle in ‘African management’ discourse. Furthermore, in this way, not Africa is to be seen as ‘different’ or abnormal, but Europe is, or ‘the west’, because Africa and Asia, particularly the Far East and Japan, would have ‘much in common’.

Several hundred business people heard a series of 10 speakers discuss prospects of utilizing *ubuntu* in the same way as many Far Eastern countries have used their cultural heritages to advantage – in ways, which sometimes appear at odds with Western norms.²⁵⁷

‘Japanese management’ is repeatedly suggested as a model for an ‘African management’ approach. Mike Boon, author of *The African Way – The Power of Interactive Leadership* referred to Japan, Malaysia and Singapore as ‘perfect examples’ to illustrate ‘African conceptions’ of humanity, teamwork and ‘total interdependence’ (Boon 1996: 74). In the Foundational Study on the *African Leadership Experience* that was commissioned by Eskom, it was argued that the Japanese had been able to rediscover and exploit their ‘traditional culture’. Experiences of the Japanese should inspire South Africans to likewise rediscover, revitalise, and refurbish their ‘own’ traditional culture and apply it to management in a successful way. Eric Mafuna of *Africa Now* referred to this explicitly, but also Mbigi, Koopman, and Binedell, as is illustrated in the following citation.

Koopman began to study aspects of African and Japanese philosophy, and soon realized that the key area of similarity between these two cultures was the tendency towards communalism rather than individualism (Bondi 1996: 180).

In addition, like Africa, Asia or ‘the East’ is associated with spiritual power, contemplation, and ‘collective consciousness’.²⁵⁸ Here is a remarkable parallel with Occidentalism, the ‘west’ as perceived by ‘non-westerners’. It assumes that ‘the west’ is lacking spirituality, religiousness, and ‘purity’ (Buruma & Margalit 2004). Another particular hybridising aspect concerns the notion of integration. ‘African management’ advocates would not envisage a ‘total take-over’, but a rightful place in the South African business world: integration – ‘fusion’, ‘absorption’, ‘synthesis’ and ‘synergy’ are other expressions used in this regard – is a characteristic that suggests that an Afrocentric orientation could be incorporated into a greater whole. Nick Binedell for instance used the term ‘absorption’ (Binedell 1994: 5). Conversely, an Afrocentric orientation would have the capacity to host other perspectives, be they ‘foreign’ or ‘modern’. This could be read as a cordial invitation to further hybridisation, in tension with the principle of purification. The notion of

²⁵⁷ The Daily News, 11 November 1991.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Taddy Blecher on 4 May 2004.

integration implies an aspiration for a synthesis between ‘African’ and ‘western’ concepts and perspectives, or a mixing between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ concepts and perspectives, which is at times even imagined as desirable. It fits with the notion of Africa’s cultural heritage, interpreted as embracing cultural diversity and tolerance in society and in the context of organisations: ‘unity in diversity’. Africa’s ‘cultural heritage’ is generally understood as multiple, in the sense of a ‘dual’ or ‘triple’ cultural heritage (e.g. Christie 1996: 69; Lessem & Nussbaum 1996: 19; Mbigi 1997: 7).

Effective contextualisation can only take place if the African managers are willing to go back into their past and come back with answers to the relevant present problems. As Southern African managers, we need to understand our dual cultural heritage, and honour and celebrate our achievements so far (Mbigi 1994: 81).

The manifold cultural heritage refers to different historical phases: pre-colonial times, the era of colonialism, and the postcolonial period, with its subsequent external cultural influences. In the past, Africa was exposed to European and eastern (including Islamic) cultural influences, and yet would carry its own ‘deep African heritage from the south’. From the logic of a ‘dual’ or ‘triple’ cultural heritage follows the implication that South Africa would more or less naturally and easily accept cultural diversity in society and in organisational contexts, as the phenomenon of cultural diversity is seen as an inherent consequence of Africa’s cultural heritage. *Eskom*’s Managing Director Mpho Letlape explained this in terms of adapting oneself to specific cultural situations, and *Eskom*’s Joe Matsau described it as ‘understanding each other’.

Recurrently, ‘African management’ advocates tend to emphasise cultural commonalities between (black) Africans and Afrikaners, contrary to assumed significant cultural differences between (black) Africans and (white) English-speaking South Africans. Controversy and painful experiences related to the colonial past and the apartheid era tend to be downplayed, if not largely ignored. Assumed commonalities concern a strong sense of nationalism and community orientation, and the importance of family ties. Black South Africans and Afrikaners suffered both because of oppression by ‘the British’, though in different ways. Both have their heroic stories of ‘courageous resistance’ against British troops, which provides a common sense of ‘shared experiences’, at least partially. In this context, also the narrative about the ‘white tribe of Africa’ appears, expressing a strong identification with Africa.²⁵⁹ This term could however also have contemptuous connotations,

²⁵⁹ According to Dan Roodt, an ardent nationalistic Afrikaner author and ‘language activist’, the term ‘white tribe’ was first used in 1977 by Time Magazine: “As far as I know, the term "white tribe" was first used by Time magazine to refer to my people in 1977, after which David Dumbleby of the BBC made a four-part series in 1979 entitled *The White Tribe of Africa*. The notion must have met with universal acclaim, for in the same year Dumbleby's film received the Supreme Documentary Award of the *Royal Television Society*. Since the late seventies the expression has become something of a commonplace, and of course it is intended as a pejorative term, to ridicule us; ‘tribes’ are after all backward peoples, lacking in civilization” (Source: <http://www.praag.org/essay7d.htm> [accessed 29 March 2006]). Alternatively, also the term ‘White Africans’ is used, for instance in *The White Africans: From Colonisation To Liberation* by L'Ange (2005).
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 137 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

when emphasising the 'tribal aspect' in the sense of the assumed backwardness of 'tribes' in Africa. Some Afrikaners have reservations about the identification with 'white tribe of Africa'. For instance, Marq de Villiers illustrated in his book about eight generations of the De Villiers family in South Africa, since 1688, how Afrikaners fought their struggle for survival on the African continent (De Villiers 1987). Although he described that they gradually started behaving more 'tribally', as an African 'white tribe', rather than a group of 'Europeans' in Africa, De Villiers had personally great difficulty in claiming pride in membership of a 'white tribe' (Furlong 1989: 531). He largely associated his family's history with bitterness, particularly in view of the making of apartheid, which put De Villiers in a personal dilemma.²⁶⁰

In 'African management'-style workshops on transformation and diversity management, often a sense of 'unity in diversity' is suggested by proclaiming visions of 'a common future' with 'shared interests', and calling for 'partnering' between black and white people. In such statements, a creative but selective process takes place of constructing the idea of 'unity in diversity' on the spot; on the one hand highlighting certain assumed commonalities (e.g. between 'Africans' and 'Afrikaners'), while simultaneously recognising cultural differences between particular groups, e.g. the 'British' in South Africa, as supposedly the latter would represent a Eurocentric position.

Another important disposition concerns the image of Africa as the 'Cradle of Humankind', alluding to Africa's assumed uniqueness. When available, reference is made to (semi-) scientific accounts that would affirm such statements, for instance to the book *Out of Africa's Eden. The peopling of the world* (Oppenheimer 2003).²⁶¹ If such claims were true, or if one accepts them to be

The publisher reports: "For generations, through colonialism and settlement and through apartheid in South Africa, the whites sought to preserve their ancestral links with Europe, to maintain an identity separate from the indigenous majority and to dominate them. The fall of colonialism and apartheid has, however, left some five million whites finally severed from their European roots and facing a new identity as Africans. At the same time they face an uncertain future as an ethnic minority, having surrendered the power they once held to the people they or their forebears dominated and often exploited" (Source: http://www.jonathanball.co.za/modules.php?op=modload&name=books&file=index&req=view_cat&cid=14&orderby=dateD [accessed 17 January 2007]).

²⁶⁰ The term 'white tribe of Africa' should not be confused with the expression 'White Africans'. The latter can have at least two different meanings. First, it could apply to white South Africans, who were born in (South) Africa and feel they 'belong' to Africa, identifying themselves explicitly as Africans. However, the term happens to be used as well in a derogatory way to denounce black African people, who would have become 'westernised' by adopting 'white values' while neglecting their 'cultural identity'.

²⁶¹ Oppenheimer asserted 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" ("Do we all originate from one African mother?" Cape Argus, 7 November 2003). This is also known as the 'Out of Africa' theory. Maropeng, situated west of Johannesburg, is generally known as a *Cradle of Humankind world Heritage Site* with the Sterkfontein Caves as an important historic site where hominid fossils were found. Probably somewhat lesser known is Makapan Valley, Mokopane (Potgietersrus) in Limpopo Province. There is thorough scientific evidence that Africans were the first to split off from the common predecessors of man and chimpanzee, as convincingly shown by. These researchers have analysed the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) for 53 complete human mtDNA genomes in order to gain insight in human evolution. Among the first groups of human beings (*Homo Sapiens*) were the San, the Mbuti, and the Hausa. Given the fact that the San are

true, it would take another – relatively small – step in this logic to the suggestion that humankind originated in Africa, and that in fact ancient Greek civilisation, and thus implicitly European and western civilisation in general, is a result of developments that started in Africa. This is sometimes also referred to as the *Black Athena* debate.²⁶² This image underscores Africa’s crucial role in human existence and worldwide civilisation in defiance of more dominant views of Africa’s ‘primitiveness’ and dependency. Similarly, Africa would have ‘something special’ to offer to the world, especially in the realm of humanity and spirituality, a message, or an answer to certain questions and difficulties that other societies (in ‘the west’) suffer from. “People in the west have lost their cultural identity,” is one of Mbigi’s standard statements. In his book *Let Africa Lead*, Reuel Khoza alluded to this narrative as well (e.g. Khoza 2006: 25). In addition to Africa’s uniqueness, its unity is often assumed: Africa as one, rather homogeneous, cultural entity. Notions of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge are abundantly referred to in written and spoken texts about ‘African management’, as illustrated by the phrase ‘to know where you are going to, you must know where you come from’. The idea of ‘where you come from’ in this phrase arguably refers to African village life in pre-colonial times, situated in the land of the Cradle of Humankind.

(5) Personal life stories & political engagement

- * Inspiration from Black Consciousness, anti-apartheid, liberation struggle (e.g. Khoza, Mafuna, Hlahla, Boon, Binedell, Mbigi, Davey)
- * Moral obligations: ‘Do something in return’ (e.g. Blecher, Takoulas)
- * Corporate social responsibility: the notion of ‘enlightened self-interest’ (e.g. corporate sponsors of CIDA City Campus)

A last point that became manifest in chapter 5 and 6 concerned the role of life stories and – what could be phrased as – personal political engagement. First, (past) engagement with the *Black Management Forum* is an aspect that for instance Reuel Khoza, Eric Mafuna, and Mpho Letlape have in common. Binedell’s involvement with JODAC and the *Consultative Business Movement* (CBM) proves a significant type of political engagement that appeared relevant in his position at *Wits Business School* when he endorsed the *South African Management Project*. Maggie Davey’s past involvement as a publishing director, with the *Mail&Guardian* and her insistence on a ‘leftist agenda’ have supposedly played a crucial role in the decision to publish De Liefde’s book. Although from a ‘leftist’ orientation, one might also be critical about the use of *ubuntu* in a business

generally recognised as autochthonous inhabitants of southern Africa, thus including what is now South Africa, this would not only support the ‘Out of Africa’ theory, but also more specifically the hypothesis of South Africa as the Cradle of Humankind, or rather as one among many more cradles throughout Africa. Another version is namely the ‘Out of Ethiopia’ theory, which entails that the entire Rift Valley, along eastern Africa, could be considered the Cradle of Humankind, as asserted in Nature by White; Asfaw, *et al.* (2003) and Stringer (2003). They provided strong evidence of modern-human emergence in Africa. (Note: I am much obliged to Prof. N.M. van Stralen of the *Institute of Ecological Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, for his expert comments on this issue.)

²⁶² The *Black Athena* debate is discussed in Chapter 8 of this thesis, in section 8.2.

context, as Sehoai Santho pointed it out.²⁶³ Moreover, the 1991 conference in Midrand on *ubuntu* and management happened to be co-organised by the *Black Management Forum*. Monhla Hlhahla referred explicitly to her past involvement as a political activist. Mike Boon has never been an anti-apartheid activist as such, but after serving in the army as an officer, he experienced a radical mind-shift. Because of this, he became opposed to apartheid sympathisers – including his own friends and family – and turned to Zulu people living in townships. From this, he gradually developed his interactive ‘African’ leadership ideas.

In addition, though having entirely different backgrounds and life histories, both Takoulas and Blecher used similar phrases to express their commitment to humanitarian non-for profit work: ‘to do something in return’ to the country, thereby adhering to *ubuntu* philosophy. Blecher found many similarities between transcendental meditation and aspects of ‘African values’. He referred to Japan, Asia, and eastern philosophy, suggesting a search for authenticity, which is clearly an aspect of the purification principle in ‘African management’ discourse. The notion of ‘doing something in return’ can discursively be extended to the idea of ‘enlightened self-interest’: do well to them, and eventually it will be good for all, i.e. business in general, the economy, and society as a whole. A clear example is *CIDA City campus*. Several companies have been sponsoring this initiative, mainly for this reason. The idea of ‘enlightened self-interest’ could turn out to be instrumental in bridging the gap between *ubuntu* philosophy and a neoliberal capitalist society. Probably for this reason, the *ubuntu* concept is very appealing to corporate actors or, at least, not hostile to them. Apparently, ‘African management’ advocates do not see this as problematic. Quite the reverse: several ‘African management’ thinkers of the first hour became lecturers at *CIDA City campus*, the ‘*Ubuntu* University’.

5.2 Deviations and critiques

In ‘African management’ discourse, several themes and patterns can be observed, but also a number of problematical constructions and combinations that call for a closer look. Not all interpretations come with similar characteristics however, or with similar meanings. Unclarities, ambiguities, and inconsistencies seem to create space for multiple interpretations, which could be taken as criticism or as opportunities for applying the discourse to specific situations.

5.2.1 Conceptual vagueness

‘African management’ philosophy may be appealing for various reasons. However, often it lacks

²⁶³ This point is further discussed in the second part of this chapter, in section 5.2.7 ‘*African management*’, *capitalism, and trade unions*.

clear practical pointers for daily management, while many readers want 'how to...' type of instructions. In a book review of Peter Christie's *Stories from an Afman(ager)*, Helena Schutte commented:

There are definitely merits in the underlying message of *Stories from an Afman(ager)*: the needs and culture of black workers have to be more accommodated, but more emphasis on how this has been achieved would make this book mandatory reading (Beeld, 18 March 1997).

Apparently, Schutte sympathised with general notions in the book, but judged it as 'generalising, irritating idealism, not practical'. A remark that several persons have made in the course of the field research concerned the following critique: eventually they felt it was not quite clear 'what managers had to do differently'. Practically, they claimed to be insufficiently equipped to implement 'African management' ideas. Nick Binedell, who supervised the *South African Management Project* (SAMP) at *Wits Business School* in the 1990s, felt that "we had the philosophical aspect quite well documented, but the practical aspect of it we struggled to articulate."

What I have been seeing the last 5 to 10 years is a black elite bringing their personal values and business experiences with them, many of which are African in nature: dignity, respect, community, process, but suddenly having thrust upon them, complex, fast paced business environments, of which they have been extremely critical. And many of them still are critical, that their own organisations have not transformed enough, but faced with a day-to-day survival for performance, for efficiency, for effectiveness, what do you do? What do you draw on? Now when this book is something [...] [it] is an attempt to draw on something out of an indigenous body of knowledge of 'African management'. I think it is quite a weak form.²⁶⁴

The above transcript clearly expressed Binedell's hesitations about the issue. He was inspired by the 'African management' concept, but also doubtful about practical implications. In modest terms, several 'African management' thinkers acknowledged this problem, though with some reluctance. Barbara Nussbaum, member of the SAMP research team in the 1990s, acknowledged the 'complaint' about conceptual vagueness.

The research attempted to clarify how and why *ubuntu* and other dimensions of African culture could become a positive resource for catalyzing the business transformation in South Africa. Such changes were needed to complement the political and social changes occurring at the time. The task was both fascinating and daunting. Part of the reason is that the concepts themselves are vague, difficult to operationalise succinctly, and often in the realm of the intangible (Nussbaum 2003c: 2).

SAMP's research work has never managed to take away the impression of the intangible character of 'African management' philosophy. Discursively, *being* is considered more relevant than *doing*. If a leader seriously concentrates on matters being (done) 'African', the particularities of actual day-to-day Afrocentric management practices would follow automatically. Intersubjectivity, a situational consensus about what constitutes 'Africanness' seems more

²⁶⁴ Interview with Nick Binedell on 2 September 2003.

important than a fixed set of criteria or a list of 'practical pointers'. As long as there is a principal agreement that the issue at hand is 'African' in some sort of way, mostly the requirement seems to be sufficiently satisfied.

In a seminar on Afrocentric management approaches, Lovemore Mbigi suddenly proposed to change the setting of the conference room and make it 'look more African'.²⁶⁵ The issue initially caused some turbulence among the participants, but it was resolved quite simply. Tables were put aside and chairs were rearranged in a circle. Moreover, there was a spontaneous initiative to have a short plenary demonstration of African drumming, as proposed by the South African business consultant, corporate *sangoma*, and pastoral therapist Kobus *Luthando* Prinsloo. The fact that the organisers gave in to this unexpected development seemed to be critical; the (Afrocentric) participants and their sympathisers demonstrated that they had successfully opposed (Eurocentric) academic conventions. At the end of the day, the agenda was completed as planned within the given timeframe.

Although people like Mbigi used to scorn critical comments about a lack of 'empirical evidence', he realised that more *Cashbuild* case studies were needed actually to help 'to keep the discourse alive'. That could be done, if more followers joined. Moreover, Mbigi repeatedly argued that 'African management' would need to 'stand on the shoulders of giants', suggesting that it took popular role models to become recognised and grow bigger. This would explain why for instance Mbigi and Broodryk depicted former president Nelson Mandela as 'an African leader' in the spirit of 'African management' philosophy, although this national symbol seems to be wearing down a bit. Mandela has become a trademark for almost anything South African, the following citation explains.

Mandela: a name that inspires myth – and money. South Africa's greatest struggle hero has brand power that ranks with Coca-Cola. In the 10 years since Nelson Mandela led South Africa to democracy, many patriots have begun to worry that their hero is becoming more of a commodity than a cultural icon (Sunday Times Business Times, 25 April 2004).

For this reason, Ronnie Lessem regretted the fact that in his opinion 'African management' was never institutionalised.²⁶⁶ By this, he meant that there were too few practical examples of firms such as Koopman's *Cashbuild* that were actually implementing 'African management' principles and could serve as an example. Institutionalisation would imply that numerous organisations adopted 'African management' philosophy as their leading management vision, and that they trained their staff in this area. Institutionalisation would mean that universities and business schools in South

²⁶⁵ Seminar *Afrocentric management approaches in South Africa* held at the *Vrije Universiteit* Amsterdam, 24-25 June 2004.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Ronnie Lessem on 23 June 2004.

Africa incorporated 'African management' in their curricula. Apparently, Reuel Khoza chose another line. He repeatedly proclaimed that Africans should stop moaning and start becoming 'world-class' and high performing. The impression emerged that *Eskom* was heading in that direction. After all, why would intelligent, creative entrepreneurs have difficulties in conceptualising 'African management' principles? Entrepreneurs and business leaders should be used to risk taking and trying out plans that have not been scientifically tested.

5.2.2 Inclusiveness & exclusiveness

If it were indeed mainly about 'a feeling of belonging', about dignity, as Nick Binedell assumed, and about "the needs and culture of black workers have to be more accommodated," the question could be raised who would be part of this and who would not. Mike Boon explained for instance that 'in the African perception' white people were not considered human; they were referred to as *mlungu*, in Zulu literally 'not human'. The term *ubuntu* would "endorse the subconscious conviction that the essence of Africans and of being an African, or an individual of European extraction, is not the same" (Coertze 2001: 113). White people can have *ubuntu*, but they have to demonstrate it first.²⁶⁷ Additionally, *ubuntu* is something that can be learned, so also non-Africans could learn to have *ubuntu*. In other words, discursively *ubuntu* is not something that exclusively black African people can have, but whites have to make efforts and convince others that they indeed have it. Of course, it makes sense to Boon to believe this. Otherwise, he could never be part of the '*ubuntu* community in management', and possibly even be out of business. Apparently, it is not something that comes automatically, but *what* would whites and other 'non-members' have to demonstrate? For whatever reason, black as well as white 'non-members' might be put to a test in case of suspicion. Could the answer be found in practices of ritual, as ritual occupies "a prominent place in the repertoire of symbolic devices through which community boundaries are confirmed and reinforced" (Cohen 1985: 50). This phenomenon could especially be noticed in "societies undergoing rapid, and, therefore de-stabilizing processes of change" that "often generate atavistically some apparently traditional forms, but impart to them meaning and implication appropriate to contemporary circumstances" (Cohen 1985: 46). In this analysis, rituals serve as 'symbolic markers' with the notion that not structure or form, but meaning and substance open doors to interpreting the '*ubuntu* movement' in management, thus as a 'community of meaning'. In the context of 'African management' discourse, verbal expressions, both spoken and written text, could be taken as 'symbolic markers'. Important to add here is that – even if there appears to be a considerable degree of consensus – each member of the community may attribute slightly different

²⁶⁷ Interview with Mike Boon on 13 April 2004 (Field report 13 April 2004).

meanings to a common set of symbols (Cohen 1985: 73). In other words, a South African manager stating that he holds on to 'African management' philosophy may have other, divergent, viewpoints or attribute a different 'substance' than another manager who practically states the same thing.

If 'African management' discourse is about structure or form, hence about cultural difference, it stands for boundaries. Explicit support, loyalty, and (proven or assumed) capability *to have ubuntu* could give access to a (virtual) 'community of meaning'. This could bring certain advantages and opportunities, e.g. a sense of belonging or specific material rewards. Supposedly, 'African management' discourse helps to construct a symbolic community around the theme of 'Africanness', while "symbolism does not so much carry meaning as allow people to impute meaning to it" (Cohen 1985: 71).

In other words, 'conceptual vagueness' and 'fuzzy guidelines' are perfectly suited to leave an unsettled space, in which individual members can assign their own bit of substance. This relative autonomy in sense making is however never unrestrained. The consequences of expulsion can be harsh, not to say inhumane. For example, some of the senior staff members in management positions of the *Leadership Regional Network (LeaRN)* and of LeaRN's *Leadership Academy* went through a bitter experience of social exclusion, while being wholehearted supporters of the philosophy of *ubuntu* and the notion of 'Contemporary African Leadership'. They imputed their own substance, but eventually to the annoyance of those in power.

5.2.3 Unsettled space in decision-making

Ambiguities in decision-making do not only spring from the imprecision of criteria, but also from a lack of clarity on *who decides* and what 'consensus procedures' to be followed. In practical application, the *ubuntu* concept and related value principles are 'systematically ambiguous' (Prinsloo 2000: 284). Such ambiguities are likely to make implementation prone to situational considerations and power games. As a result, there is plenty of room for diverging interpretations on the issue of decision-making, e.g. one view could be to focus on transparency, information sharing, consensus, and harmony (e.g. Mangaliso 2001: 27). However, actual decision-making could take place, either in (or by) the group or be left to the leader. It would be the responsibility of the leader to listen carefully and weigh all opinions and concerns, and to come up with a decision 'supported by all'. To this end, the *umhlangano* is suggested as the path to democracy in business through discussion groups or interactive forums.

These groups involve everyone in the department, including managers and union officials. No one is exempt and nothing has greater priority. During these discussions, rank does not exist. All the participants are simply human beings baring their humanity and listening to each other with dignity. [...] This is a forum, in which opinions can be aired. The *umhlangano* can also make decisions. These must be by secret ballot, and achieved through consensus. However, the forum can only make decisions about

things for which it is responsible and accountable. [...] Traditionally, it was the *ibandla* [the strength that comes from many people] that guided the king. It gave him the opportunity to read the consensus of the people [...] In an *umhlangano*, criticism is made to strengthen the leader and one another (Boon 1996: 89-91).

Eskom's Joe Matsau characterised the process of consultation and decision-making in a similar way, as Mike Boon described it in the above citation. This is however slightly different from what Mangaliso suggested, where the actual decision-making seemed to be an integral element of the group process. In Boon's exposé however, the consultation process and actual decision-making can be separate. If there is differentiation on a conceptual level, one can only guess what happens at implementation level. Is one reading a 'truer' interpretation of 'African management' philosophy than the other, or is vagueness and an amount of 'unsettled space' a feature of the discourse?

5.2.4 Search for (intellectual) recognition

Supposedly, cultural and intellectual recognition is an important driving force for many Afrocentric claims, even if it has been attained by contentious means. Several black intellectuals see the continued dominance of the publishing industry by 'white male academics' as a hindrance to the dissemination of 'local knowledge' in South Africa.

Knowledge production is an essential component of nation-building: opinions are created and stereotypes are asserted or challenged. But most importantly, knowledge production allows us to reflect on our society and use our voices to define its present disposition for the benefit of posterity (Sunday Times, 19 October 2003).

The proposal for the launch of a 'Native Club' in South Africa, to discuss social and political issues among an exclusive group of black African intellectuals could be seen as an illustration of a longing for intellectual, academic recognition.²⁶⁸ However, with regard to 'African management' philosophy, the publishing industry does not seem to be too much of an obstacle. *Knowledge Resources* and *Jacana Media* may not be fully black-owned publishers, but they have a proven professional interest in publishing on issues pertaining to 'African management' and 'indigenous knowledge'. Above all, there appears to be a demand for such publications. Seemingly, there is a contradiction in externalisations of 'African management' philosophy between an anti-rational, anti-intellectual, or anti-bureaucratic attitude, and the desire to be fully accepted and appreciated by academia and the mainstream management community. The rather unassuming and informal way of self-representation contrasts quite remarkably with an underlying urge for recognition by 'the establishment'. Mbigi's call to WKKF's 'grant fellows' to become 'star troopers' is a clear expression of this aspiration. Could one lead this back to the unfinished business of colonialism and

²⁶⁸ See, for instance, John Kane-Berman *Of intellectualism, common sense and Easter eggs* (Business Day, 11 June 2006), and *Native Club Racist* (Financial Mail, 26 May 2006).

apartheid and the process of ‘decolonising the mind’, wishing to be set free from internalised feelings of inferiority?²⁶⁹ However, as the commotion around the ‘Native Club’ showed, it might suggest a sense of (reversed) racism.²⁷⁰

Lovemore Mbigi is not an archetypal academic professor, although he enjoys several lecturing assignments. His writings are not particularly examples of academic excellence. Nevertheless, he is quite keen in carrying this title as it carries status. *Rainmaker Management Consultants*’ office staff usually referred to Mbigi as ‘the Professor’. Mbigi has repeatedly stated that ‘African management’ should be an integral subject in the curriculum of business schools and universities, and not just a marginal item for electives and guest lectures. In addition, Ronnie Lessem regretted that ‘African management’ lacked institutionalisation. Every interview, publication, or guest lecture offers an opportunity to spread the discourse, find new followers, and perhaps make money in the process. The chances get better, when the patrons are more powerful. *Eskom* seems to provide a case in point of going beyond a rather indignant stance in attaining recognition. Spokespersons of *Eskom* have developed a firm sense of self-confidence based on proven business success. Their top-managers seem to be more convinced that African values are accepted, even globally.

5.2.5 Cultural diversity management

‘African management’ discourse harbours the belief that cultural diversity is ‘well taken care of’ under Afrocentric custody. Chapter 8 will describe how this principle is discursively explained as a logical feature of Afrocentrism. However, there is potentially a tension between claims of embracing ‘cultural diversity’ on the one hand, and a search for the essence of ‘Africanness’ on the other hand. In combination with certain ‘eccentric’ organisational principles, such as emotionality and dramatisation, this could create conditions for volatile situations. Elements of purification easily lead to the use of stereotypes.

At a time when intercultural contact is increasing and thrusts for employment equity prevail, managing diversity skills training requires individuals to look internally at their own attitudes and behaviours rather than at the reinforcement of often counterproductive stereotypes based on either tacitly negative or romantically positive views of particular national cultures (Human 1996b: 61).²⁷¹

At the height of the *South African Management Project* (SAMP), Linda Human happened to be a lecturer at *Wits Business School*. She was entirely opposed to the idea of an ‘African

²⁶⁹ Chapter 6 of this thesis will go into the impact of colonialism and apartheid.

²⁷⁰ NRC Handelsblad, 9 June 2006.

²⁷¹ Linda Human is a former academic and runs a small consulting firm, called *Linda Human and Associates CC* with Stellenbosch as its home base, specialising in cultural diversity management. At a relatively early stage, she co-authored a book – by Hofmeyr & Human (1985) – about the positioning of black managers in South Africa. It can be assumed that Human was rather well informed about stereotypical ideas concerning black people in South Africa in the 1980s, particularly in the field of management and organisation.

management' philosophy at that time, but decided not to criticise it openly.²⁷² The main problem for Human concerned the so-called 'maximalist perspective' based on stereotypes of 'national cultures', which she considered detrimental, particularly with regard to cultural diversity management. Contrary to (her interpretation of) 'African management' philosophy, Human advised cultural sensitivity trainers to focus on the individual attitudes and behaviours of managers and other employees, instead of taking the assumed characteristics of members of a 'national culture' or ethnic group as point of departure. Put differently, Human warned for a too strong emphasis on assumed cultural differences between social categories. Instead of falling back on a 'maximalist perspective' if a situation gets too overwhelmingly complex to deal with, it would be better to take on a 'kaleidoscopic perspective'. Human called this a 'situational adaptability' approach: appreciating the various facets that are important and together constitute a person's identity, and then consider what is situationally relevant dealing with cultural diversity in a particular organisational context. 'African management' discourse would reduce management of cultural diversity in organisations to simplistic group differences, in Human's view.

5.2.6 Afrocentric/African - Eurocentric/Western binarism

The use of dichotomies in explaining and popularising 'African management' philosophy in South Africa can impossibly be overlooked. Without much effort to differentiate, a 'Eurocentric perspective' is usually depicted as an inadequate and unjust approach, in any case out of place for the South African context.²⁷³ Principally 'African management' philosophy is described by means of binary positioning, in opposition to 'the west' and to 'Eurocentric' conceptions and practices of leadership and management. The tendency of portraying 'the west' and 'western culture' in negative terms, treating it as a monolithic entity, entirely ignores a wide variety of traditions in human resource management and leadership philosophies, such as various perspectives of participatory, humanistic, and anthroposophical management that have been developed in Europe, including the United Kingdom.

Somewhat paradoxically as it may seem, negative portrayals of 'western' and 'Eurocentric' management often coincide with a sense of admiration of industrial and economic achievements in Europe and the USA in the 20th century, to which Mbigi would add: "Let's copy this intelligently." Apparently, African values can coexist with Eurocentric perspectives, thereby in fact refuting the 'Afrocentric' versus 'Eurocentric' management dichotomy. This would support the 'from binarism back to hybridity' argument of Frenkel and Shenhav, who state that the fusion between (*former*)

²⁷² Interview with Linda Human on 5 May 2004.

²⁷³ In line with a tendency towards homogenisation, the singular form is commonly used, so 'Eurocentric perspective' instead of 'Eurocentric perspectives'.

'coloniser' and the (*former*) 'colonised' should be recognised, instead of viewing particular management perspectives as merely 'western' or 'non-western' in a binary way (Frenkel & Shenhav 2006: 855). Phrased even more paradoxically, from a postcolonial point of view one could argue, that the 'formerly colonised' might be inclined to copy what the 'colonisers' used to do. Drawing on Richard Rorty, one could argue that the 'avant-garde' – in this case 'African management' thinkers in the early 1990s – would use much of the cultural idiom of those who they hope to replace, but then in a contextualised, indigenised form.²⁷⁴ In other words, the management visions of Covey, Mintzberg, Peters & Waterman, Pfeffer, Moss Kanter, Toffler, and others brought in an 'Africanised' flavour?

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that within 'African management' philosophy there are differences of interpretation on the assumed uniqueness of 'African management' concepts, such as *ubuntu*. Some argue that it is 'authentically African' and categorically different from 'western' humanistic notions, while others assert its universal character, with *ubuntu* as a particularity of a more general notion. Rather, the problem seems to be that a 'western' and 'Eurocentric' management perspective tends to be accepted as the norm in South Africa, without further questioning. The use of a dichotomy puts emphasis on denial. In negative terms, 'African management' philosophy would mean 'not-being-Eurocentric', without actually clarifying the substance of 'African management' (Boessenkool & Van Rinsum 2006: 186).

5.2.7 'African management', capitalism, and trade unions

If *ubuntu* means 'humane-ness' in the broadest sense, would it not clash with capitalism that is characterised by surplus value created by exploitation of human labour? As a management philosophy that emerged in a capitalist environment, 'African management' was never publicised as explicitly anti-capitalist, socialist, or in similar politically loaded terms. In essence, it is not assumed to be antagonistic to capitalism, but to be critical of certain management practices in organisations under post-apartheid capitalism. Capitalism is a mode of production that has been modified under the influence of trade union pressures and government labour legislation; generally, it has become less harsh than in the early 20th century. In a paradoxical way, 'African management' philosophy is presented as opposed to 'Eurocentric management' while simultaneously seeking a 'mixed marriage' into a multicultural family. Would the reconciliatory African want to marry a mean yet attractive Eurocentric bride, to live happily ever after in a peaceful and prosperous South Africa?

As a concept largely appropriated by Afrocentric management consultants, *ubuntu* is inherently part of South Africa's post-apartheid capitalist economy. It has become a commodity in itself.

²⁷⁴ Rorty (1989), page 56, cited in Gaylard (2005), pp. 12.

Moreover, the link between being black African and being wealthy has become accepted. Has another taboo on 'race' been broken? The ideology of consumer capitalism is now accessible to everyone. Capitalism, despite its negative side effects, has the capacity to produce the food and goods that people may enjoy in life.

Nevertheless, Afrocentric management philosophy claims to defy a society that is *not sustainable* and *not equitable*, a society that is *not spiritual* and lost its cultural identity. Furthermore, it seeks to challenge an economy that is not sufficiently creative and innovative. This paradox explains that 'African management' advocates continue to have a mission, while not touching upon the foundations of capitalist development.

Very few data were available about the position of trade unions in South Africa on 'African management' ideas, about *ubuntu* and management.²⁷⁵ Tentatively, it could be stated that trade unions have never publicly expressed official support to or explicit sympathy with the debate on 'African management' perspectives in South Africa, or it is not really an issue to them. However, at a conference in 1991 in Midrand, organised by the *Black Management Forum (BMF)*, *Institute of Directors SA (IODSA)* and the *Economic Community of Southern Africa*, a representative of the *National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)* expressed a critical view on the utilisation of *ubuntu* in a capitalist business environment.

However, a dissenting note was sounded by Mr S. Tambani, of the national executive committee of the National Union of Mineworkers. He felt the concept was rooted in pre-colonial tribal history and therefore was inappropriate to the way in which a capital-labour economy had emerged (The Daily News 11, November 1991).

Notably, Mr Tambani referred to 'pre-colonial tribal history', implicitly criticising notions of ethnic and tribal identity and objecting that these past realities were linked to contemporary power relations.²⁷⁶ Trade unions in South Africa might be reluctant to notions such as *ubuntu*, possibly because of the principle of 'racialism' and since *ubuntu* could be used 'to silence the workers', thus mystifying the 'real' capital-labour relations.²⁷⁷ Albert Koopman never made it a secret that his relationship with the trade unions in *Cashbuild* was – at least initially – problematic. He interpreted this as a struggle for power. Any initiative regarding workers' participation allegedly met with suspicion from trade unions' side.

²⁷⁵ During the field research period in South Africa, from June 2003 until May 2004, repeated attempts to get an appointment with COSATU representatives to talk about 'African management' ideas, about *ubuntu* and management, have been to no avail. Probably, some trade unions whose membership used to be more affiliated with the *Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)* during the liberation struggle, such as the *National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU)*, might be more sympathetic towards notions such as *ubuntu*. However, this was beyond the scope of this PhD research.

²⁷⁶ These notions are discussed in Chapter 8 of this thesis, section 8.2.

²⁷⁷ This view was for instance brought up in a conversation with Dr. Sehoai Santho, then acting director of LeARN's *Leadership Academy* (Field journal Friday, 18 July 2003).

Generally, trade unions in South Africa have been hesitant about Workplace Forums and other workers' participation initiatives, for fear of workers' cooptation by management, undermining trade union solidarity networks.²⁷⁸ Would trade union representatives support an 'African management' approach at organisational level? In one instance, trade union 'shop stewards' would have pressed management to engage Mbigi as 'African management' consultant, as preferred to 'Eurocentric' consultants.²⁷⁹ There could be a division between official trade union positions and the standpoints of 'shop stewards', including ordinary membership, at company level. Mbigi has claimed repeatedly that the practice of caucusing among trade unions in South Africa would be a strategy derived from 'African culture'.²⁸⁰ On another level, the renowned *Triple Alliance*, the cooperation between the *African National Congress* (ANC), the *Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU), and the *South African Communist Party* (SACP) is discursively characterised as a distinctively 'African' decision-making structure, seeking consultation to reach consensus on social and economic policies.

Concluding remarks

By now, the reader may realise that 'African management' discourse in South Africa is very much about language, spoken and written text. Management discourse is inherently related to social action and management practice. However, would actual 'African management' practice be very different from what is already there? Perhaps, the 'real difference' lies in the way people make sense of social realities at work and after hours, and how they identify with certain ideas and opinion leaders. Perhaps, the 'real difference' lies in a desire to attain cultural and intellectual recognition, supposedly an important aspect in getting rid of a 'neurosis of victimisation' and disposing of internalised feelings of inferiority. The latter features relate to Afrocentrism, identity formation and identification; these complex issues will be examined thoroughly in chapters 8 and 9.

Although some versions of 'African management' discourse may have essentialist features, essentialism may carry a vital message to the post-apartheid business community in South Africa. It takes sensitivity and empathy to distinguish and unravel this message. Exploring the historical and political dimensions to the discourse may help with this effort. To raise such awareness, the next

²⁷⁸ This view was expressed for instance at the annual conference of the *Industrial Relations Association of South Africa* in 2003 (IRasa National Conference *Social Transformation: the IR Contribution?* Rosebank, Johannesburg, 12-13 August). Sarah Mosoetsa and Nirvana Pillay of the *University of Witwatersrand* reported on Workplace Forums in South Africa. They stated that only very few Workplace Forums have been established and registered since adoption of the *Labour Relations Act* of 1995 (chapter 5). Moreover, they observed a growing reluctance to this concept for fear of workers' cooptation by management, undermining trade union solidarity networks. Mosoetsa and Pillay argued that trade unions should "move out of an apartheid mentality."

²⁷⁹ *Diversity and Transformation Training* in Springs, 19-21 June 2002 (field report June 2002).

²⁸⁰ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi by Barbara Nussbaum on 17 July 1995 (source: SAMP archive).

chapter further contextualise the emergence of ‘African management’ discourse by highlighting the impact of colonialism and apartheid in this context. In addition, contextualisation of the discourse in contemporary South Africa is reflected in Chapter 7.

Although the followership of ‘African management’ philosophy may be relatively small, the debate coincides with recurring stories and reports in South African media on the resurgence of ‘tradition’ and ‘ethnicity’, in various domains – religion, philosophy, social justice, local administration, land reforms, literature, even in personal relationships and sexuality.

On top of all this, the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe is lingering in everybody’s mind. Furthermore, there is a growing awareness that a large part of the South African population is getting somewhat impatient, as their expectations about ‘a better life for all’ have not quite come true yet. Against this background, political elites and business elites try to manoeuvre in the best possible way to serve their interests. The ‘flirting’ with ideas pertaining to *ubuntu* and management has become part of this power game.

‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa keeps transforming itself. It expands, developing extensions and offshoots. From a dominant management perspective, however, it may not be hard to criticise and discredit prophecies of ‘African management’ advocates, for their claims are usually far-reaching and quite ‘imaginative’. The ‘*ubuntu* community’ in management and leadership is not a ‘threat’ to the relatively secure position of dominant management discourse. There are indications that elements of an Afrocentric perspective to management and leadership is gradually gaining influence, at least at a rhetorical level. One example is for instance the very ‘cradle’ of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa: *Wits Business School* in Johannesburg. Purposely WBS made reference to the Afrocentric narrative about Africa as the ‘Cradle of Humankind’. The text of an advert said:

...our position at the heart of the African business community helps create a global perspective from an African viewpoint. The genesis of business transformation starts at WBS (Advertisement of *Wits Business School* in Mail&Guardian, 1 August 2003).

This was apparently deemed suitable imagery to promote this prestigious business school in South Africa and to bring this message to the public. In addition, newspapers in South Africa bring up terms, such as *lekgotla* and *imbizo* in their reports, e.g. *Lekgotla to outline Mbeki’s state-of-the-nation address* (ThisDay, 20 January 2004). When the *Road Accident Fund* tried to resolve its problem of overspending, a well-known weekly magazine reported: *Yarona Creative Management Consultants hired to facilitate three board lekgotlas* (Mail&Guardian, 21 November 2003). These two examples illustrate that notions of ‘traditional values’, such as *ubuntu* and *lekgotla*, are increasingly noticeable in public and official parlance.

Chapter 6: Colonialism, apartheid and transition

Introduction

This chapter highlights the 'pre-emergence' era of 'African management' discourse in South Africa. Principally, it shows that this development is one of the outcomes of a long historical process. 'African management' philosophy did not just appear 'out of the blue' so to speak. In many ways, there is a clear continuity from the past. For example, if one becomes aware of the historical and political context that apparently caused the desire for 'decolonising the mind', this distinctive feature of 'African management' discourse will probably make a lot more sense.

Understanding historical and political developments since colonial times is a requisite for interpreting Afrocentric management approaches. To a considerable degree, all this refers to a long history of unfree labour in South Africa, or *coercive labour*, starting with colonialism that influenced the social and cultural climate in organisations very much, as discussed in the first paragraph. In the 20th century, policies around industrialisation and labour can be reviewed through an analysis of the 'Native Question'. Although the jargon changed in the course of a century, the key question remained the same. How could African population groups be controlled and at the same time, a cheap and submissive workforce be guaranteed for the emerging mining industry? The social sciences, in particular cultural anthropology, or rather *Volkekunde*, made a distinctive contribution to policies concerning the *Native Question*, although that may have been a more ambiguous one than often assumed. One of the lasting effects it produced nevertheless was a certain fixation on notions relating to ethnicity, traditional leadership, and 'indigenous culture'. One could wonder to what extent and how such a fixation has influenced conceptualisations of 'African management' philosophy. At the very least, it is important to consider this historical dimension to become aware of the broader context, against which local knowledge in the form of 'African management' philosophy was produced, and to identify both elements of continuity and change.

While business has played a prominent role in creating a culture of coercive labour, section 6.2 will consider the involvement of more proactive sections of the South African business sector at the end of the 1980s in bringing about a radical breakthrough in the stalemate between the business sector and the liberation movement. Thereby they contributed to a political transition from apartheid to a democratic political system. A flow of 'new' management visions sprung off from this active political engagement, as illustrated in the third section. Specific features of these visions can also be found, almost in identical wording, in 'African management' philosophy, as described in the previous chapters. The last section will assess in brief significant elements of the impact of 'African management' in South Africa

colonialism and apartheid on contemporary management thinking and practices in South Africa, and how these relate to an emergent and still evolving 'African management' discourse.

6.1 A long history of coercive labour

The term 'coercive labour' tries to capture labour practices from the 17th until the 20th century. The concept is an expression of a compromise between free labour, that for the majority of the workforce was never the practice in South Africa before 1994, and slave labour. From the 17th century onwards, European settlers brought into southern Africa their practices of government administration, colonial bureaucracies, modes of economic production, and trade.

The Portuguese, Dutch, French, Belgians and Germans all left a mark in terms of language, administration and laws, but from the beginning of the nineteenth century Britain was the hegemonic power in the region, and of all the former colonial masters it has had the greatest lasting influence (Alexander 2002: 2).

The British are said to have created a major impact on the shaping of the labour histories of South Africa. The settlers' ways of organising households, livelihood, agriculture, stock farming and 'doing business' differed considerably from the precarious but for long ages sustainable forms of social and economic survival known locally, as Neil Bennun mentioned for instance in his book about the language and culture of the /Xam-ka!ei, the San people of southern Africa (Bennun 2005).²⁸¹ The San belonged to the indigenous population groups in the southern part of the African continent. Bennun's remark about leadership among the San community is noteworthy:

Like the more traditional San people still surviving, the /Xam-ka!ei were particularly democratic. There was no word in their language for 'chief' and leadership duties for any particular task were more or less spontaneously delegated according to who was most skilled at the matter in hand, be it hunting, butchering, curing skins or curing the sick (Bennun 2005: 178).²⁸²

In the colonial period "the colonial masters were mostly the victors in group conflicts and the indigenous population groups mostly the losers," while in the postcolonial period "local whites [...] were again (at least until 1974) typically the conquerors, and therefore in a position to enrich themselves, mostly at the cost of the indigenous people" (Terreblanche 2002: 6). Through forcing the Khoikhoi, the San and other population groups into serfdom by taking away their land, pastures, and hunting grounds, the colonists became landowners. The latter developed a huge demand for

²⁸¹ The efforts of the German linguist Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law Lucy Lloyd to document the language and culture of the /Xam-ka!ei have been lively described by Bennun (2005).

²⁸² Although Neil Bennun recognises that he is not an anthropologist by training (*Acknowledgements*, on pp. 383), in the appendix *References and notes* he claims: "There exists an enormous body of historical and ethnographic research pertaining to the work of Wilhem Bleek and Lucy Lloyd, the material they collected from their /Xam informants and the San people of southern Africa. I have drawn on this research on nearly every page here; in many ways much of this book should be considered a survey of the broad consensus achieved through the decades' worth of work that went into the publications on the following list," pp. 393 Ibid.

cheap labour to work on the farms.

This transformation of black labour into unfree labour shortly after the abolition of Khoisan enservment and slavery is perhaps the most momentous event in South Africa's labour history. By the time diamonds were discovered in 1867, and gold in 1886, these new methods of forcing blacks into unfree labour had already been firmly institutionalised. The mines' great demand for cheap and docile African labour necessitated not only the refinement of existing methods, but also the design of additional methods of control and repression (Terreblanche 2002: 9).

After 1838, when slavery and serfdom had been abolished, new methods were designed to turn local population groups into unfree wage labourers, much to the benefit of both Afrikaans- and English-speaking landowning classes, and the British mining companies.²⁸³ Slave labour increasingly became a taboo issue in Britain, which was the home of empire and was considered by many industrialists in South Africa in that period as their 'mother country'. Hence, business and the state invented another form of submissive labour, avoiding allegations of slave labour, since forced labour or any form of slavery was denounced and considered 'uncivilised', particularly in Britain (Ashforth 1990: 24-26). The colonial administration sought possible solutions for the mass recruitment of African workers and to justify measures to do so, through gathering 'true knowledge' of social and economic conditions of the 'Natives' and of the distribution of land and the classification of population. The outcome of this could best be described by the term *coercive labour*: unfree but no outright enslavement. With the discovery of diamonds in the Witwatersrand, mining and industrialisation began to arise from the end of the 1890s. The defeat of the Boer republics in the second Anglo Boer War (1899-1902) made it easier for British corporate capitalism to spread around the region, although at very high cost and to the detriment of both Afrikaner and African communities. The British however accommodated the class of large Afrikaner landowners politically to facilitate the process. The Afrikaner proletariat then entered into a long-lasting but essentially unfair competition with African labourers (Terreblanche 2002: 242-246). Since the late 19th century, Cecil John Rhodes and his chartered company that eventually developed into *Anglo American* has set to a considerable extent the tone for business practices in South Africa, as well as in neighbouring countries. Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Milner were tasked by the British government to gain control over more land in South Africa, conquer 'African tribes' that were still independent and to create a cheap and submissive labour force to work in the gold mines (Thompson 2001: 114-

²⁸³ In 1807, the *slave trade* in the British colonies was abolished; it became illegal to carry slaves in British ships. The Abolition of Slavery Act was passed in 1833 and came into effect on 1 August 1834. However, slaves were compelled to work for another 6 years for their old masters. In the Abolition of Slavery Act (Emancipation Act), a condition was included concerning an 'apprenticeship period', which in fact implied an extension of slavery.

115).²⁸⁴ Later, a process of ‘retribalisation of Africans’ under the leadership of traditional chiefs who collaborated with the state proved helpful in providing cheap labour for the industry, in which African communities were placed in ‘native reserves’. This was a peculiar way of exerting control over Africans, allowing them to only live in generally barren, remote Reserves, which were later called ‘Bantustans’ or – depending on one’s perspective – ‘homelands’. They could be seen as a form of (what the British termed) ‘indirect rule’, as opposed to ‘direct rule’ that ruled out the possibility of ‘native’ institutions. Basically, South Africa’s system of segregation and later apartheid was not unique in the world, but a generic mode of colonial domination (Mamdani 1996: 8). In the early 20th century, the British governors of Africa believed that segregation was also desirable in terms of ‘social comfort’, and for reasons of ‘health and sanitation’. In other words, it was considered very much a matter of ‘civilisation’ (Mamdani 1996: 16). Racial segregation and customary law were instruments in the hands of the colonial administration and later the apartheid state.²⁸⁵ Because of initial colonial interventions since the 17th century, Dutch Roman law had become standard in South Africa up to this day, which is also of huge importance for the ways in which society and business organise their affairs and settle disputes. Subsequently, customary and tribal law have been permeated, transformed, “defined and legitimated by the (colonial) state” (Wilson 2000: 77).²⁸⁶ The *Native Question* and the practice of *coercive labour* relations have left deep marks on the apartheid workplace *regime* of the 20th century, and beyond. Contemporary labour relations and organisational climates in South Africa have their “deep historical roots in the evolution of labour regimes, work practices and the racial structures of power within settler colonialism” (Von Holdt 2003: 27).

In the following, the dynamic interplay between industrialisation, domination, segregation and ethnicity, are examined in more detail, in order to gain deeper insight into the historical context, from which ‘African management’ discourse has emerged.

²⁸⁴ Sir Alfred Milner was British High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of the Cape Colony between 1897 and 1899 (Source: www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/milner.a.htm South African History Online [accessed 9 September 2005]).

²⁸⁵ After the second Anglo Boer War, in 1910 the Cape and Natal formed the Union of South Africa with the two Boer republics (Orange Free State and the South African Republic [Transvaal]) that had Afrikaner leadership with relative autonomy. In 1961, the Union of South Africa became the Republic of South Africa, withdrew from the Commonwealth, and broke its ties with Britain. A number of countries had pressured against South Africa’s continued membership of the Commonwealth. On 20 April 1961, Nelson Mandela wrote a letter to Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd protesting against the decision for South Africa to become a Republic, since the referendum, underlying that decision, had been undemocratic for it had excluded the participation of African people.

²⁸⁶ Legal ‘pluralists’ argue that traditional African courts and of local ideas and institutions of justice would have relative autonomy next to the official legal system. In an annexure to Wilson’s article, Owen Sichone comments (pp. 93): “Even if tribal jurisprudence was different from Roman-Dutch law, the two were not parallel or dual legal systems but different levels of the same colonial legal system. [...] Culturally and politically, there is no evidence of legal pluralism in colonial and postcolonial Africa.”

Fabrications of tradition, ethnicity, and tribality

Customary law, traditional leadership, ethnic identity, and related notions were deliberately used as instruments for 'indirect rule'. It had major consequences for how many people continue to perceive such notions. This section seeks to expose problematic facets with regard to traditional notions that were used to legitimise 'ethnic' segregation in South Africa. The system of 'indirect rule' served among other things to transform 'raw Natives' into 'useful workers', while hoping to avoid dreaded allegations of forced labour as far as possible (Ashforth 1990: 23). The latter seemed a difficult task: capitalist industry required bodily strength in combination with political powerlessness, meaning 'a degree of subjection' at least from black workers, not to the same extent from white workers. This did not imply that African people readily accepted these models and images brought upon them. In official political discourse, the issue of 'indirect rule' was generally treated as 'The Native Question', which basically meant solving the 'problem' of how to deal with questions of 'race relations' or "the proper place of Africans in South African society," without Africans themselves having any say in the matter.

To speak of a social 'question' then, or to view some peoples' lives as a 'problem' is to name those people as a subject of power, the power presumed capable of 'solving' the problem they constitute (Ashforth 1990: 5).

The 'Native Question' was the intellectual domain, in which "the knowledge, strategies, policies, and justifications necessary for the maintenance of domination were fashioned" (Ashforth 1990: 1).²⁸⁷ In the course of time, the respective government commissions of inquiry may have used different terms and may at times have been less or more rigid in particular ways. However, fundamentally their approach was the same all the way through: domination of 'non-European' population groups and creation of a sufficient number of compliant African industrial workers effectively made available in great numbers. Altogether, 'the Native Question' led to a shrewd power strategy "to fragment resistance in contemporary Africa" (Mamdani 1996: 3). Conceiving ethnic division and plurality in 'Bantu society' with all its political implications fitted perfectly well in a political strategy of 'indirect rule'. In the early 20th century, the term 'Native' was common

²⁸⁷ Adam Ashforth described in detail the proceedings and findings of consecutive government commissions of inquiry throughout the 20th century that he called "the Grand Tradition of 'Native Question' Commissions," encompassing the following:

- *The South African Native Affairs Commission SANAC* (1903-1905);
- *The Native Economic Commission NEC* (1930-1932);
- *The Native Laws (Fagan) Commission* (1946-1948);
- *The Commission for Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa* (or the *Tomlinson Commission*, 1950-1954), and
- *The Riekert and Wiehahn Commissions* (1977-1981).

Prof. Adam Ashforth (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, USA) is an American scholar and philosopher (politics) by education, who has published widely on South Africa, amongst others about politics, state formation and witchcraft (see: www.sss.ias.edu/community/ashforth.php [accessed 13 September 2005]).

usage, affiliated to the idiom of 'savage' of earlier times, restating the idea that Africa, and therefore Africans, were 'different' with the connotation of 'uncivilised' and 'primitive'. In the 1950s, this changed in official language into 'Bantu', equally defined in contrast to 'whites' or 'Europeans', but with a slightly increased sense of humanity.

The *South African Native Affairs Commission* saw its mission to facilitate the "moral upliftment of 'Natives' and protecting them from backsliding and degeneration" and to move them into 'civilisation'. SANAC looked into the ways that the 'Natives' could be turned into 'industrious persons', "giving them experience of the joys of 'hard work'" (Ashforth 1990: 38). There was a challenge, and simultaneously a tension, to figure out what (supposedly) traditional practices would be preferred aspects of 'tribalism' as a basis for 'Native' Administration – that is to say in the imperial perspective – and what 'primitive' elements were considered prejudicial; the former had to be maintained and strengthened, and – obviously – the latter to be eliminated. Possible social and cultural differences between 'Native' communities, for instance in law systems, were basically seen as minor variations, while assuming social homogeneity for the larger 'Native' society (Ashforth 1990: 42). This allowed for a uniform system of administration for the 'Natives' as a whole, with some degree of flexibility on account of regional variations in 'tribal' customs.

The essence of 'Nativeness'

In the early 1930s, when the NEC was established, it was assumed that 'Natives' could be aided in development and their mentality be changed "without eradicating the essence of their identity and thus their difference from 'Europeans'" (Ashforth 1990: 97). The essence of 'Nativeness' was viewed as a matter of 'primitive mentality' and 'primitive economy' (Ashforth 1990: 56). Anthropological science was the main authority to define the essence of 'Nativism'. Under supervision of the state, 'Tribalism' was reconstructed and turned into an authoritative system of control, by which 'Natives' could be denied the rights of political citizenship (Ashforth 1990: 54). Communalism was considered the essence of tribalism, thus used as a justified ground for disenfranchisement, taking away voting rights from Africans (Ashforth 1990: 48). Voting was considered an individual citizen's right, but 'Natives' did not enjoy the status of citizens nor did they in any way relate to the central state as citizens.

'Separate development' and 'homelands': from homogeneity to plurality

During World War II, the economic situation had considerably improved in South Africa. By that time, a great number of Africans had migrated from the Reserves to urban areas, satisfying the demand of industrial employers for unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. The municipalities were hardly able to establish and maintain segregated 'Natives locations' in the urban areas. Still, there was not only a labour-shortage in the mining industry, but also at the farms in the rural areas, while *'African management' in South Africa* Page 157 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

employment opportunities in the cities were also increasing (Wolpe 1988: 71). In the 1940s, African political resistance was mounting, as exemplified by a short strike by the *African Mine Workers Union* in 1946 that was violently suppressed by the government. This sharpened the debate on the 'Native Question' (Ashforth 1990: 118). The *Fagan Commission* proposed plans for rearranging the regulation of 'Native labour'. The Reserves were earmarked for housing migrant workers for the mining industry and urban areas were expected to accommodate permanent 'Native workers' for secondary industries. Hence, 'redundant Natives' could be removed from urban areas, if necessary by force (Ashforth 1990: 113). In 1946, a moderate and more feasible strategy was proposed by the *Fagan Commission*, a 'third road' between segregation and integration as a sort of temporary measure, while essential ('racial') differences between 'Natives' and 'Europeans' would be upheld. The commission felt that African urbanisation could not be stopped (Mamdani 1996: 99; Thompson 2001: 157).

After World War II, the view of a fundamental homogeneity within African society, both in 'Native' society and among 'Europeans', changed into a more differentiated conception. Gradually, the idea of heterogeneity within 'Native' society became accepted in official discourse. Since then supposedly a plurality of 'African cultures' existed. Statecraft moved 'from race to tribe' (Mamdani 1996: 100). Furthermore, it was argued that 'Europeans' had rightfully occupied the land and attained political and economic dominance, since before their arrival the country would have been practically 'empty'. 'Bantu' migration – so it was said – had happened not quite long before the white settlers arrived. In other words, "none had any greater right to be there in the first place than any others" and "all inhabitants of South Africa were originally immigrants of one sort or another" (Ashforth 1990: 162). Thus, black inhabitants could be considered immigrants, just like the Afrikaners. 'Autochthonous inhabitants', such as the Khoi, the San, and their descendants of mixed origins, were disregarded in this reasoning altogether.

In 1948, the *Herenigde Nasionale Party* (National Party) led by D.F. Malan came to power and the Malan regime was ready to introduce the 'Native policy' of apartheid, which meant a total and physical separation of 'Europeans' and 'Non-Europeans' (Ashforth 1990: 139). Segregation was believed to be a somewhat negative term, as if people had to be fenced off from each other, while the term apartheid would have a more natural and logic connotation of giving "the various races the opportunity of uplifting themselves on the basis of what is their own" (Giliomee 2003: 374, citation of D.F. Malan). Notably, the *Tomlinson Commission* did not depict 'Bantu culture' as necessarily inferior, but rather just as 'different'. They emphasised "social difference as divinely ordained fact." It was assumed that one's 'culture and language' constituted a God-given identity, so it would be intolerable that black and white population groups mixed. The *Tomlinson Commission* advised to

accompany a policy of total segregation, with huge investments for the social economic development of the 'Bantustans', but these never materialised. Under apartheid, there were small African industrialists that were supported in the homelands, and there was the informal sector. However, Africans were restricted to the homelands for economic opportunities, strictly regulated by the state. The *Bantu Investment Corporation* was the tool for this. Later, a *Development Corporation* for each of the homelands was established.

Furthermore, an immense research effort was put into the objective of 'separate development' that would enable Africans to engage in an independent national socio-economic and cultural process 'in their own Bantu Areas'. It resulted in a 3.755 page report. The then Minister for Native Affairs, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, did not entirely accept the report's contents and proposals, and hence decided not to make the full report available to the public. Instead, an executive summary and a detailed master plan were written up. Apparently, there was *no real need* for the government to implement the plans of the *Tomlinson Commission*. It rather served as a justification, giving apartheid policy credibility and 'scientific' underpinning, in order to 'put substance' to apartheid (Ashforth 1990: 150-151).

Based on the notion of separate 'peoples' (*volke*) with distinct ethnic and cultural identities that had to be maintained and developed separately, it utilised the work of leading Afrikaner intellectuals, especially (but not exclusively) anthropologists, to give a quasi-scientific support to their ideology (Ellis 1999: 80).

The *Tomlinson Commission* helped to spread the fear that eventually integration of cultures would be irreversible, with all sorts of undesired consequences (Ashforth 1990: 156). The survival of 'European culture' in South Africa was at stake, so it was said:

...special prophylactic steps must be taken to preserve the integrity of this 'absorbent people' against the promiscuous exchange of cultural fluids... (Ashforth 1990: 156).

Hence, the 'Europeans' should have a right 'to defend themselves' against contagious external cultural influences, thus a right to self-determination. In the wake of 'the hegemonic status of a new international discourse of equality', Verwoerd granted internal self-government to eight (and later ten) 'Bantustans' and promised that chieftaincy would be protected and looked after (Nugent 2004: 134). Later on, four 'homelands' accepted 'full independence' from South Africa, namely Transkei (1976), Bophuthatswana (1977), Venda (1979) and Ciskei (1981), while six 'homelands' remained 'self-governing'.

Emergence of 'authentic Bantu cultures' and migrant labour

Each and every 'ethnic group' – since the 1950s gradually referred to as 'Bantu' and no longer as 'Native' or 'savage' – was suddenly entitled to have their 'national home', to experience its own

development without any ‘contaminating’ interference from other ‘cultures’. As ‘Bantu’ workers were considered carriers of ‘cultural impurities’ endangering ‘European culture’, likewise there was a risk of outsiders disturbing authentic ‘Bantu’ cultural development. Culture contact and racial mixture might lead to an irreversible denigration of ‘the white race’ and to physical, moral and mental disharmonies (Sparks 2004: 234).²⁸⁸ Language was seen as a major distinguishing factor in cultural divisions, at least with regard to black population groups. The future vision of this ideology contained the prospect of self-sufficient full-fledged ‘Bantu’ states.

Under ‘Separate Development’, the state must facilitate the development of each separate culture in its own ‘sphere’ to the highest degree possible. Capacities for cultures to develop in this view, however, are racially determined and the form taken by such development must, if it is to be ‘authentic’ development and not a mere mimicking of another culture, follow the ‘lines’ intrinsic to each culture (Ashforth 1990: 165).

The ‘Native Question’ would then be definitively solved once the ‘Bantu cultures’ had developed themselves into mature independent nations (Ashforth 1990: 167). In any event, ‘Bantu people’ would no longer have valid reasons to dwell outside ‘their own area’, except as migrant workers. As such, they had a moral obligation to contribute substantially to the development of their own ‘Bantu culture’. Overall, 19th and 20th century South Africa could be seen as a ‘bifurcated state’ with a double division: on the one hand keeping the urban and the rural apart with force, and on the other hand maintaining and accentuating an ethnic divide (Mamdani 1996: 29-31). In a euphemistic way, there was talk of ‘organised labour’ instead of using the term ‘forced labour’. As presumed, Africans had to be willing to give their labour force in the industrial undertakings of ‘civilisation’, in the interest of their own ‘education’ (Ashforth 1990: 28, 35). The ideological and cultural context that was created in the course of the 1940-1950s put the African ‘subject’ mainly in the position of a migrant, an otherwise ‘redundant’ (e.g. Sparks 2004: 188).²⁸⁹ This was the outcome of a series of reports by consecutive *Commissions of Inquiry* and subsequent political consequences and policies. The African was not seen as a citizen, but rather as a subject, an idle and mostly a child-like person, with no rights outside his reserve. He was depicted as a ‘tribal person’, though often with a dubious ethnic background or invented ‘ancestry’. He should by no means contaminate ‘civilised Europeans’ through ‘unnecessary’ cultural contacts.

Although Afrikaner intelligentsia may have had most say in advancing an apartheid ideology,

²⁸⁸ Reference is made to (the Dutch translation of) *The Mind of South Africa: the story of the rise and fall of Apartheid* by Allister Sparks (1990).

²⁸⁹ The practice of migrant labour existed in South Africa well before the mid-19th century as a result of de-peasantisation and proletarianisation within the African population, according to Wolpe (1988). Harold Wolpe found it incorrect to analyse the political order in South Africa exclusively around the issue of ‘race’ while neglecting class struggles (between and within ‘racial groups’) and economic interests, and vice-versa. The apartheid political system had its origins in capitalism and white domination, as developed since colonial times. However, this had not been a matter of a smooth continuous development; the relationship with capitalist economy changed over time in many ways. ‘*African management*’ in *South Africa* Page 160 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

industrialists benefited from policies resulting from it, as long as cheap submissive workers were available in large numbers near urban industrial areas.

Growing resistance

After several resistance wars in the 19th century, it became clear that the colonial state had to seriously count with increased resistance. Since the early 20th century (e.g. Thompson 2001: 170-177; Wolpe 1988: 65-74). The power of African chiefdoms was in many cases considerable and involved sometimes a certain amount of flexibility (Ashforth 1990: 12, 41-43). Traditional leaders were co-opted or appointed by the state. They were put on the pay-role of the apartheid state. Nonetheless, in the rural areas there were many indications of resistance to 'Bantustan policies' throughout the 1950s, for example in the Ciskei:

All indicate the growing disaffection of the mass of the so-called 'Ciskeian' population who never accepted ethnicity or homelands in the first place ((Anonymous) 1991: 404, in Vail 1991).

It was suggested that these reserved lands were in a certain way a core of 'ancestral lands', but the occupation of many of the concerned 'Bantustans' was of a much more recent date than the early 19th century (Ashforth 1990: 35). Moreover, some of the 'Bantustans', such as the Ciskei and Sekhukhuneland, were no coherent national or ethnic units at all ((Anonymous) 1991: 395, in Vail 1991; Nugent 2004: 133). Generally, protest campaigns met with brute force by the central state and the installation of new chiefs that were more loyal to the state. Steve Biko, the renowned representative of the *Black Consciousness Movement* of the early 1970s, compared the 'homelands' with concentration camps.

No bantustan leader can tell me that he is acting at his own initiative when he enters the realms of bantustan politics. At this stage of our history, we can not have our struggle being tribalised through the creation of Zulu, Xhosa and Tswana politicians by the system. These tribal cocoons called 'homelands' are nothing else but sophisticated concentration camps where black people are allowed to suffer 'peacefully'. Black people must constantly pressurise the bantustan leaders to pull out of the political cul-de-sac that has been created for us by the system (Biko 2004: 95).

Eventually, forced removals openly showed the ugly face of apartheid: the attempts to 'de-urbanise' a growing urban African population forcibly, a strategy 'to reverse the decades-long process of African urbanisation'. This policy was abandoned in 1986 (Mamdani 1996: 102). Between 1960 and 1983, the apartheid regime removed about 1.1 million people from white rural areas to separate ethnic 'homeland' reserves.²⁹⁰ Other sources speak of a number of more than 3.5 million people that were uprooted between 1960 and 1985 as a result of forced removals (Mamdani 1996: 102). This included the uprooting of people within rural areas, and from urban to rural areas.

²⁹⁰ In: *Our Land...Our Life...Our Future... A Land Dispossession History*, part IV 'From Segregation to Apartheid' (Source: www.sahistory.org.za/pages/specialprojects/land/05_apartheid.htm).
'African management' in South Africa Page 161 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

As observed earlier, the policies of 'divide and rule' based on racial-ethnic segregation was scientifically justified by an extensive research on the preconditions for a supposedly sustainable 'separate development'. The role of social scientists, and in particular cultural anthropologists, in this process was remarkable, which is discussed in the next section.

The role of anthropology

The contribution of cultural anthropologists and ethnologists in the 20th century to the concept of 'separate development' in the service of the Native Affairs Department, could throw light on the use of notions relating to traditional leadership, tribalism and 'the Tribe', ethnic identity, authenticity and authentic cultural development. Their work in the past may still play a role in the ways people nowadays attribute meanings to the aforementioned notions, as these notions are still alive today, and even seem to experience a sort of revival, as is possibly also the case with 'African management' discourse. It should be noted that the relationship between professional cultural anthropologists and apartheid ideologues has not always been quite harmonious and unproblematic. Altogether, the Native Question culminating in unsuccessful apartheid policies was a case of 'othering' African people in their own country of birth. Therefore, in many ways, South Africa was largely a local variant of 'indirect rule' as implemented in other countries on the African continent.

Cultural anthropologists and ethnologists who were affiliated with Afrikaans-speaking universities and government institutions have exerted a great influence in relation to meanings ascribed to, and the use of terms such as 'ethnicity', 'Bantu cultures' and 'the Tribe' in 20th century South Africa (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 5). Particularly in the 1950s, anthropologists helped to paint the new social landscape, and provide the language to describe the claimed cultural diversity (Ashforth 1990; Kuper 2002). Leading Afrikaner academics in this field were, for instance, Pieter Johannes Coertze and Werner Willi Max Eiselen. Prof. P.J. Coertze played a major role in the establishment of 'Historically Black Universities', such as the *University of the North* (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 130). Eiselen established anthropology as a university subject at the *University of Stellenbosch* in 1926 (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 57).

Before, uniformity among the 'Natives' was assumed. The anthropological community in 20th century South Africa was, however, fundamentally fragmented and divided. The labels used to indicate the most noticeable divide were 'social anthropology' and *Volkekunde*, later 'cultural anthropology' or anthropology, which to a large degree coincided with a divide between anthropology practised at English-medium universities and at Afrikaans-medium universities. In fact, tensions existed already before 1948. After World War II, Afrikaans anthropology gradually developed into a specific local version of the discipline, referred to as *Volkekunde*, a diverse approach with 'culture' as its main concept, rather than 'society'. In retrospect, anthropology in '*African management*' in South Africa

South Africa could be regarded as ‘unfocused’ (Ellis 1999: 87).

As an academic enterprise, it seemed to focus more on the immutable differences between groups defined as ethnic groups than on the unifying elements of our human existence (Ellis 1999: 71).

Principally, *Volkekunde* made use of an ‘organic view of culture’ – assuming the absence of external cultural influences – allegedly portraying ‘the complexities and rich content of indigenous life’, culminating in a rather conservative attitude:

It is not surprising that anthropology in South Africa, or more precisely, its ethnographic aspect, became closely linked, in both the popular and official mind, with ‘Native Policy’ and administration. Here was a discipline that claimed to be devoted to the study of other cultures: surely it held the promise of providing insights that could lead to the better administration of the indigenous people (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 8).

In this logic, it was not difficult to maintain that segregation of blacks and whites was also ‘in black interest’, so they could “regain their lost self-respect and identity in their own areas, because only then they refuse to intermarry with us,” as stated by Prof. P.J. Schoeman of the *University of Stellenbosch* in 1941 (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 124). Leading Afrikaner academics used their status as scientists and so-called experts on ‘the life of the Natives’ to justify their political sympathies with Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 129). *Volkekunde* was based on ‘ethnos theory’; a ‘people’ or ‘nation’ and their culture together formed a bounded unit, an ‘ethnos’ (Ellis 1999: 77). Such a conception is characterised by a form of cultural relativism: cultural differences would not necessarily imply superiority or inferiority. The relationship of anthropologists and ethnologists with the state, and in particular with the *Department of Native Affairs*, was however neither self-evident nor necessarily unproblematic:

...the Ethnological Section [...] was an isolated corner of the vast Native Affairs empire, staffed by a group of eccentrics who were regarded as politically suspect by the apartheid ideologues [...] (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 11). [...] But it was not only the personnel of the Section that was politically suspect. Its work was not of such a nature as to meet the urgent demands of the planners of the new order (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 117).

Anthropologists were often not very welcome in the department and their role was not quite clear. The ‘apartheid planners’ were not at all times pleased with the kind of work that the staff of the *Ethnological Section* delivered. After 1948, when the mode of governing Bantu peoples changed from ‘direct rule’ to ‘indirect rule’, Afrikaner nationalists largely replaced English-speaking staff at the department. Consequently, there was a felt need for a database on the ‘Bantu-speaking peoples’ as a basis for further research on developing a ‘homelands’ system, since available information was shockingly limited and rather fragmentary. Traditional African political structures were typically described with ‘the Tribe’ as the core unit, as a pyramid directed towards the chief and with ‘the Tribe’ as ‘evolutionary precursor of states’. There is evidence that ‘tribes’

were simply made up misleadingly in order to obtain access to land in ‘Bantustan’ areas, such as in Ciskei ((Anonymous) 1991: 400).²⁹¹ This demonstrates a significant level of ‘constructedness’ of ethnicity and deliberate manipulation in transforming notions of tribal identity on both sides – the state and decentralised ‘Native’ authorities pursuing such machinations. Anthropological research products in that context were usually descriptive by nature, without much theoretical content (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 113-114; 121). Instead of paying attention to comprehensive ethnographic studies, anthropologists began to focus increasingly on “specific aspects of ‘traditional’ life” (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 72). It would be an oversimplification to assume that across the board cultural anthropologists, particularly Afrikaans *volkekundiges*, collaborated willingly and consciously with the apartheid regime and that – in contrast – social anthropologists were unanimously opposed to this.

There has also been an unwillingness in the past on the part of some liberal anthropologists to forcefully challenge the work of scholars whose work directly provided some of the undergirth of apartheid (Ellis 1999: 72).

Basically, there was a “lack of internal criticism and contact between colleagues in South Africa itself” (Hammond-Tooke 1997: 185). Social anthropologists generally stressed “the essentially integrated nature of South African society,” which declared apartheid undesirable and unrealistic. Only since the 1970s and 1980s, scholarly criticism on the societal status quo and specifically on the role of (cultural) anthropology in this regard, was becoming fiercer under the influence of Marxist theories. From emerging social movements and resistance to apartheid policies, ‘different narratives of emancipation’ started to develop; intellectual formation networks evolved around these narratives – both inside and outside the universities – supported debates on pressing problems in society. Against this background, sociology was resurrected in South Africa to become a broader, vibrant multidisciplinary ‘social science of liberation’ (Sitas 1997: 16). Before, sociology used to be as divided as anthropology, but started flourishing again in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the rise of social movements in the apartheid period. As a consequence of an ‘identity crisis’ in anthropology that surfaced manifestly in the 1990s, many scholars decided “to turn its attention away from academic analysis of race and ethnicity,” even as people may still employ ethnicity in terms of identification, as a rational choice (Ellis 1999: 80-83). While anthropologists have mostly distanced themselves from the issue, a number of critical scholars have demonstrated a renewed interest in the study of ethnicity and ‘race’ in South African society (e.g. McAllister 1996; 1997; Posel; Hyslop & Nieftagodien 2001).

²⁹¹ The chapter of this anonymous author was included in the volume *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, edited by Leroy Vail (1991).

The preceding historical context serves to understand 20th century official political discourse around the 'Native Question' and how that related to industrialisation. It shows the long history of 'unfree labour' since the early days of colonialism, however little that tells us about leadership and management practices in the past. Furthermore, it provides insights in the fabrication of concepts such as traditional leadership, authentic culture, and ethnicity. These ingredients are important in contextualising 'African management' discourse.

From this to the next section is a jump to the 1970s and 1980s, focusing on the role of business in the transition from apartheid to democracy: a period that could be seen as the 'pre-emergence' era of 'African management' discourse.

6.2 Transition and the role of business

'African management' discourse emerged before the actual change of the political system into a constitutional democracy with majority rule. Whereas generally business tends to be rather conservative, in this instance one could state that 'business' was ahead of 'government'. A relatively small section of the South African business community started exploring the 'African management' concept. At the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, old alliances and power relations started to shift. Several new role-players entered the political and economic arena, such as the *Consultative Business Movement* (CBM), the *Black Management Forum* (BMF), the *Centre for Development and Enterprise* (CDE), the *National Business Initiative* (NBI) and a few others, as will be discussed further on. These organisations were quite diverse, representing different constituencies and defending different interests. Nevertheless, together they co-created conditions that led to new visions on management. Some persons from the aforementioned actors became directly involved in the debate on 'African management', such as Reuel Khoza and Eric Mafuna of CBM. Therefore, in this section the role of CBM is specifically examined. Importantly, in the late 1980s the so-called 'Broederstroom meeting' was a groundbreaking event in the relations between business and political movements. It marked the beginning of an extraordinary period of transition, with conversations between 'sworn enemies' suddenly producing a perhaps temporary, but significant space to discuss issues hitherto unheard of, such as broadening the ownership and management base and around 'collective participation in decision-making' in business.

Few will object to the assertion that the white dominated South African business sector has profited considerably from apartheid regulations for a long time, in particular because of the supply of cheap submissive labour, deprived of its political rights, as reviewed in the previous section. Former chairperson of the *Truth & Reconciliation Commission*, Desmond Tutu and fellow ex-TRC commissioner Yasmin Sooka reaffirmed early 2006, that white business had "profiteered while

propping up the apartheid state” (The Cape Times, 21 April 2006). On the other hand, business was equally framed in a system of institutional discrimination.

If businesspeople wanted to remain in business, to do business within the law, they had to discriminate (Luhabe 2002: 158).

This did not imply that apartheid was entirely lucrative and the most advantageous option to business in the end. In the 1950s and 1960s, liberals would have judged the combination of apartheid and capitalism an ‘unhealthy relationship’, hindering free economic development (Posel; Hyslop *et al.* 2001: iii-iv). The state, however, was not primarily concerned with protecting the capitalist system, but with safeguarding white supremacy and more specifically Afrikaner nationalist interests. In essence, Afrikanerdom has usually been typified as nationalistic and anti-capitalist (Sparks 2004: 216). Some of the consequences of apartheid policies were actually disadvantageous to capitalist development, against the interests of employers. For instance, there were serious restrictions in terms of the number of African workers that could be employed and in terms of the availability of skills and experience. Entrepreneurs did not have control over this. The labour bureaux decided on the allocation of labour force, disregarding workers’ skills and previous experiences (Posel 1997: 168).

The limited number of trained and experienced managers became a serious limitation for the development of large industrial enterprises in South Africa. From the mid-1970s onwards, business started supporting initiatives to bridge the enormous education gap, by offering special courses to talented black students in order to make competent managers out of them. Some business schools initiated accelerated training programmes. In the 1990s, *Wits Business School* in Johannesburg organised so-called ‘bridging courses’ for black students as an alternative route for admission to MBA courses. This was criticised, because it would lead to stigmatisation. In the course of the 1980s, the opinion that black students would have serious shortcomings was increasingly considered untenable, reflecting the militant political climate of those days.²⁹² Naturally, it was illusionary to assume that so many decades of structural poor education could be solved with just a few bridging courses. It would be incorrect to picture the business sector as an initiator and accelerator of democratisation of South Africa. In fact, there was a huge distance.

...ideological distance between the South African corporate sector and the democratic movement (Terreblanche 2002: 51).

To say the least, business, including subsidiaries of foreign companies in South Africa, played an ambiguous role in the past. At some occasions foreign firms openly expressed (mild) criticism on

²⁹² Interview with Jonathan Cook, *Wits Business School*, Johannesburg on 28 January 2004.

the apartheid regime or they covertly supported platforms for black managers and created opportunities where *others* could express criticism, while they stood back safely, still benefiting from the system.²⁹³ The international community turned more outspokenly critical of apartheid in South Africa in the course of the 1980s. As a result, the business sector, in particular international companies, came increasingly under attack by international anti-apartheid campaigns, and consequently by public opinion in their home countries. They were under heavy pressure to withdraw investments.

A number of American companies in South Africa complied with the *Sullivan Code*. This non-binding code of conduct, designed in 1977, was called after Reverend Leon Sullivan, an Afro-American anti-apartheid activist. Sullivan signatory companies – amongst them were large companies, e.g. *Exxon*, *Mobil*, *IBM*, *Ford*, *Coca Cola*, *Caltex* and *General Motors*) – committed themselves to increasing the number of black people in management and supervisory positions. Also, they said to aim at eliminating ‘racial segregation’ in terms of work facilities, lunch rooms, change rooms, instituting equal pay for all employees doing equal or comparable work, and investing in training for and education of black people.²⁹⁴ The *Sullivan Code* comprised guidelines for companies to improve their working conditions for black employees and promote black managers. A number of talented people obtained training in such companies, for instance IBM, and gained experiences, some of whom are among today’s prime business leaders. More or less simultaneously more radical demands for ‘disinvestments’ and trade sanctions got stronger to force concessions from the South African government. These demands came from anti-apartheid movements and solidarity groups in South Africa, Europe, and America, not in the last place from Reverend Sullivan himself, when the South African government refused to give in to his demands. This raised quite some annoyance from South African business, fearing long-term negative economic impact and arguing that – once apartheid would be gone – foreign business should be physically present to be able to assist in developing South Africa (Terreblanche 2002: 16).

From the mid-1970s onwards, signs of a shifting balance of power between white (capital) and black (labour) began to show (Terreblanche 2002: 10). The growth of the trade union movement “confronted the state with a political voice that can no longer safely be ignored” (Ashforth 1990: 231). In their attempts to reform the apartheid labour system, the Wiehahn Commission advised in 1977 to legalise black trade unions and to institutionalise equal job opportunities for all (Ashforth 1990: 198). This recommendation implied the elimination of the system of job reservation (Human

²⁹³ Interview with Eric Mafuna on 11 May 2004, director of consultancy bureau *Africa Now*, one of the founder members of the *Black Management Forum* (BMF), and founder of the *African Leadership Group*, which was launched in July 2006 (Source: www.africanleadershipgroup.com). Mafuna was President of the BMF from 1977 to 1987.

²⁹⁴ *Sullivan Code signatories aid regeneration of black education* Management, April 1985, pp. 36-38.

& Van Zyl 1982: 156). From then onwards, African urban dwellers were allowed permanent residence in the city, while the black majorities that lived in worse socio-economic conditions in the rural areas were only under strict conditions given temporarily access to the city (Ashforth 1990: 201). The system of labour control over migrant workers was given up entirely in 1986. There was much resistance to giving up privileges for white workers, especially from white labour unions (Ashforth 1990: 227-228). The aforementioned developments cleared the ground for the *Consultative Business Movement* to step forward, after less successful initiatives by the *Urban Foundation* and the *Centre for Development and Enterprise*, later on together merging into the *National Business Initiative*. The ideas on post-apartheid approaches to management and leadership that sprung from CBM consultations were later absorbed into 'African management' discourse, which were rearticulated in a cultural idiom that added an African flavour.

The Urban Foundation and the Centre for Development and Enterprise

Especially after the violent suppression of youth and student protests in the township Soweto near Johannesburg that started on 16 June 1976, policy-makers and industrialists became more anxious about social stability. Late 1976, the *Urban Foundation* was established under the leadership of businessman Jan Steyn (Ashforth 1990: 199-200). The *Urban Foundation* claimed to be a private agency working for an 'open society', promoting a 'free enterprise economic system' that would offer the best chances for a 'diversity of opportunities' (Lee 1980: 105). The *Anglo American Corporation* and the *Rembrandt* group were behind this initiative, in disappointment over the government's reaction to the Soweto uprising (Marais 2001: 42). The *Urban Foundation* wanted "to be a catalyst for change" in cooperation with the authorities, and "improve the living environment and to draw black people into the free market economy in South Africa" (Lee 1980: 105). The values that the *Urban Foundation* sought to promote comprised for instance 'inclusive decision making at all levels' and 'a common destiny', moving away from an emphasis on group differences (Steyn, J. 1990: 78). However, housing facilities, education programmes, community services, and urban development seemed more prominent in its profile than changing power relations in the business sector. Through their interventions, the *Urban Foundation* brought about 'class differentiation among urban Africans'. Thus it could gain considerable control over the reproduction of labour in the interest of the capitalist system (Marais 2001: 47). At a later stage, the *Centre for Development and Enterprise* (CDE) emerged from the *Urban Foundation*. CDE was a business-funded think-tank that in policy debates over South Africa's future largely represented a metropolitan vision on development, "cast in terms of *the city* versus *the country-side*," meaning that it primarily looked after the interests of big business in urban areas (Hart 2002: 5, 236).

The Consultative Business Movement (CBM)

CBM was launched in 1988, after a long period of talks between about forty business leaders, academics and professionals, and an equal number of representatives of democratic mass movements at the legendary ‘Broederstroom meeting’. It aimed to make a difference by mobilising business ‘as a major agent for change’ more so than the *Urban Foundation* (Nel 1988: 35). For one of the first times ever, business representatives met with leaders of African liberation movements, e.g. the *Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU), the *United Democratic Front* (UDF), and the *National Union of Mineworkers* (NUM). The executives of a core group of South African companies (*AECI, First National Bank, Southern Life, Trader, and Trust Bank*) and individual businessmen wished to establish relationships with them.²⁹⁵ Christo Nel was one of the co-founders and became the executive director of CBM. Later Theuns Eloff took over. Albert Koopman was also one of the founding members. A few years later, Koopman would play a prominent role in the ‘African management’ discourse. CBM served as “a platform for interaction between business leaders and the emerging political leaders, most of whom were under house arrest, out of jail or simply involved in other ‘illegal’ activities such as trade unions and political fronts.”²⁹⁶ CBM recognised that non-violent means of African resistance to bring about social change had failed, and that mass movements therefore turned to violent actions. In CBM’s view, the state had responded inappropriately by characterising these as indications of ‘the total communist onslaught’. At the ‘Broederstroom meeting’, business leaders were free to express their fears of communist take-overs (Nel 1988: 36). On their turn, black political leaders articulated their distrust of white business leaders, suspecting them of conspiring with the apartheid state. On both sides, a difficult process of exchanging views and dislikes took place. This involved listening and learning, re-evaluating perceptions and positions, as illustrated in the following:

We have been shocked to realise just how little business in fact knows of what is going on. We believed that you were a monolithic structure out to get us. Now we see that there are some of you out there who we can relate to and cooperate with (Nel 1988: 35).

The meetings gave insights in prevailing images and differing perceptions of social and political realities in the country that concerned parties upheld. Mostly, business leaders were blamed that they had been “passive bystanders who claimed the comfort of ‘not wanting to be politically involved’ or at best rely on ad hoc, unilateral actions” (Nel 1988: 36). They appeared to

²⁹⁵ *Businessmen hold talks with extra-parliamentary groups* Weekend Argus, 13 August 1988; *Leadership expert migrates from Stellenbosch to corporate heartland* Sunday Times Business News, 30 June 2002. Christo Nel is head of the *Center for Leadership Studies* at the *University of Stellenbosch Business School*. (Source: www.usb.sun.ac.za/USB/People [accessed 20 July 2004]). In addition, also *Engen, Eskom, Gencor, Nampak, Shell, PG Bison, Protea Assurance* and others joined, as pointed out by Alberts; Coetsee, *et al.* (1993).

²⁹⁶ E-mail correspondence with Albert Koopman on 28 June 2004.

be rather ignorant of developments in South Africa: "...when such businessmen are confronted with certain of the realities, these sound most unbelievable" (Nel 1988: 36). The consultation revealed somewhat painfully 'the political and social illiteracy of whites'. The term 'alienated society' was repeatedly used.

The alienation wrought by apartheid and decades of enforced social segregation has reduced the average white's capacity to acknowledge the basic humanity of his or her fellow black South Africans (Nel 1988: 36).

CBM turned out to be a sustainable initiative. It was active during a number of years in a crucial period for the transition. Various regional meetings were held, involving hundreds of business people and community leaders all over the country. In 1992, CBM embarked on a project called 'RoBiT', the *Role of Business in Transition*. Business declared itself to be prepared to play 'its rightful role in helping to make the transition successful' (Alberts; Coetsee *et al.* 1993: xi). To a large extent this was driven for reasons of – what businesspeople recognised as – *enlightened self-interest*, in the conviction that apartheid was, in the end, not good for business.²⁹⁷

For business leaders in the 1990s, the national interest and the self-interest of business are interwoven and interdependent. This puts the very future of business at stake (Alberts; Coetsee *et al.* 1993: 2).

Businesspeople involved in CBM were reluctant to leave South Africa's future in the hands of politicians only. Business wanted to survive through politically turbulent times and eventually grow. CBM meetings were not just about political awareness raising and discussing the need for redistributing wealth, but also about future business strategies, social values and the need to implement democracy in the workplace, and in brief *how to manage change*. Strikes, stay-aways, conflicts and political protests in companies were becoming everyday matters of *managing change*: "Politics is on the agenda in virtually all major boardrooms" (Schlemmer 1990: 8). Whether business liked it or not, they *were* political for they could no longer pretend to be 'apolitical'. To this goal of *managing change*, CBM advocated to broaden the ownership and management base, and suggested amongst other things 'collective participation in decision making' on different levels (Alberts; Coetsee *et al.* 1993: 49-67). This would imply co-responsibility of employees and management in decision-making and aligning the company strategy with the process of changing business practices. Keywords were: building trust, creating a shared value system, encouraging equal employment opportunities and replacing hierarchical organisational structures and autocratic management styles with 'legitimate business practices' (Alberts; Coetsee *et al.* 1993: 32) As to upward mobility of black employees and affirmative action, CBM recommended the provision of

²⁹⁷ Theuns Eloff *The uphill lies ahead. Business, Past and Future* (Source: http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/7_2/Article02.html [accessed 20 July 2004]).

support structures, networks and mentorship. In addition, a component of business acculturation was proposed, taking cognisance of the ‘fears of whites’ and the ‘aspirations of blacks’. All the same, it was felt that self-sufficiency and competitiveness should have a central place, to prevent ‘problems such as an anti-achievement mentality’, when affirmative action programmes would be ‘based solely on moral principles’ (Alberts; Coetsee *et al.* 1993: 49-67). Furthermore, the establishment of relationships with the community was considered important. Interestingly, practically all points aforementioned have been integrated into the ‘African management’ philosophy that was to be developed soon after.

The activities of the *Urban Foundation* and CBM, including clandestine meetings with ANC leadership, envisaging the options for a post-apartheid economy, showed the anxiety of the business community about growing instability, uncertainty, and a revolutionary climate in society. In a meeting in Zambia between ANC leaders, including Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki, and a small group of (white) South African businesspersons, all agreed that civil war would harm both the interests of business and of black leadership. The debate over nationalisation of the private sector was not easily resolved. Such joint meetings took place more than once, e.g. in Dakar in 1987, organised by the *Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa* (IDASA), in which among others Christo Nel and Albert Koopman participated. The ANC characterised this meeting as “part of the process of the South African people making history” (ANC 1987). Afterwards, Afrikaner participants were accused of betrayal by their own Afrikaner constituency. Koopman personally experienced unpleasant reactions from relatives upon his return from Dakar, who since then tended to treat him – and worse even, also his wife and children – as outlaws.²⁹⁸ These initiatives opened the eyes of many businesspersons. They started to realise that a transition to democracy in society and in organisations could not be avoided, and should not be avoided. Other sections of business however considered ‘countervailing strategies’ to aid development of black business. They opted for a much more moderate approach to ‘reconciliation’:

...a proper and thorough-going reconciliation of essential interests. Business should participate in this reconciliation as an independent force with interests to protect and resources to offer. It therefore must have its own role in the process of transition (Schlemmer 1990: 19).

CBM pushed for a negotiated political settlement. It provided the secretariat of the *Convention for a Democratic South Africa* (CODESA) launched in 1991 to build a broad political consensus about dismantling apartheid and assisted to prepare for a new constitution of a democratic South Africa. After the elections in April 1994, with a view to join forces in fuelling a socio-economic transition, CBM and *Urban Foundation* merged into one organisation, the *National Business*

²⁹⁸ Interview with Albert Koopman on 26 June 2004.

Initiative (NBI). More than a decade after the political transition to democratisation, a thorough socio-economic transformation has yet to take place; the quality of life of the majority of South Africans has not improved much (Terreblanche 2002: 15). South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki considers the business sector as a key partner in tackling the vast poverty and inequality among the black population, but few business leaders share the ANC's national development goals and still distrust the government (Gumede 2002: 204). Mbeki is known for his 'pro-business strategy' and for 'cultivating' international business leaders (Gumede 2002: 216). The slow pace in which the transition evolves into an anticipated structural socio-economic transformation – if ever – has repeatedly led to ironical comments:

We have been told endlessly that we live in a society in transition. I suppose no one can tell us when the transition will be over and we can start living like real human beings, like the rest of the world (Matshikiza 2003).²⁹⁹

However, the South African government, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel particularly, claimed that since 1994 its macro-economic policy had been 'coherent all along' and is allegedly now showing the anticipated economic growth to fund redistribution of wealth and income. The *Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa* (AsgiSA) was introduced in 2005 "to boost social provision and job creation among the marginalized mass of the population."³⁰⁰ AsgiSA seems to bear a resemblance to the short-lived *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) of the mid-1990s.

'New' management philosophies

Some imaginative businesspeople and 'mavericks' in management and marketing suddenly saw new opportunities arising, when the power balances in South African society started to shift. They encouraged the exploration of 'new paradigms' in management and organisation. In this context, the notion of *ubuntu* also cropped up, which became appropriated in management discourse. Transformation was welcomed as a series of unique challenges, whereas businesspeople that were more conservative saw mainly obstacles and hazards, fearing that they might lose much of their previously privileged position. The sudden surprisingly optimistic business mood globally was reflected in the stream of popular management literature published in South Africa in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. Several authors utilised an inspirational, high-energy type of 'transformation language', propagating new approaches to business and management. 'New' management philosophies were explored, characterised by the euphoria brought about by the end of apartheid

²⁹⁹ Matshikiza is a fellow of the *Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research* (WISER) in Johannesburg.

³⁰⁰ SouthScan Vol. 21, No. 9, 5 May 2006, page 1. For further information, also see

<http://www.info.gov.za/asgisa/asgisa.htm>.

and re-admission to the international community; South Africa was no longer a pariah state. With these philosophies, a need for 'paradigm shifts' in management thought was articulated, putting emphasis on 'leadership' and 'mentorship' instead of 'management' in a strict sense. This also included addressing issues such as 'alienation' at work, advancing the cause of 'co-ownership' and democratisation in the workplace. This paragraph gives further insight in these issues and shows that 'African management' philosophy was part of a broader flood of transformational optimistic and refreshing management thinking.

Paradigm shifts

Changes were proposed in conventional business and management attitudes that were phrased in terms of various 'paradigm shifts'. Slogans, e.g. *From Top Down to Bottom Up*, called for behavioural changes in business 'from dictatorship to relationship' and 'from manager to mentor', as for instance illustrated by *Revelling in the wild. Business Lessons out of Africa* (Lascaris & Lipkin 1993). The kind of delight or excitement might seem a bit ironic against a background of chaos, instability, and uncertainty still prevalent at the time. Apparently, 'the wild' was a metaphor for the turbulent stages, which South African society and the business community had to go through at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, when the post-apartheid future was not at all spelled out in detail yet. Simultaneously, it seemed a reference to the imagery on Africa: 'wildness' and 'primitiveness'.

South Africa is the most thrilling country in the world or the most traumatic, depending on your perspective (Lascaris & Lipkin 1993: 1).

At the time of publication, Lascaris was heading *Hunt Lascaris TBWA*, a high-flying South African advertising agency, while Lipkin was with an international marketing consultancy called *Touch the Sky – the Imagination Company* based in Johannesburg. On the book cover, Mike Lipkin was introduced as 'an imagineer'. Just after the title page, the reader's attention was drawn to the following claim:

To the extraordinary resilience, courage and goodwill of all South Africa's unsung heroes who are making this country what it will become.

Of course, these 'unsung heroes' were businesspeople, mostly businessmen, and top managers of big South African corporations or institutions. People, who were destined to lead companies and institutions into a reborn, non-racial, democratic South Africa, transforming the business sector from 'managing the past' into 'managing the future'. The issue that the CBM had dealt with, namely addressing the 'fears of whites and aspirations of blacks' began to be treated in management and business literature in a consoling way, emphasising the prospects of an emerging domestic

consumer market, rather than the threat of a communist take-over.

For them [‘the business champions’] the ANC really means ‘Another New Customer’ (Lascaris & Lipkin 1993: 2).

The tone was often exceptionally optimistic, inspirational and almost spiritual. It was not meant as a blueprint for transformation. Rather, it was just meant to ‘turbo boost’ business thinking and to change conventional business attitudes.

...conventional business thinking in the new and soon-to-be improved South Africa will lead companies into one cul-de-sac after another. In a marketplace gone wild, the signposts to the future have been swept away. The only thing that’s certain is that nothing is certain (Lascaris & Lipkin 1993: 1).

The issue of ‘Africanness’, the formation of an African identity in relation to management, also entered the debate.³⁰¹ Peter Vundla, one of the few ‘early’ black managers in South Africa, articulated this as follows:³⁰²

We need to redefine management in this country by appreciating the African-ness of our people (Lascaris & Lipkin 1993: 46).

In this context, *ubuntu* came up, which was introduced as ‘the indigenous African style of participatory 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 share values (Lascaris & Lipkin 1993: 45).

At that stage, *ubuntu* was presented as one out of many ‘bright new ideas’ on management, but it was more highlighted as the debate on African Renaissance intensified.³⁰³

A focus on restyling leadership styles and organisational cultures, promoting ‘a winning mindset’ for ‘a winning nation’ hinting at enhanced competitiveness brings reminiscence of popular American management books to the mind, although the authors warned for ‘management fads’, ‘quick-fix’ solutions and ‘secret formula’ approaches (Nasser & Vivier 1995: 18, 49). Overall, a ‘new generation of business and management principles for economic revival’ would have to apply the proposed ‘paradigm shifts’ urgently, because:

...without the sound management and leadership principles exhibited by new generation nations and organisations, the impasse is likely to continue. It is imperative that leaders in South Africa overcome the psychological deadlock... [...] The negative thinking prevalent during the apartheid decades must

³⁰¹ For a discussion of identity formation in an African context and different meanings attributed to the notion of ‘Africanness’, see chapters 8 and 9.

³⁰² In 1991, Peter Vundla, Dimape Serenyane, Dennis Mashabela, Happy Ntshingila, and Quinton Denysson, joined forces to create a black empowered advertising agency named *Herdbuoys*. Presently, the firm is called *Herdbuoys McCann-Erickson South Africa*. (Source: <http://www.top300.co.za/National/Awards/TopCompaniesoftheYear.htm> [accessed 12 January 2006]).

³⁰³ In the next chapter, in section 7.3, it is argued that there are important parallels in the debates around African Renaissance and ‘African management’ discourse. Actually, these are mutually reinforcing developments.

be replaced by an economic will to shape and control our own destiny. This requires a frame breaking approach that banishes the fear of failure and nurtures the vision of winning (Nasser & Vivier 1995: 3).

In the course of the 1990s, the initial euphoria appeared to become somewhat tempered. Gradually, the harsh realities of the transformation process and its drawbacks, e.g. growing unemployment, crime and corruption, became exposed. The unbridled optimistic mood of earlier years turned into a more cautious attitude, somewhat anxious even whether South Africa would follow the path of several other countries.

There is no reason to suppose that South Africans are uniquely corrupt or morally flawed. Some critics of post-colonial Africa would have us believe that corruption is a way of life, the natural order of things in Africa and that we must inevitably follow this road to ruin. Rubbish! (Hunt & Lascaris 1998: 99).

Subsequently, performance and delivery were emphasised more and even 'sensible management controls' on corruption were proposed. Executives of successful 'new generation organisations' were ideally portrayed as 'cultivated autocrats' (Nasser & Vivier 1995: 104). The basic idea was not to be too authoritarian and dictatorial, but to 'energise' the organisation and to fight – *fight together as a pack* – allowing opposite viewpoints (but not too much) and trying to convince employees, instead of brusquely commanding them to do something. Had the tone of local management literature changed in just a few years from participatory and reconciliatory to semi-authoritarian? Had there been a rude awakening from a previously optimistic mood, after a confrontation with business realities?

Addressing 'alienation'

Nevertheless, the realisation was dawning that a participative management approach might be considered a preferred model for future leadership, for it would offer possibilities to address issues of alienation at the workplace. At least, that is how it was envisaged in the wave of optimistic business and management literature in the 1990s. Particularly Albert Koopman, actively involved in the *Consultative Business Movement* and later on considered as one of the leading spokespersons on 'African management' philosophy, made this a point of interest. He explained his vision as co-author of *The Corporate Crusaders*, together with Martin Nasser and Johann Nel. This title symbolised a fighting spirit and a strong political profile as few other books in management do, and the metaphor of the 'crusade' brought a religious connotation with it.

In the wake of this turbulence has come a growing alienation between management and its workforce. The fabric of the corporate environment has been torn apart (Koopman; Nasser *et al.* 1987: s.n.).

Koopman used terms like 'power to the people' and 'total people participation' in his version of a new management philosophy. Koopman brought in his practical experiences with a transformation process in his wholesale company in building materials *Cashbuild*.

...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: 15)?

The term ‘hierarchy’ in its conventional meaning was almost treated as a taboo, as if it was contaminated. ‘Our customer’ was now considered priority number one, and in addition ‘the extra mile’, full commitment from the concerned employees, in exchange for full participation, respect, and co-responsibility.

The development of a highly structured impersonal culture, riddled with controls, has created an environment in which alienation has become the order of the day. (...) This traditional alienation between management and workforce is characterised by management complaining of declining worker productivity, poor morale, lack of quality workmanship, absenteeism, labour turnover and a loss of loyalty toward the organisation and its objectives. The employees’ response is that they have little or no real say regarding their work, motivation is lacking, their intelligence and experience are overlooked and underutilised and they are treated like machines in a work process which has little respect for their human dignity and personal aspirations (Koopman; Nasser *et al.* 1987: 141).

Koopman *et al.* looked at management in terms of leadership, taking account of the life world perspective of employees. They were apparently concerned with ‘doing the right things’, and made a serious attempt to draft an inclusive management philosophy for the post-1994 period, bringing democratisation and human dignity into the domain of organisations.

[This] shift from management to leadership introduced a movement towards an innovative adaptable and organic culture that allowed and, in fact, encouraged all the people in the business to contribute toward its success. [...] Quite simply the manager focuses on doing things right. The leader is concerned with doing the right things. The difference is running a business by a host of manuals and rules drawn up in the boardroom, as opposed to a simple visionary philosophy that is based on human dignity and lives in the hearts of the people (Koopman; Nasser *et al.* 1987: 144-145).

The emergence of an ‘African management’ perspective could to a large extent be seen as analogous to, and as an extension of, abovementioned ‘new management philosophies’. The former management philosophy was driven by similar ideals, concerns, and opportunities, mainly differing in the role attributed to ‘traditional African values’ as a cultural resource. However, ‘African management’ philosophy is not just an extension of a new breed of management visions that emerged since the end of the 1980s, but in a broader historical perspective it was discursively also a reaction to practices of ‘unfree labour’. The next section examines what ‘unfree labour’ meant in terms of ‘real work’ and ‘real life’ situations, in a further attempt of contextualising the emergence of ‘African management’ discourse, and in search of reasons to what extent and why ‘African management’ philosophy resonated with certain social categories in South African society.

6.3 Impact of colonialism and apartheid

A long history of domination and ‘unfree labour’ inevitably had a lasting impact on the minds of people in South Africa, on both workers and managers, up to this day, with all sorts of consequences.

It has been suggested that, with the demise of apartheid, racism, sexism, and cultural stereotyping will disappear. This would appear to be wishful thinking. All over the world, and particularly in a racist, patriarchal country like South Africa, power differentials and maximalist stereotypes of culture (and of gender) remain. These are no longer generally translated into overtly racist or sexist remarks and/or behaviour. They remain, nevertheless, on the level of negative expectancy communications and continue to cement power relations. Power relations continue to be reinforced by the fact that such negative expectancy communications, even if extremely subtle, have a powerful dampening effect on both the motivation and the performance of many blacks (and, indeed, women) (Human 1996b: 57).

Obviously, apartheid (ideology) also invaded the economic and industrial domain. Accordingly, it has affected South African organisational cultures, in spite of considerable variations in regional and local cultural and socio-economic circumstances. Formally, apartheid politics had nothing to do with ‘work’ or management:

...white managers see the workplace as separate from politics; black workers see it as an extension of apartheid...(Beatty & Harari 1987: 98).

To workers however, who predominantly used to be black people, domination was a *total experience* those days. It was not just limited to work. This caused anger and bitterness among workers. Often managers did not know how to deal with these emotions adequately.

Black South Africans look at things differently. They cannot separate their lives inside the corporation from the domination they perceive on the outside. (...) American management textbooks, which abound in South African business courses, hardly prepare novice managers for the resentment and scepticism that black workers will direct toward them (Beatty & Harari 1987: 99).

The dominant management approach in South Africa was – and continues to be – usually typified in strikingly indefinite and imprecise ways, as if there is a generally felt ambiguity how to give a clear characterisation. Invariably, management in South Africa is described as British, Anglo-Saxon, European, Eurocentric, northern, western, or (as a combination with) American even.³⁰⁴ Seldom are these terms well defined or are differences explained. There seems to be a consensus, however, that British influence was amongst the strongest and it is assumed to have lasting effects, moreover since “people of British origin virtually monopolized the entrepreneurial, managerial, and skilled positions in every sector of the economy except agriculture” in the early 20th century (Thompson 2001: 155). The city, where the elites predominantly used the English

³⁰⁴ In a range of interviews with managing directors and consultants, carried out between June 2003 and June 2004, these terms were mostly used to describe in general organisational culture, management, and leadership styles in South Africa.

language in the early 20th century, was the centre of Anglo-Saxon culture and of British-Jewish financial power (Sparks 2004: 178).

In (tertiary) education – universities and business schools – textbooks and handbooks are used that are primarily written either by American or European authors, or by local authors who write in a similar ‘mainstream’ tradition.

It is unfortunate that management education and development in Africa has been caught up in a lack of recognition of the differences between the environment of sub-Saharan Africa and, say, the United States. Managers, having undergone MBA-type training perhaps have to unlearn principles that work in one environment, but not in the environment in which they have to manage (Jackson, T. 2004: 69).

Supposedly, the lasting effects of a magnitude of cultural encounters and mutual influencing of various management and leadership styles have not been recognised as leading to more or less identifiable ‘South African ways’. Hence, no momentous textbooks have ever been released, which pretend to distinguish and analyse specific local management and organisation practices, other than books with normative and prescriptive views of *how* management and organisation *should be* practised in South Africa.

Apartheid is assumed to have produced lasting effects on managerial practices and on organisational cultures throughout South Africa. However, perceptions of discrimination and racial prejudice within organisations and in organisational discourse are not necessarily results of the past. Is the past to blame of all wrongs in the workplace? Moreover, if so, is the legacy of apartheid the cause of everything? “Reducing the problems of the past to Apartheid leads to claims of easy victories,” Farid Esack once stated.³⁰⁵ For instance, managers or employees may perceive particular situations as discriminatory or racist that may have been caused by other factors. At the risk of overgeneralisation, what can be said in this regard about ‘the South African workplace’ after the official demise of apartheid?

‘Non-racialism’ in organisational discourse after 1994

Depending on the dynamics of a specific societal and cultural context, organisational cultures may change quite rapidly. Strangely, this aspect is often overlooked in studies of cultures in organisations (Martin, J. 2002: 318). Since 1994, ‘non-racialism’ has become common usage in official political discourse. This could however turn into a shallow slogan or just a temporary ‘transformational conception’. On a formal level, ‘race’ may become less significant, but more relevant on an informal level (Sharp 1998: 245). While overt acts of intentional racism are declining, covert racism may even be increasing. This could result in ambivalent racial attitudes and

³⁰⁵ Prof. Esack is a South African Muslim theologian. This citation is from his speech at the occasion of the second *Mandela Lecture* in *De Nieuwe Kerk* in Amsterdam on 20 May 2005, by NiZA (2005), p. 7.

superficial tolerance, since “racial schisms and racist attitudes have not been swept away by the repeal of enactments that legitimated them” (Strous 2003: 12). This has implications for all sorts of professionals, such as counsellors and (psycho) therapists and probably to managers and business leaders as well.

It would have been impossible for South African therapists not to experience the pull of social and racial identity, and it would be difficult for them to magically overcome biases with the ushering in of a new government (Strous 2003: 13).

In order to de-racialise – the process of “the unpacking of ‘racially constructed’ understandings of the self, the other and the world one lives” – it is essential that professionals, who have been raised and socialised in apartheid ideology with persistent notions of black inferiority, develop an attitude of critical self-reflection and learn to identify racism in themselves. Such a process ‘often limps awkwardly behind’ (Franchi 2003: 185). Government has undertaken initiatives towards ‘positive discrimination’ by means of affirmative action measures, in order to redress inequalities in the labour market proactively. Qualifying affirmative action as a form of ‘reversed discrimination’ may be a discursive strategy to deny one’s own racism.

A range of underlying social, political, economic, and psychological expressions of racism, and manifestations of ‘mal être’ in the transition from a ‘racially’ determined past to an ideal of a non-‘racial’ democratic future, can become symbolically transposed onto affirmative action: a sign of hope and macro-justice for the majority, and of impending threat of personal and collective loss for an economically dominant minority (Franchi 2003: 160).

Hidden ‘racial’ attitudes can be projected on issues such as affirmative action, using ‘politically correct terms’ instead of apartheid categorisations. This could lead to avoidance, ‘turning away from black people’ rather than intentional destructive racist behaviour, termed as ‘aversive racism’ (Luhabe 2002: 178-179). In present-day organisational discourse in South Africa, stigmatisation and prejudice against black people without referring to ‘race’ can be seen as a manifestation of ‘symbolic racism’ (Franchi 2003: 161). Practices of ‘aversive racism’ and ‘symbolic racism’ may hide under a disguise of ‘political correctness’ and thus constitute part of an organisational culture.

The denial of race, racism and the racial basis of organisational culture have forced much of the racial conflict underground. Organisations have learned to present a face of ‘political correctness’ that avoids any overt racial conflict or expression (Stimie 2000: 14).

There is also the view that ‘affirmative action’ is faulty by design, because of its superficial use of problematic categories such as ‘whites’, ‘Africans’, ‘Asians’, and ‘Coloureds’. Can one after 1994 still use ‘apartheid categorisations’ linked to ethnicity and skin colour to promote ‘non-racialism’ and social inclusivity (Zegeye; Liebenberg & Houston 2000: 151)? This would suggest that, by definition and categorically, all whites benefited (equally) from apartheid, and ‘Africans’, ‘Asians’, ‘Coloureds’ under all circumstances became victims. Some propose to distinguish *‘African management’ in South Africa* Page 179 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

between specific social groups, or measure the ‘past damage done’ to develop a more just and precise instrument of affirmative action (Waddy 2003).

Similarly, in organisations and in organisational discourse after 1994, despite official talk of ‘non-racialism’, ethnicity is still a factor in matters of identity formation, although it is no longer ‘coming from above’, and no longer overtly imposed by a minority government.

At the same time, the historical racial and ethnic perceptions of difference – partially invented, reinforced and entrenched by Apartheid, but above all, underscored by material inequality – did not psychologically homogenise the population, the ideology of colour-blind non-racial ideology notwithstanding (Adam 1994: 25, as cited in Zegeye; Liebenberg *et al.* 2000: 164).

Everyday ethnic consciousness is still seriously influenced by apartheid machinations. This, however, is not necessarily a ‘bad’ thing. Ethnicity defines part of people’s identity regardless of its historical roots and possible cultural fabrications: “people cannot be expected to throw away their evolved identities and values” (Mangu 2001: 19).³⁰⁶ Ethnicity (and ethnicisation) can be instrumental in terms of identity formation and helpful for the purpose of belonging, social mobilisation, emancipation, nation-building or even consolation.³⁰⁷ Moreover,

...claims to racial or ethnic exclusivity may function, paradoxically, as a means by which the disadvantaged press for a proper deracialization of society...(Sharp 1998: 251).

After all, not so much time has elapsed since apartheid was officially dismantled in 1994. The transformation of political power “did not mean that the racialised selves of South Africans were transformed at the same time” (Schutte, Gerhard 2000: 207). It cannot reasonably be assumed that ethnicity, or ‘race’, has suddenly become meaningless: the selves of South Africans have become apt to reconstructing their selves. To mention two more extreme positions, some may opt for Africanisation, while others, who could be called ‘Eurocentrists’, may prefer to identify themselves more with ‘western values’, while emphasising the need for rationalisation (Schutte, Gerhard 2000: 216-217). Doubtlessly, this applies also to the domain of organisation and management. Naturally, ‘workplaces’ and ‘organisational cultures’ in South Africa are very diverse in such a vast ‘multicultural’ country. Nevertheless, in the space that was created after 1994 in terms of identity formation, ‘African management’ discourse represented an option that might be appealing for various reasons. Arguably, one of the main reasons was precisely to bring the issue of ethnicity into the open, for instance to challenge instances of ‘aversive racism’ and ‘symbolic racism’ especially in the realm of institutions and modern organisational contexts, although connotations attached to the notion of ethnicity might have very different meanings to different people.

³⁰⁶ This issue is discussed in more depth in Chapter 9, section 9.2 *Race and ethnic identity discourse*.

³⁰⁷ The concept of ethnicisation is examined in Chapter 9, section 9.2 *Race and ethnic identity discourse*.

Sweeping ethnicity under the managerial carpet?

In view of ‘the plethora of ethnic groups’ in the South African workplace, it is important to understand the different cultural orientations and values that people bring to the organisation. Whereas cultural diversity is viewed positively in Afrocentric management discourse, and thus made explicit in various ways, there seems to be an overall tendency in South Africa to view the issue in a rather neutral or instrumental way. Although in dominant management discourse, ethnicity and cultural diversity are in fact being acknowledged, at the same time they tend to be de-emphasised. Arguably, this contrasts remarkably with Afrocentric management perspectives.

Two senior researchers from *Wits Business School* in Johannesburg, Adèle Thomas and Mike Bendixen, found that “effective management culture is independent of race” (Thomas & Bendixen 2000: 517).³⁰⁸ To their own astonishment, so it seemed, the authors concluded from a comparison of culture dimensions between ethnic groups in the workplace that at a managerial level there were *striking similarities*. In addition, there would also be striking similarities between Dutch, British, and American ‘cultures’ and that of South African managers.³⁰⁹ They appeared to be ‘surprised’ about the high individualism score among black managers. Their research drew heavily on Hofstede’s theory on culture dimensions, assessing national cultural differences (Hofstede 1980; 1991).³¹⁰ In this view, ‘culture’ and cultural differences are represented as independent and static variables, which has been seriously criticised.³¹¹ Thomas and Bendixen felt that the individualism/collectivism dimension did not sufficiently grasp specific cultural orientations in a South African context. Therefore, they added communalism, a feature often attributed to ‘African culture’ and with the capacity to coexist with personal freedom and individualism, as the authors presumed.

The low PDI score [i.e. Power Distance Index] is in keeping with the present political and economic climate of the country where participation, consultation and democracy are promoted as ideal forms of governance rather than the historical hierarchical bureaucracies that characterised the previous regime. [...] The legacy of the past is another possible explanation of the intolerance of hierarchy. The

³⁰⁸ Adèle Thomas was director of WBS up to mid-2004.

³⁰⁹ This thesis is wary of using the idea of well-bounded coherent ‘national cultures’, following the critical view on this issue by Hannerz (1996), pp. 23.

³¹⁰ In a nutshell, Lere & Portz (2005) explained Hofstede’s theory as follows: “From 1967 to 1973, Hofstede collected and analyzed data from more than 100,000 individuals working in more than 70 countries. From those results, and later additions, Hofstede developed a theoretical framework that identifies four primary dimensions that differentiate cultures: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculine/feminine, and uncertainty avoidance. He used these dimensions to distinguish the cultures of 50 countries and three regions. Later, with Michael H. Bond, Hofstede added a fifth dimension, Confucian dynamism, which has been used to distinguish cultures among 23 countries. Hofstede’s taxonomy is a widely used framework for differentiating among cultures.” The fifth dimension, Confucian dynamism, would be about ‘Long-term Focus versus Short-term Focus’, according to Bond (1986).

³¹¹ From the perspective of organisational anthropology, for instance Koot and Tennekes have warned against the use of stereotypes in describing, classifying, and comparing ‘national cultures’. They argued for a more differentiation, a focus on power relations and a critical attitude with regard to existing and constructed images accompanying the analysis of cultural differences; see Koot (1988); Tennekes (1995).

previously disenfranchised groups (black Africans, coloureds and Asians) understandably have rebelled against historical authoritarianism. English-speaking whites, who traditionally have held more liberal political views, also rebelled against authority as a form of protest. More recently, Afrikaans-speaking whites have had to adapt to the democratic structures of the new political regime (Thomas & Bendixen 2000: 513-514).

These authors seemed to cling to essentialist notions about 'African culture' and about black people specifically, expecting that black managers would score very low on individualism. Tentatively they concluded that "the effect of ethnicity on management culture is minimal" and "there is no dependence between race and management culture" (Thomas & Bendixen 2000: 515). They were inclined to consider ethnicity and cultural diversity in the South African workplace, including managerial positions, as 'something to be valued', at least something to be better understood, and not something that would necessarily hinder competitiveness:

...the realisation of fully integrated and ethnically diverse management strata will not inhibit corporate competitive performance... (Thomas & Bendixen 2000: 516).

The dominance of 'Eurocentric' management practices in South Africa may be subject to change, taking into account "the increase in the diversity in managerial and leadership ranks of South Africa," and therefore the influence of ethnicity on leadership is a serious question (Booyesen 2001: 37). In addition to the study of Thomas and Bendixen, and likewise drawing on similar research techniques and theoretical assumptions concerning culture dimensions, as developed by Geert Hofstede, Lize Booyesen observed, "white managers achieved higher scores for individualism than black managers." She also found that "white managers show a higher intolerance for uncertainty than black managers," because they probably favoured "structured organisations and a profusion of rules and regulations" (Booyesen 2001: 48).³¹² One of the explanations given concerned the legacy of apartheid, as a result of which black people "learned to cope better with change, uncertainty and ambiguity" (Booyesen 2001: 49). Similarities concerned 'power distance' (inequality by power and status stratification), which meant that both groups accepted inequalities between superiors and subordinates as normal, valued close supervision and considered status as important (Booyesen 2001: 54). On masculinity, both black and white managers turned out to have low scores on 'gender egalitarianism'. Moreover, white managers achieved a significantly higher score on 'performance orientation' than black managers and on 'assertiveness' likewise. From these findings, Booyesen arrived at a similar contention as her colleagues of *Wits Business School*, stating the following.

³¹² Lize Booyesen is a full professor in organisational behaviour and leadership at University of South Africa's *Graduate School of Business Leadership* (SBL). She does research in the fields of leadership, culture, diversity and change management.

South African leaders need to understand the different cultural expectations of all South Africans, and corporate South Africa needs to 'South Africanise' in order to mobilise the people of South Africa effectively. [...] In order for South Africa to mobilise its own people, it is necessary to place equal value on the Afrocentric and the Eurocentric approaches to leadership (Booyesen 2001: 57).

The fact that South African senior researchers in the field of business leadership, like Booyesen, Thomas and Bendixen, treat 'black managers' and 'white managers' almost as strictly separate groups, tells something about how ethnicity in organisations tends to be viewed in South Africa. The concerned researchers seemed to assume clearly distinguishable categories with corresponding essentially different values and cultural manifestations. Nonetheless, from stereotype categorisation thinking, a sense of appreciation seems to come into view with regard to ethnicity and cultural diversity in organisations. The latter is perhaps indicative of (ideological) transition; a move from a doctrine of white supremacy and 'corporate multiculturalism', in which Africans are deemed 'different', whereas 'whiteness' is not treated as a form of ethnicity, into a sort of (left) liberal multiculturalism. Liberal multiculturalism contends that there is 'a natural sameness' between ethnic groups. In this view, eventually anyone can compete equally in the capitalist marketplace, if measures are taken to create equal social and educational opportunities. Left liberal multiculturalism reveals a tendency to essentialise cultural differences and exoticise *Otherness*, while ignoring the social and historical construction of difference "that is constitutive of the power to represent meanings" (McLaren 1994: 52).³¹³ Liberal and left liberal views on multiculturalism tend to push people in line, moulding a harmonious corporate regime, to develop a sort of 'sameness', as was for instance illustrated by Booyesen's call for the corporate community to 'South Africanise'. Quantitative studies of identity, and ethnic differences for instance, may "fail to capture the complex meaning and construction of identity" (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 350). In South Africa's academic community, Frank Horwitz and others for example seem to be well aware of the importance of the latter. He indeed considers 'cultural diversity' in South African firms as a competitive advantage, but does not wish to discard the specific historical background of the given situation (Horwitz; Bowmaker-Falconer & Searll 1996; Horwitz; Browning; Jain & Steenkamp 2002).³¹⁴ In treating ethnicity in the workplace and in management echelons either as an exotic positive quality for its assumed 'richness' without seeking in-depth understanding, or as a 'neutral factor' in terms of corporate competitiveness, the probability of discovering different meanings, meaningful expressions of cultural resistance or other unexpected insights, tends to be limited.

³¹³ It is noted that there is also a 'conservative multiculturalism' with views leading back to colonial doctrines of white supremacy, "which biologized Africans as 'creatures' by equating them with the earliest stages of development," according to Peter McLaren (1994); also see: Terence Turner (1994) *Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology That Multiculturalists Should be Mindful of It?*

³¹⁴ Frank M. Horwitz is Professor of Business Administration and Director of the *Graduate School of Business* at the *University of Cape Town* (source: <http://www.gsb.uct.ac.za> [accessed 18 July 2006]).

Instead, a strategy to “thematize rather than minimize racial issues” would create a possibility to facilitate a more meaningful change towards removing ‘racial barriers’ in organisations (Stimie 2000: 14). Now, grasping such complex meanings is no easy task. The implication of the conclusion that South Africa’s “ethnic diversity does not harm its management productivity” could lead to a deliberate attempt of neutralising ethnicity, or ‘race’, in the workplace, wiping the issue from the managerial agenda. As argued here, ‘African management’ discourse seems to do the opposite; aspects of ‘ethnic identity’ and cultural diversity even become overtly dramatised, for example in so-called diversity and transformation workshops.

A contestation of worldviews

In case ethnicity is put on the managerial agenda, instead of being swept under the carpet, it immediately invokes questions concerning the meaning of this concept and related notions, such as ‘indigenous culture’ and ‘traditional values’. As some argue, it would be problematic “to sustain any cohesive and clearly distinctive form of indigenous culture” (Bernstein, A. 2002: 198). Likewise, an ‘African management’ technique based on the concept of *ubuntu* would in this view not be capable of providing any useful guidelines how to function in a modern company situation (Bernstein, A. 2002: 206). In this view, South Africa would be nothing but a cultural outpost of Europe, a ‘western cultural ghetto’ that widely accepts western, global cultural values, perhaps just adding some kind of ‘African spin’ to it. If anything is left of ‘indigenous cultures’ in South Africa, there would be ‘not much specific content’ to the African cultural system (Bernstein, A. 2002: 200). Does this inevitably lead to a contestation of worldviews, in which heterogeneity and unity have to be continuously negotiated?

The continuous excursion through a ‘rainbow’ of differences involves more than a concern on the part of people to tell their own stories and in so doing reaffirm themselves. It involves a thorough consideration of why their histories and culture – the modalities of being in the lifeworld – are meaningful and important, and of why they have an integrity worth preserving while subjecting it to progressive refinement. It involves commitment to the ideal of maintaining our own integrity without encroaching upon the integrity and well-being of others (Zegeye; Liebenberg *et al.* 2000: 184).

In this discussion, the willingness to engage in a conversation about why histories and culture are meaningful and important seems to be more significant than the question whether or not anything is left of ‘indigenous culture’ in South Africa.

On a different level, however, the question of ethnicity, or ‘race’, can be analysed in terms of class positions, as embedded in a web of power relations. Workplaces continue to experience the legacy of division and conflict rooted in apartheid’s political economy that constitutes an obstacle to productivity across all economic sectors:

...race and class divisions shore up 'trenches of the mind' in which management and workers have long bunkered (Zegeye; Liebenberg *et al.* 2000: 200).

In the past, the relationship between 'race' and class used to be a complex one and subject to change with economic, political, and social aspects playing a prominent role between and within 'race groups'.³¹⁵ Obviously, this relationship has undergone more drastic changes after 1994, not at the least due to the process of *Black Economic Empowerment*. Nevertheless, the apartheid legacy of division and conflict turns out to be difficult to overcome. Hence, the South African workplace is still considered to be in a transitional stage, in which elements of continuity with the past can be distinguished, as well as elements of transformation. This situation represents largely the playground, in which 'African management' advocates operate.

The transitional workplace

In his study of the 'Workplace Challenge' project on worker participation, David Dickinson speaks of the need for an 'industrial decolonisation' in shop-floor relations (Dickinson 2005: 190).³¹⁶ Cross-cultural exchanges 'ranging from food to values' were said to be 'a novelty' in all those years that people had been working together 40 hours per week. Cultural experiences and preferences of management and workers are worlds apart: while workers and worker leaders valued joint factory-wide meetings, management did not.

[Worker leaders] saw them as very significant in that they suggested equality between committee members and the cultures from which they came. [...] Standing shoulder to shoulder publicly with management would powerfully project the joint nature of the Workplace Challenge in a manner that would resonate with African traditions of public decision-making. Management however viewed these requests only in terms of the loss of production and rejected them (Dickinson 2005: 201).

Typically, workers requested for factory-wide public meetings "that would resonate with African traditions of public decision making," but management considered it 'a waste of time'. A widely felt 'insistence on economic restructuring' is believed to be an important obstacle to democratic change within companies (Dickinson 2005: 205-206). Thus, transition of the workplace has not been completed: the workplace is 'transitional'. The "rapid and forceful emergence of a black managerial and bourgeois class" is an important factor in this process (Von Holdt 2003: 432). This could imply among other things "the aggressively business-minded ethos of some of the new black managers ambitious to prove themselves in the corporate world" (Von Holdt 2003: 426). From these views, one could conclude that workers would identify more comfortably with 'African traditions' than the rising elite of 'new black managers'. The latter group would identify effortlessly

³¹⁵ Particularly, reference is made here to the work of Wolpe (1988).

³¹⁶ David Dickinson is a Senior Lecturer at the *Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Witwatersrand* in Johannesburg. He is currently doing research on HIV/aids in relation to the workplace.

with mainstream neo-liberal corporate thinking and go along with the need for economic restructuring and privatisation. A black manager is often supposed to fight for black workers, his 'comrades', and not side with management, even though he is formally part of management (Bezuidenhout 2005: 81). If he does, his superiors complain that he is 'failing to choose sides' (Dickinson 2002: 17). Consequently, black managers, who have been newly promoted, run the risk of ending up somewhere in-between, in particular if they fail to have 'real power'.

...black managers have been incorporated into the company power structures without transforming the power itself (Masondo 2005: 168).

Some analysts see a tendency towards new authoritarianism and new forms of inclusion and exclusion, producing 'an enclave of development in a sea of poverty'. This would generate 'a broader social crisis' (Von Holdt 2005: 31).³¹⁷ Do black managers now tend to adopt similar derogatory colonial styles as their superiors used to? As one worker put it, black managers now also have 'the habit of shouting at workers', as if they are children, just like white managers in the old days. This practice used to be related to a notion with deep colonial roots that 'blacks are the servants of whites' and consequently blacks were to obey to the white man's rules, however arbitrary or senseless (Von Holdt 2003: 31).

The relationship between managerial authority and the racial structure of power was complex. Not all whites were managers. However, any white had the 'right' to issue instructions to any black. This meant that there was no clear line of managerial authority or job demarcation – at least, as applied to black workers (Von Holdt 2003: 31).

An altered political establishment, groundbreaking pro-labour legislation, a change in the role of trade unions and increased global economic competition, are factors that have become relevant in the post-1994 era, which so far appear not to have resulted in a radical democratisation and transformation of the workplace. Nevertheless, undoubtedly, a shift in the ethnic and cultural composition of personnel has affected the mainstay of business practice in many ways.

Post-apartheid, neo-apartheid, postcolonial?

In contrast to 'post-apartheid workplace regime', the term 'neo-apartheid workplace regime' suggests that the transformation from apartheid to democracy has not been completed, for instance in companies where a racial division of labour, related labour practices and power structures by and large persist (Von Holdt 2003). If one underlines similarities with other countries in Africa as former colonies, not treating South Africa as 'an exceptional case', the term 'postcolonial

³¹⁷ Karl von Holdt is senior researcher at the *National Labour and Economic Development Institute* (NALEDI) and acts as adviser to the trade unions in their engagement with the government and management. Edward Webster is Professor of Sociology and Director of the *Sociology of Work Unit* (SWOP) at the *University of Witwatersrand*.

workplace regime' may be more appropriate (Bezuidenhout 2005: 95). This is not to say that there has been no change at all, but "one can sometimes identify continuities with the past in the way that change is taking place" (Bezuidenhout 2005: 73).

After 1994, new strategies to retain managerial control and economic pressures have been undertaken. Moreover, workers tend to be pushed into casual labour or unemployment. Many workers may experience these measures as forms of domination and humiliation, which cause grievances and uncertainty. Sometimes they perceive these as racial by nature, in particular in firms where the organisational hierarchy is still largely racialised in many cases. In practice, it is very difficult to prove discrimination due to 'race' or gender in terms of the law. The law provides a legal framework to remove discrimination from the workplace, but it does not automatically change managerial behaviour. On the contrary, employers tend to see measures to redress inequalities in the workplace as 'obstacles to productivity and employment'.

Concluding remarks

This chapter is meant to contextualise 'African management' discourse in South Africa in a historical perspective. Since colonial times, a practice of 'unfree labour' has developed in South Africa, which in conjunction with policies to 'solve' the 'Native Question', produced a cheap submissive migrant labour force, available in great quantities to work in the mining industry. Mostly, African population groups came to be considered 'subjects', not citizens, deprived of political and civil rights. These developments over more than 3,5 centuries, with substantial British/Anglo-Saxon influences on entrepreneurial, managerial, and skilled positions in most economic sectors, have largely created – and continue to be influential – on labour relations and work cultures. With increased international pressure on the apartheid regime since the 1970s, growing ineffectiveness in controlling 'the Natives' mounting up enormous state expenditures, and rising political resistance by the African liberation movements, South Africa ran into a state of emergency and a severe economic and political crisis. In a context of political turbulence and economic uncertainties, a small but significant faction of the business community initiated a groundbreaking project that came to be known as the 'Broederstoom meeting'. This unique initiative, undertaken by the CBM, came about well before the actual political changes. One of the consequences was a flow of new management visions and – besides fear and resistance to change – a sudden optimistic business mood that flared up, putting emphasis on industrial democracy, participatory decision-making, improved relations with communities, and broadening the ownership and management base. Only a few years later, the concept of 'African management' was launched, as described in Chapter 3, drawing abundantly on the aforementioned 'new paradigms' in

management and business, however adding a specific 'African' (Afrocentric) flavour. 'African management' philosophy emerged before the political change to majority rule, but enjoyed increasingly public attention after 1994 when several publications came out on the issue. However, the transitional workplace regime after 1994 – alternately referred to as 'post-apartheid', 'neo-apartheid', or 'postcolonial' – reveals many characteristics of the apartheid era. The question of ethnicity, or 'race', remains an issue of debate in this regard. It was argued, that in general a neutralising perspective on ethnicity in management and organisation seems to be dominant in South Africa: it is acknowledged that ethnic identity and cultural diversity exist, but without further interest in underlying meanings attached to the use of ethnicity in the identity make-up of individual employees, be they managers or workers. In this context, 'African management' discourse is meddling in.

The next chapter will go into several issues with regard to the process of business transformation, defined here as 'challenges', so as to gain further insight into the post-1994 context, in which 'African management' discourse is situated. In this regard, especially cultural aspects of the phenomenon of *Black Economic Empowerment* are considered, as well as the debate on African Renaissance and the attention that is given to ethical enterprising.

Chapter 7: Challenges of business transformation

Introduction

The previous chapter described where ‘African management’ discourse ‘came from’; in what circumstances and in what timeframe it emerged. In a sudden optimistic mood in business, several ‘new management ideas’ emerged. In this process, there was also space for Afrocentric versions of innovative management thinking to sprout. This chapter is meant to contextualise ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa further. It is about an era that was characterised by a strong urge for business to transform. Business transformation provided a number of opportunities to ‘African management’ discourse to establish itself and spread out. ‘African management’ philosophy has come from an explosive political climate, an economic emergency situation, and a fragile process of negotiation and alliance building, both in politics and in business.

The era of transition and transformation in the late 1980s and 1990s showed on the one hand anxiety and fear about the changes that would take place, and on the other hand a great deal of optimism about the future. Equally, in the business sector, there was reason for concern, but also excitement. The latter was reflected in a string of highly optimistic business and management books that came out in that period, unleashing a hitherto unknown creativity, and generating new perspectives on management and leadership in organisations. The era of transition and transformation created – temporarily perhaps – a willingness of ‘listening to voices’ that were seldom heard before. A small section of the business and academic community started imagining a *more humane* South Africa, without institutionalised racial discrimination that had become part of its organisational cultures. A future South Africa was envisaged that from an economic point of view would also be far more prosperous and ‘just’. Mostly, business had profited considerably from apartheid regulations, in particular because of a large supply of cheap labour, deprived of its political rights. The issue of complicity of business in relation to apartheid seems to be a rather obvious one (SACP 1997).

The first section is about *Black Economic Empowerment* (BEE) and its assumed impact on organisational values. Section 7.2 will go into the need for South African business to become more competitive and the need to address cultural diversity issues in organisations. It will be illustrated how ‘African management’ advocates positioned themselves in this arena. They claimed that an Afrocentric management approach offers a great potential to deal with global competitiveness and with diversity management. Section 7.3 considers specifically discursive parallels between ‘African management’ philosophy and the debate on African Renaissance, but simultaneously points out that ‘*African management*’ in South Africa

they are not quite synonymous. Section 7.4 describes popular (global) business themes, such as Corporate Social Responsibility and ethical enterprising, and how ‘African management’ discourse responds to these trends.

7.1 Does *Black Economic Empowerment* imply value changes?

Assumed categorical cultural differences between black and white managers have been subject of several studies in South Africa (e.g. Bendixen & Thomas 1997; Booysen 1999; Thomas & Bendixen 2000; Booysen 2001). Amongst other things, a neutralising view on ethnicity (‘race’) in the workplace was implied, suggesting that ethnic diversity would not ‘harm’ management productivity.³¹⁸ Such studies also pointed for instance at ‘affectionate needs’ that black managers would have relatively more, tending to seek consensus and being ‘less performance oriented’, and that white managers would achieve higher scores for individualism than black managers. This perhaps recaps an inclination towards essentialist thinking still entrenched in the (South African) academic community, reiterating an emphasis on cultural difference, echoing the past. It is not surprising that segregationist and racist thinking leaves its marks, on managers, and on researchers. Even so, one could question such essentialist bias, by raising the question whether the fact that gradually more black people are moving into top management and senior management positions as a result of *Black Economic Empowerment*, also has an impact on organisational values. While a persistence or re-emergence of authoritarian management styles can be observed, here and there also ‘culture and mindset changes’ and corresponding human resources practices may be on the rise. On the whole however, ‘a uniquely South African business culture’ based on values of tolerance, group identity, and social cohesion, ‘underpinned by shared values’ has not become the new standard, but is at least under debate (Horwitz; Browning *et al.* 2002: 1116). Evidently, the notion of *ubuntu* could be part of such a debate.

Black Economic Empowerment and management

Statistics tell us that black managers are still a minority. The *Department of Labour* set up the *Employment Equity* programme to eradicate ‘unfair discrimination’ in the workplace. The 2002-2003 annual report of the *Employment Equity Commission* revealed that the number of black people, Africans and other black groups, as part of the economically active population was 86% in total (only 77% is covered in *Employment Equity Reports* 2002), whereas their share in top management positions, as reported, was 19% and in senior management positions 22%. Of the reported cases, a share of 52% of the occupational category of managers, legislators, and senior

³¹⁸ In the previous chapter, the issue of ‘Sweeping ethnicity under the managerial carpet?’ was discussed, in section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid*.

officials was in the hands of white males. Women, black and white, accounted for 14% of all top management positions and 21% of all senior management positions whereas females represented 46% of the economically active population (only 37% was covered in *Employment Equity Reports* 2002). Women seemed to be lagging behind in general in transformation agendas.³¹⁹ Although the *Employment Equity Commission* assessed the improvement of blacks in key positions in the workforce profile as ‘disappointing’ compared to the previous annual report, it considered the finding that blacks accounted for 56% of all top management *promotions* encouraging.³²⁰

Symbolic, ideological, and strategic meaning of BEE

Statistics as abovementioned seem to contrast with the abundant media attention to a number of well-known black businesspeople that have fared well in recent years, such as Tokyo Sexwale, Cyril Ramaphosa, Patrice Motsepe, and Saki Macozoma. From their claimed economic and financial successes, however, one cannot conclude that the objectives of *Black Economic Empowerment* (BEE) supported by the government have been achieved. BEE aims to support the creation of a black class of entrepreneurs as to ‘deracialise’ the economy. President Thabo Mbeki promised to assist black people to become entrepreneurs, as declared to the *Black Management Forum* (BMF) in November 1999 (Iheduru 2004: 9). South African media make regular statements that BEE is going ‘too slow’ and leads to the enrichment of only a few people. This would create a bad impression to potential foreign investors.

To make matters worse potential foreign investors rightly ask why they should consider investing when many of our politicians are busy spending their time cutting private, underhanded and preferential business deals – as happens in the rest of Africa. [...] How then does one account for De Beers giving Tokyo Sexwale a deal of a lifetime (interests in up to six diamond mines)... (Ginsberg 1998: 61).

Cyril Ramaphosa, formerly a trade union leader and a high-ranking member of the ANC, strongly disagrees with criticism that BEE would only enrich a few:

I see it differently. Yes, it is leading to the empowerment of key leading people. You need to have leaders, creating role models, looked upon as rising out of the ashes of apartheid, as people who can succeed and be good examples.³²¹

The ideology of consumer capitalism is now accessible to everyone: “A reality as evident in a top ANC politician’s bluish defence of the right to ‘get filthy rich’ as it is in the dogged efforts of ordinary South Africans to participate more fully in consumer society” (Marais 2001: 243). A similar interpretation comes from one of the BEE ‘typhoons’, Saki Macozoma who, evading critical

³¹⁹ *Here is the news: where are the women? Black females constitute 45 percent of the population in South Africa - yet their voices are mere whispers in the vox populi* The Sunday Independent, 10 August 2003.

³²⁰ Source: www.labour.gov.za/download/8521/Annual%20Report%20-%20Commission%20for%20Employment%20Equity%202002-2003.pdf [accessed 10 November 2005].

³²¹ Sunday Times Business Times, 6 July 2003.

questions on the 'self-enrichment' of a small elite of black entrepreneurs, comments: "If South Africa is to be a capitalist economy, it cannot then say in the same breath 'if someone is black, it is not OK to accumulate wealth'."³²² Has another taboo on 'race' been broken? Ramaphosa refers to the potential ideological impact of black economic empowerment on the millions of people that are worse-off, daydreaming of a bright prosperous future that is now in the reach of black people too.

Publicly denigrated but privately envied, African élite advancement carries strong symbolic meaning. [...] ...black economic empowerment aids the nurturing of a collective moral, ethical and economic will in society (Marais 2001: 243).

Businessman Moeletsi Mbeki, the 'freethinking' brother of President Thabo Mbeki, criticises BEE because in his view it does not encourage entrepreneurship, since it is a tool for fulfilling a political agenda through involving 'political agents' and not 'real businesspeople' (Wadula 2003).

...black economic empowerment as an invention of big white corporations, which, in the early 1990s, fearing that a future ANC government would be tempted to nationalise the economy, set out to solicit black economic participation. [...] What we need are entrepreneurs, people who start new business, take risks, and create new jobs. Under black economic empowerment, people take no risks. It encourages people to live of the fat of the land (Msomi 2003).

Moeletsi Mbeki believes that BEE was set up to create a buffer class among political leaders of the ANC and the *Pan Africanist Congress* (PAC) that would support the economic status quo. This argument makes sense, in view of the uncertainties and risks in the 1990s about the possible consequences of broad and rising political unrest:

...the prospects for political instability necessitated the 'deployment' in 1996 of several 'patriotic' blacks to those sectors of the economy that symbolise white economic power and a constant reminder of the black majority's continued subordinate economic status. [...] In the twilight of apartheid, the government attempted to establish them as a buffer between itself and the hungry masses and radicalised activists; the ANC today is fostering their ascent not only as the saviour of the masses but also as its ally against white economic power... (Iheduru 2004: 20).³²³

Others support the view that since 1994 it is mostly 'still business as usual for too many'. White business managers would use 'business reasons' to resist real change. Therefore, Hasmukh Gajjar, a former president of the *Black Business Council*, believes that it is important to have black people in management to break the resistance to change: "...with a view to instituting joint-management control over the operation through collaboration and joint control as a team."³²⁴

Black Economic Empowerment in a context of global management hegemony

In the early 1990s, several corporate leaders and academics worked together in 'scenario planning'

³²² Saki Macozoma, chief executive of *New Africa Investments Limited* (NAIL) was chosen as 'Business Leader of the Month' (*The deal-maker* Sunday Times Business Times 5 July 2003).

³²³ Iheduru refers here also to Mark Gevisser (1997) *Ending economic apartheid* The Nation, 165 (9) pp. 24.

³²⁴ *It's still business as usual for too many* Sunday Times Business Times, 13 July 2003.

exercises. Their conclusion could be summarised as ‘there is no alternative to neo-liberalism’, also referred to with its acronym ‘TINA’. Within the ANC conservative elements were becoming stronger and the internal tension within the ANC was increasing. The gradual shift of intellectuals within ‘the ruling bloc’ to a neoliberal position was embraced by sections of the upcoming class of ‘black bourgeoisie’ (Hart 2002: 23). In contrast with notions generally associated with apartheid, democracy was now increasingly associated with individual freedom, market, consumption, and flexibility - all favouring ‘the neoliberal option’ (Hart 2002: 25). In the absence of a clear economic policy on the part of the liberation movement that came to power in 1994, President Thabo Mbeki has drawn heavily on business advice and implemented ‘pro-business reforms’:

Its historical neglect of economic policy left it prone to the counsel of business and mainstream foreign experts that set about schooling ANC leaders in the ‘realities of the world’ (Marais 2001: 123).

Initially, the *Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU) and the *South African Communist Party* (SACP) had proposed alternative economic policies, directing toward wealth redistribution and unbundling of conglomerates, leading to the *Reconstruction and Development Plan* (RDP) launched in 1994 to live a short life. Soon afterwards, the RDP was replaced by a liberal macro-economic policy in 1996, called *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* (GEAR). Allegedly, under the influence of business organisations, redistributive principles were swiftly given up to be replaced by a belief in neoliberal ‘trickle down’ effects (Hart 2002: 18). In the TINA vision, achieving growth through redistribution would not be sustainable (Marais 2001: 126-127). This outcome was surprising against the background of the socialist ideology of the ANC in the pre-1994 era, focussing on nationalisation of the industry, wealth redistribution, and poverty alleviation, and in view of the *Triple Alliance* with COSATU and the SACP.

Government officials interact consistently with business and generally rely heavily on consultants for information and ideas (Seidman Makgetla 2004: 270).

The ANC’s historical constituencies and alliances were largely excluded from decision-making on macro-economic policies. Initially, GEAR policy gave disappointing results which made the need for greater international competitiveness even more pressing and for making South Africa a ‘hotspot for international investment’ (Magubane 2002: 91). The logic behind GEAR was to develop a competitiveness strategy by ‘shaking off’ unproductive enterprises in order to drive rapid growth in future, making wealth redistribution and growth of jobs possible (Seidman Makgetla 2004: 268). This policy, amended with a BEE strategy to ‘deracialise’ the economic sector, could be a significant factor in the persistence of ‘western’ or global management hegemony in South Africa that includes black managers.

...the language of the global manager has penetrated planning styles with our (global administrators) concern for stakeholders, bottom lines and mission statements, and our (global educators) outcome-based, quality-assured education (Guy 2004: 97).

Is there then reason to expect that the 'managerial ethos' of BEE entrepreneurs would be different? This could only be expected if one assumed that for instance notions of communalism and 'collective consciousnesses' continue to 'mean something' to BEE entrepreneurs as a social group. If such notions have ever resonated with the latter group, this might tend to diminish once people become more affluent, if 'collective consciousness' was largely based on shared experiences of suffering and related with (the memory of) poor living conditions, therefore seeking security in social networks and survival of the group (e.g. Kotzé 1993). Unless one believes that notions, such as 'collective consciousness' are innate to black African people, it is not likely that BEE entrepreneurs and newly promoted black managers bring along a different managerial ethos because of their ethnic background.

One result [of BEE] has been that the selection of key business activities and the operational and managerial ethos of these firms are seldom distinguishable from those practised by white-controlled companies. [...] Yet, the notion that a different ethos would govern the decisions of black capitalists survives (Marais 2001: 241).

More important then becomes the question whether there will be an open dialogue about transformation and the possible consequences in terms of organisational culture, whenever a new 'empowerment deal' is struck. Or will there be resistance and 'invisible walls' thrown up, holding the 'empowerment partner' safely away from key decision making?

Questions that are likely to be raised are: How socially and politically high-profile is the empowerment partner? How controversial are his or her business views and perspectives? How will the mind-set of the potential empowerment partner differ from our own? Is it likely to sow discontent? (Gqubule 2004: 37)

Are there reasons to assume that 'empowerment partners' and emergent black managers would be more 'logically' disposed to support Afrocentric views (on management)? As matters stand today, Africanism does not seem to have become the dominant ideology of the new political elite, although it may keep on shimmering somewhere under the surface. At least in the economic sphere and in the business sector, the ANC has not been able to (or not been willing to) place South Africa as a multicultural society 'under a sky of African hegemony' (Filatova 1997: 48). However, (some sections within) the ANC would perhaps *prefer* a stronger (black) African identity for the new South Africa:

...the ANC is looking towards creating – admittedly gradually – a cultural hegemony based on symbols and artefacts that represent the 'new South Africa' and break totally with the old. The old municipalities are being merged into new entities with entirely new names (such as Tshwane for the one including Pretoria, or eThekweni for the one including Durban); plans are afoot to construct museums and memorials that identify the country with the anti-apartheid 'struggle'. All work situations are supposed

to be in the process of ‘transformation’ in order to achieve a racial (and gender) balance corresponding to the national population balance (Freund 2004: 45).

Currently, the government seems to be going a bit soft on the ‘Mbeki model’ of nation-building under an African cultural hegemony, for fear of a ‘white withdrawal’ and ‘the Zimbabwe threat’ (Freund 2004: 45-46). Massive ‘white withdrawal’ and emigration could damage important national institutions and the economy. Although unlikely under the present circumstances, it is not unthinkable that a successor to President Mbeki could follow in the footsteps of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and take drastic measures for instance to dispossess whites (Freund 2004: 50-51). For now, many BEE entrepreneurs and black managers do perhaps not have an unambiguous stance at all about their social identity. The small but expanding African middle class at least would not have a clear identity and not be ‘a self-conscious class with a coherent ideology’ (Schlemmer 2005: 10). Many appear even to be rather sceptical about business, partly due to (what they perceive as) discrimination against Africans in business.

Overall, it does not seem very likely that the increase of black entrepreneurs and black managers in influential positions *necessarily* implies significant changes in organisational values. Their ethnic background and supposedly innate characteristics are supposedly not so pertinent. This does not preclude the probability of changes over time in organisational values in a broader perspective, but then for other – political and cultural – reasons, in which possibly social identity issues, e.g. an Afrocentric social identity, play a role.

Deculturalise or incorporate ‘African cultures’ in business settings?

Could one indeed conclude that *Black Economic Empowerment*, affirmative action, and neoliberal macro-economic policies indeed reinforce mainstream (global) management approaches? Perhaps yes, but ethnicity remains an undecided issue. Do managers in South African organisations have to ‘deculturalise’ or rather ‘negotiate’ their sense of identity?

Well before the 1990s, long-term shortages of management talent had been foreseen. In that time, merely lip service was paid to black management advancement instead of real commitment, due to resistance: “To give up existing privileges, or fear.”³²⁵ Negative expectations *vis-à-vis* young black management candidates prevailed in the 1970s and 1980s. They would lack ‘achievement needs’ and ‘act slowly’, as was assumed, using the belittling idiom of that time. Moreover, opinions were expressed for instance that black management candidates should be ‘deculturalized’ and willing “to ‘dump’ their cultural heritage to succeed in white business” (Reese 1981: 23). Specific roles were expected from black employees and all sorts of ‘well-intended’ encouragement for black

³²⁵ *How committed is top management to black advancement?* Management, May 1985 pp. 31
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 195 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

talent and 'incentive schemes' were however not effective, since black employees did not feel recognised as fellow human beings, as long as apartheid remained intact:

For black South Africans, corporate actions that simply emphasize internal issues like pay equity, job training, and integrated facilities, all miss the point (Beaty & Harari 1987: 103).

Although it is rather problematic to make generalising statements about 'black people' or 'black managers' in South Africa, the notion persists that they may experience internalised feelings of inferiority as part of the legacy of apartheid. Similar notions were, for example, pointed out in the work of Franz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo (Fanon 1963; Thiong'o 1997).³²⁶

In the absence of legalised racism, these behaviours became obstacles for the black majority to realise their full development in the new environment (Luhabe 2002: 183).

This could for instance bring black (African) people devaluing 'their own cultural heritage' as a result of accepting the idea of their inferiority.³²⁷ Do black managers actually have to negotiate their cultural identity in organisations (Luhabe 2002: 167)?

Many of our stereotypes of Black people are often linked to notions of 'traditional African culture'. However, many Black managers have grown up in urban areas, which implies daily contact with the 'Western' world. During my conversations with Black managers, I have come to the conclusion that, for many Black managers, conformity with traditional cultural values is often situational. In other words, the Black manager (and often the White manager for that matter) will deliberately adapt his or her behaviour according to the situation (Human 1996a: 177).

Where in the 1980s black managers were often advised to 'deculturalise' and throw their cultural heritage over the wall, under the new regime after 1994 'cultural pressures' are usually declared to be 'not problematic' in a business context. If black employees ask their black executives for special favours or "to support any 'black issue' regardless of its merit," or when black executives perceive specific situations as such, these practices of ethnicisation 'from below' should simply not be ignored.

...none of the interviewees expressed any long-term problems with incorporating African cultures into good business practices, structures, and systems. [...] Corporate culture transcends individual cultures and these companies see themselves as fully integrated with no European or African bias. [...] ...cultural factors do not appear to make it impossible for Black Executives to manage the performance of their subordinates in the manner required by good business practice in globally competitive business (Russell 2003: s.n.).

In South Africa, there seems to be a tendency towards a 'neutralising view' on ethnicity in the workplace. Ethnicity and the phenomenon of ethnicising are being acknowledged as part of social realities in South African business and organisations and often seen as 'not really a problem' that

³²⁶ The views of Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo will be discussed in Chapter 9 'Africanness' as open-ended, particularly in section 9.2 *Identity in-the-making*.

³²⁷ Luhabe draws here on the concept of 'internalised oppression' as developed by Valerie Batts (1997).

would seriously hamper efficiency or competitiveness. Black managers and BEE entrepreneurs remain somewhat ambiguous about the role of business in a context of transformation. Business and management are both seen as vehicles for economic prosperity, but also as potential sources of frustration, as they are confronted with – or perceive as such – instances of discrimination spilling over from the past, or with an implied (perceived?) urge to ‘assimilate’ to dominant corporate cultures. The question is whether in general South African managers are willing “to develop a mindset that values diversity in the workplace” (Horwitz; Browning *et al.* 2002: 1116). Is there generally resistance to transformation and culture change or an open atmosphere for constructive dialogue, not only on top-management but also on middle-management level?

A debate about whether corporate culture in SA is being affected by black economic empowerment has begun (Gqubule 2004: 36).

Now, the majority of (African) black managers do not appear to be inherently supportive of ‘Afrocentric’ approaches to management and organisation, or other alternative perspectives. They do not seem to be necessarily inclined to ‘a different managerial ethos’. Such a contention is partly created by a disproportional focus on cultural difference in South African organisation studies with regard to ethnicity. Equating black (African) managers or black (African) entrepreneurs with ‘African management’ advocates would be erroneous and naïve. Therefore, the contention that management styles and organisational values fundamentally change once black managers obtain substantially more seats in top and senior management positions, does probably not hold true. If in such circumstances management styles and organisational values do change, it is not specifically because they happen to be black. In other words, *Black Economic Empowerment* does not automatically evolve into *Black African Cultural Empowerment*. In the light of neoliberal macro-economic policies reinforcing mainstream (global) management perspectives in South Africa, one could not quite claim an Africanist cultural hegemony in the power bastions of government and business. The wobbly era of transition and transformation, with a volatile mélange of shifts in power relations, resentments, and aspirations provides significant clues why ‘African management’ philosophy has advanced in South Africa. The role of the CBM clearly illustrates this point, revealing the political context, (business) concerns, and other interests that were at stake.

7.2 Cultural diversity and global competitiveness

Since 1994 the awareness has grown that South African business needs to become more competitive. Subsidies that the apartheid state used to provide to parastatals and domestic companies that were not profitable, were stopped. In addition, it was felt that business should address cultural diversity issues in organisations. In this period, creative forces seemed busy

reworking former 'dark sides' of its history into more positive images, in which the richness of its cultural diversity is heralded, against the background of a peaceful multicultural harmony, represented as a 'rainbow nation'. In the 'rainbow nation' image, the 'uniqueness' of combining cultural features of Europe and Africa were exposed, and an imagined tolerant co-existence of 'the old' and 'the new', symbolising inclusiveness of society (e.g. Steyn, M. E. & Motshabi 1996).

I truly believe the greatness in South Africa will stem from a holistic reconciliation of the value systems of the rainbow country. It will give us a competitive edge and will solve our productivity problem by implication. [...] ...we can synergistically build a South African uniqueness: able to translate into what we design and sell to the world, thereby achieving a competitive edge in value-added products (Oosthuizen 1995: s.n.).

The citation above came from a professional in advertising, who gave a testimony of a newly shaped, positive imagery to be communicated to the rest of the world. Such positive representations are typical of the era of transformation and are constructed to strengthen South Africa's image locally and globally.

South Africans of all races can develop a South African culture in which the whole is greater than the sum of its many and varied parts. But that culture will only develop when we recognise and respect the complexity of individual social identity; when we cease to see each other through the distorting and often negative prism of cultural stereotypes... (Human 1996b: 46-64).

Such warning concerning cultural stereotypes is not always well observed. Positive imagery namely also serves to attract global capital, and explanations of cultural complexities will not help to get a clear, positive message across. Global competition in international business relates to operations on the domestic market and on African, and international markets. South African corporations have increased their investments in sub-Saharan Africa since the first half of the 1990s, especially in the mining industry. The regional economies are however not yet sufficiently integrated; political and economic fragmentation in Africa pose serious constraints (Asante-Darko 1999: 43). A number of big South African corporations have moved headquarters to London expecting to access cheaper capital and facilitate foreign expansion (Carmody 2002: 262-263; Seidman Makgetla 2004: 276). Capital is literally 'going global'. To some extent, capital flight explains painful job losses in South Africa. Allegedly, this makes the need for South African business to become more globally competitive more pressing.

In this light, South Africa's new imagery around its multicultural society and its cultural diversity – also in organisations – is represented as an important asset. Likewise, business organisations are increasingly expected to develop expertise in issues around management of diversity, cross-cultural communication and community involvement (Hofmeyr, K. B.; Rall & Templer 1995: 114) The ability to manage cultural diversity is seen as one of the tools that South African business could use to its advantage in global competition. 'African management' thought

has shown to be amenable to this call that became increasingly articulated after 1994. A sense of appreciation seemed to come about with regard to ethnicity and cultural diversity, coming from stereotypical and categorical thinking and largely leaving a doctrine of white supremacy and 'corporate multiculturalism' behind. In the euphoria of the transformation era, this might have been augmented into a nearly boundless left 'liberal multiculturalism' that tended to essentialise cultural difference and exoticise *Otherness* (McLaren 1994: 52).³²⁸

In the era of transformation, the issue of diversity management has risen high on the managerial agenda. In the thinking on this issue, often reference is made to experiences and theoretical insights from the United States. In the South African context, 'black people' belong to a majority group, which is not the case in a North American context.

Parallel to the 'rainbow nation' imagery, the skill of 'cross-cultural diversity management' tends to be considered an asset to business. Some see it therefore as imperative to link valuing cultural diversity in the workplace with 'human resource development' (Horwitz; Bowmaker-Falconer *et al.* 1996). From an academic point of view, there is however no consensus about the most appropriate method of addressing the issue, and how to turn it into an organisational asset.

Recognition of the value of cultural diversity in the workplace, and of the ability to deal with it, occasionally also tends to be associated with Afrocentric notions, such as *ubuntu*, sometimes underpinned by empirical research (English 2002).

South African managers live in a society enriched by its diversity. They have the capacity, but many need to develop a mindset that values diversity in the workplace. Organizations will need to shift from compliance to a commitment model, which has an organizational culture reflecting the notion of *ubuntu* and capacity building as vital for both competitiveness and equity in the workplace (Horwitz; Browning *et al.* 2002: 1116).

Cultural diversity management is publicised as an important aspect of Afrocentric management approaches, as the *ubuntu* concept would supposedly possess features to deal with this complex issue. In connection with an urge of enhancing global competitiveness, cultural diversity management could be seen as a new priority on the managerial agenda. This rather new priority came along with 'new visions' of management, democratisation in the workplace, emergent ideas with regard to the African Renaissance in public and economic spheres. On the spur of the moment with all these new perspectives and debates coming up, 'African management' philosophy emerged. The next section elaborates more on these new trends in business, African Renaissance and ethical business, in a further contextualisation of the emergence of 'African management' discourse.

³²⁸ The notion of 'left liberal multiculturalism' was discussed in the previous chapter, in section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid*.

7.3 African Renaissance

Early 2005, Reverend Tutu expressed serious criticism on the South African government because “too many of our people live in gruelling, demeaning, dehumanising poverty.”³²⁹ This criticism evolved into a fierce debate in the media between Desmond Tutu and President Thabo Mbeki. For Mbeki this was a painful attack, as it implicitly also criticised his ambitious political programme of the African Renaissance that he launched in June 1997. It referred to ideals of establishing genuine and stable democracies in Africa, a call to Africa’s renewal, good governance, poverty reduction, foreign investment, economic growth, an end to violent conflicts and respect for human rights (Van Kessel 2001; Lodge 2002a).

African Renaissance and modernity

African Renaissance aims to promote ‘a spirit of awaking in Africa in the late twentieth century’, alluding to an abundance of revitalising energy. One of the notions it harbours is the idea of modernity (or modernisation). In this analysis, African Renaissance is seen as a connection between business interests and prospects of commercial gains and with pan-African ideals, with South Africa imagining itself as a regional power. Gradually, the discourse has also been transformed into a continental development and investment programme, called a *New Partnership for Africa’s Development* (NEPAD), for which considerable financial support was sought from the international community. This modernist interpretation, the globalist framing of the African Renaissance, is apparently embraced by both black and white business elites, but is not always welcomed by other African countries, bringing back unpleasant memories of the ‘old days’.

The idea that ‘what is good for South Africa is good for Africa’ revisits a series of uncomfortable historical encounters between Africa and South Africa’s powerful moneyed establishment (Vale & Maseko 2002: 127).

Neighbouring countries depend considerably on South Africa as a regional economic power, while they simultaneously fear South African economic dominance. African Renaissance ideology could be a helpful tool to bring some more harmony in this situation.

The notion of ‘cultural heritage’

In a specifically Afrocentric reading of African Renaissance, special emphasis is put on notions of heritage and legacy, meaning:

...a renaissance in which African communities succeed in reconstructing themselves around tradition, legacy and heritage, around the values and relationships that characterised pre-colonial institutions and

³²⁹ New African, January 2005, pp. 12-21.

values. [...] ...the impersonal forces of modern bureaucracies, international markets and electronic technologies can somehow be humanised and adapted to African needs (Lodge 2002a; 2002b: 230).

In this view, African Renaissance turns on issues of identity, and is then accordingly labelled as an 'Africanist interpretation' (Vale & Maseko 2002: 126). A focus on identity would be necessary to 'recover a distorted view of Africa' that is supposedly broader than a mere concern with 'blackness' (Bongmba 2004: 294). It would be essential to have the backing of an Africa-focussed intelligentsia to drive the African Renaissance project, in order to reinforce the process of African identity formation.

Intellectuals are central to the process of identity formation. Identities are reproduced institutionally, and changed institutionally. The locus of identity formation is not just political; it is also cultural and academic (Mamdani 1999: 130).

'Indigenous knowledge' and history – a return to the mythical roots of Africa, so to speak – would provide 'unexplored resources' to nurture the further development of Africanist identities. There may be a touch of anti-globalisation sentiments to this, acting against 'meaningless consumerism' and encouraging Africans "to contribute meaningfully to rescuing the world from barbarism that masquerades as civilisation" (Vale & Maseko 2002: 126).³³⁰

Ideological tool

The concept of *ubuntu* is a key element in this 'Africanist interpretation' of African Renaissance. Simply put, it is seen as an expression of humanness, community; an idea of mutual solidarity and belonging. It has the potential to provide a sense of identity, self-esteem, pride even. Its popularity can be seen in the context of a society where 'negative images of self' subsist amongst black intellectuals (Mamdani 1999: 127). The *ubuntu* concept evolved into discourses on its own, and into new forms of business and new commodities.

Ubuntu discourses have helped to generate a mini-industry. There are today *ubuntu* consultants, there is even an *Ubuntu Institute* in Pretoria which arranges seminars on such topics as '*ubuntu* marketing and public relations' and '*ubuntu* management' (Lodge 2002a: 231).

In a more critical perspective, the black middle class and upper class tends to be seen as using African Renaissance as an ideological tool, e.g. "to generalise its interests to make them that of the people" or calling for *ubuntu* while insisting on 'very ruthless and paternalistic labour policies' (Maloka 1997: 42). The *ubuntu* concept in this perspective is judged as *highly opportunistic*. It suggests togetherness and belonging to serve capitalist business interests.

Corporate South Africa has proved equally accepting of other, more authentically 'African' concepts that are woven into the African renaissance. *Ubuntu* is one of them. Essentially, an ethos of reciprocity

³³⁰ Original citation in Mail&Guardian, April 1-7, 1997.

and mutual aid, it centers on the idea that people realize themselves through others. Motivational speakers and consultants, corporate human resource planners and advertising agencies eagerly assimilate the concept into their attempts to help modernize and revitalize South African capitalism. The African renaissance vision is evidently hospitable to such opportunism (Marais 2001: 250).

African Renaissance and *ubuntu* are, however, ‘open-ended’ concepts.³³¹ Both optimistic perspectives may be raised in debates as well as in sceptical arguments. Will the cynics only be silenced, if African Renaissance actually delivers in concrete organisational terms: business successes, increased employment opportunities, wealth, and equity: ‘a better life for all’?

The idea of *ubuntu* has to reflect directly in leadership and management styles that produce results (Bongmba 2004: 300).

Reuel Khoza, non-executive chairman of *Eskom*, a public enterprise producing electricity, emphasises the need for creating a sense of efficacy, and individual and institutional excellence in business operations (Khoza 1999: 286).³³² His recommendation is the following: “If your purpose is an African Renaissance, be master of your own destiny!” (Khoza 1999: 279). In his view, this is the prime institutional make-up to underpin the African Renaissance, and the optimal way to rise above the image of inferiority and failure, as often ascribed to Africans. A conference on African Renaissance in 1998 posed a great opportunity to address an audience of prominent political and business leaders and test the water, to prepare for developing the notion of ‘African business leadership’. Professor M.W. Makgoba edited the book *African Renaissance: The New Struggle* that came out of the conference and it included Khoza’s paper (Makgoba 1999). A number of well-known South African companies sponsored the African Renaissance conference, such as *Engen*, *Eskom*, and *Telkom*. Such a prominent conference helped popularising African Renaissance and was most probably conducive to dissemination ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa.

Powerful appeal

Now, *ubuntu* and globalisation should not be seen as opposites, but rather as “processes that can work together” (Bongmba 2004: 299). This view helps to constitute a fusion between an Africanist and a modernist conception of African Renaissance. An element of anti-globalisation helps to mobilise a support base, but this does not rule out the (potential) ideological use of *ubuntu* to push an agenda of Africanist modernisation and regional and international corporate expansion.

...the state [is required] to provide a political-ideological and economic framework that enables them [capital and large corporations] to internationalise their activities in pursuit of higher returns than the national economy seems to offer. [...] [This is a] generally overlooked function of the African

³³¹ Reference is made to Chapter 9 of this thesis, about the idea of ‘Africanness’ as open-ended.

³³² *Eskom*’s ‘African business leadership’ was described in Chapter 4 ‘*African management*’ flows: utilisation, in section 4.1 *Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users*.

renaissance discourse, which locates bids at international and especially continental expansion within a project of pan-African revival (Marais 2001: 234).

The agenda of an African Renaissance seems full of ambiguity, and its meanings ‘puzzling and perhaps mysterious’ (Vale & Maseko 2002: 124). While claiming democratic values and respect for human rights, could African Renaissance discourse also be used to legitimate traditionalist or culturalist perspectives with overt exclusivist notions?³³³

There is an ongoing debate about a shift in African Renaissance discourse in the course of years from democratic, humanistic and reconciliatory values into the direction of ‘Africanisation’. The latter would allude to favouring black people in the first place, black elites rather: “For leading Renaissance advocates [...] ‘African’ means black, or at the very least, a total identification with ‘blacks’” (Van Kessel 2001: 50). Exclusion is always a risk. Supposedly, not so much skin colour is a decisive factor in this regard, rather one’s role and power position in a particular social network the willingness to identify with African Renaissance and the *ubuntu* movement in South Africa. Van Kessel’s critical notes are somewhat weakened in the light of a contrasting observation: the phenomenon of ‘Black Racism’ and xenophobia against (black) migrants and refugees from elsewhere on the continent.

Notwithstanding its ‘puzzling and perhaps mysterious’ meanings, “the African Renaissance underscores an increasingly powerful appeal, strongly articulated by intellectuals, for a new future for Africa,” opening up exciting promises to change the lives of people across the continent (Vale & Maseko 2002: 129-130). African Renaissance provides the ‘seeds of hope’ that the continent is so desperately seeking for: the desire for ‘a new beginning’, for which the timing – in a post-cold war context – seems to be exactly right (Okumu 2002: 145-146). Phrasing African Renaissance in such a way suggests strong similarities with Afrocentrism, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The definition of ‘African’ in African Renaissance could also be read as a broad one, referring to ‘all those who live in this country’. Patriotism and ‘a reaction to the final decolonisation of Africa’ are also primary features in this perspective (Maloka 1997: 39). Altogether, African Renaissance remains a contested ideology ‘vague and open-ended as it is’ (Maloka 1997: 43).

Implications for management & organisation

The clear parallels between principles in African Renaissance and ‘African management’ philosophy suggest the possibility of significant interactions between both terrains. In a somewhat cautious manner, Lovemore Mbigi once suggested that he would have personally inspired Thabo

³³³ For a discussion on culturalist notions of ‘Africanness’, please refer to chapters 8 and 9.

Mbeki to launch his African Renaissance campaign.³³⁴ African Renaissance is often framed in terms of dreams and challenges, and searching ('in search of...'), as illustrated with one of Mbigi's book titles: *In Search of the African Business Renaissance: an African cultural perspective* (Mbigi 2000). However, attempts have rarely been undertaken to operationalise the African Renaissance concept and define its implications for other domains than the political.

Even though many have expressed themselves on the subject of an African Renaissance, most of the discourse has remained largely philosophical, and abstracted from the groundswell of the ordinary (Matheba 1999: 157).

Popular participation, empowerment, and ownership of key decision-making structures and processes should therefore be seen to occur. [...] ...the African Renaissance will only be meaningful if people's aspirations, hopes, fears and expectations inform its programmes and projects (Matheba 1999: 162).

In this regard, *Eskom* may be a case in point. The electricity utility that Reuel Khoza leads, seems more faithful to a modernist than to a traditionalist reading of African Renaissance. Could Khoza be seen as a leader in the tradition of the prominent Pan-Africanist leader Julius Nyerere?

We have been led to accept the division of men into masters and slaves. Sometimes you hear people talking about themselves as being simply ordinary men. They think their leaders know everything. When you talk to them and explain an issue to them, they will simply say, "What can we say? You leaders know everything" (Nyerere 1998: 79).

This refers to the central theme of the previous chapter: the long history of coercive labour and the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and apartheid. If African Renaissance has meaningful implications for management and organisation, it may be about 'de-racialisation' and 'decolonising the mind', as discussed in section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid* in the previous chapter. Does African Renaissance take removing 'the neurosis of victimisation' seriously, or is it just another illustration of 'rhetoric to the contrary', as Achille Mbembe argues in relation to the 'so-called politics of Africanity' (Mbembe 2002: 252). This question is considered in more depth in Chapter 9, in section 9.1 *'Race' and ethnic identity discourse*. Nonetheless, Julius Nyerere perhaps encapsulated a vital message regarding leadership: 'Leaders must not be masters'.

7.4 Corporate Social Responsibility and ethical enterprising

In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has risen on the managerial agenda worldwide. It is a business response to civil society efforts (environmental groups, human rights campaigns, and social movements) to expose worldwide practices of fraud, mismanagement, environmental pollution, and poor labour conditions, mainly resulting from the pursuit of profit maximisation and optimal shareholder value (e.g. *Enron*, *WorldCom*, *Royal Dutch Shell*). Threats of

³³⁴ Field journal Thursday, 21 August 2003.

consumer boycotts and damaging public profiles of corporations are powerful tools in the hands of consumer campaigns. In the 1990s, CSR was in South Africa mostly implemented by means of special social responsibility projects in housing, education, income-generation, and welfare services. In some instances, it was incidentally linked to political activities.

An organisation could find itself trapped in a situation where it discovered that its donations to its seemingly highly motivated community projects were in fact being administered by organisations with affiliations, albeit informal, to a particular political movement (*Social responsibility. Good business... big business too* Management, April 1985).

‘African management’ philosophy can not be specifically categorised as a CSR strategy. After the 1990s, however, several ‘African management’ advocates took advantage of this emergent trend in business and management as a new opportunity to ‘sell’ their ideas and services.

The King Report

With the further intensification of South Africa’s global interactions, CSR has become increasingly relevant for South African corporations as well, despite complaints about additional ‘paper work’ that it would cause. Currently, the debate also extends to business operations, questioning their effects on the environment and in terms of sustainable development, as well as to issues around ‘business and human rights’ and ‘corporate governance’. South Africa was one of the first countries in the world providing guidelines to companies on corporate governance, with obligatory regular reporting to the government, as a result of the *King Report on Corporate Governance*, first published in 1994 (IODSA 1994; 2002). The publisher is the *Institute of Directors in Southern Africa* (IODSA) in Johannesburg. Interestingly, in 1991 IODSA organised one of the first conferences on *ubuntu* in relation to management, with the *Black Management Forum* (BMF) and the *Economic Community of Southern Africa*.³³⁵

Basically, the *King Report* outlines a code of conduct with attention to issues such as ‘ethics’, ‘governance’, ‘affirmative action’, and ‘stakeholders’. Such guidelines do, however, not question the essence and underlying principles of business practices and production modes. They just set some minimum standards on governance issues.

A human rights culture in business

The debate on ‘business and human rights’ is about applying the Bill of Rights (adopted in 1996 as part of the new Constitution), to business. It stipulates rights for business, but also obligations, in the sphere of labour standards, education, and skills training. The ultimate goal is to stimulate ‘a human rights culture’ in the South African business sector. CSR is part of the transformation

³³⁵ This was mentioned in Chapter 3 of this thesis, in section 3.1.2 *Theory of the African Firm workshop*.
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 205 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

process of business.

...business has a vital role to play in the successful transition/transformation of society to that of a fully-fledged democracy. Business has to therefore be assisted in the awesome task facing it in that regard (HSRC 1999).

A safe and sound corporate culture that promotes ethical behaviour and internal and external integrity tends to be well received by stakeholders and has the potential to send out a comforting message to entrepreneurs and shareholders (Zuckerman; Kulesa & Meyer 2002). In other words, 'it pays to be ethical'. In particular, after a number of business scandals and allegations of massive fraud and financial maltreatments in the United States and in Europe, such as in the case of *Enron* and *Shell* in the first decade of the 21st century, big corporations have become somewhat more cautious in their financial operations. They try to re-create a better public company profile by reaching out to surrounding communities and supporting various social projects. This is, of course, largely a matter of self-interest.³³⁶

It is in the interest of a business to strengthen ties with external partners. Business has a role to play in maintaining and bolstering the social fabric. It benefits from an effective regulatory framework, a decent infrastructure, a well-educated population, and a safe natural environment (Rossouw 2002).

Now, is CSR and ethical enterprising about universal values or is it a 'culturally relative' affair? In other words, do business ethics mean something else in Africa? Is this a matter of ethical universalism or cultural relativism (Jackson, T. 2004: 87)? Moral disagreement is however not the same as ethical relativism (Rossouw 2002: 74). If one takes a position of ethical relativism, it may block the road to come to any understanding, while a dialogue between conflicting moral viewpoints can produce solutions. Such interaction can even be a source of creativity. A pragmatic position in the ethical universalism versus cultural relativism debate, would be to involve a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, engaging all of them in a conversation about corporate ethical decision-making (Jackson, T. 2004: 87). There is some concern that guiding principles for ethical business are lacking in Africa.

The greatest danger facing Africa is that the current absence of ethical values in business comes to be seen as the way business should be done (Rossouw 2002: 12).

It may not come as a surprise that in this perspective Afrocentric management and leadership approaches have come into sight, claiming a humanistic, holistic outlook. The debate on 'African management' philosophy and on 'corporate governance' (due to the King Committee) have

³³⁶ Note the analogy with 'African management' philosophy, as Taddy Blecher explained why a number of banks and big corporations are donating huge amounts of money to *CIDA City Campus*, the so-called '*Ubuntu University*' in Johannesburg: a matter of 'enlightened self-interest' (see: Chapter 4 '*African management*' flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of 'African management' end-users*).

practically emerged in the same period, cognisant of the turbulent stages that South African business had gone through and aware of the challenges ahead.

Concluding remarks

This chapter and the previous one attempted to contextualise the emergence and evolution of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, by focussing on the ambiguous role of business, both in terms of complicity with apartheid and its constructive contribution towards the ending of apartheid. As was shown, 'African management' philosophy emerged in a time when there seemed to be a flood of optimistic 'new' management and business visions.

In addition, this chapter draws specifically attention to the political dimension. The end of the 1980s and 1990s was characterised by enormous economic instability and political turbulence, which created huge uncertainties in the business sector. A prominent group of progressive, visionary entrepreneurs and business leaders broke out to engage in a groundbreaking dialogue with the leaders of the liberation movement. This marked the beginning of a 'hopeful period', after centuries of colonialism and coercive labour. The South African 'organisational mindset' suddenly proved to be subject to considerable change.

The optimistic mood of the 1990s came with the euphoria over a breakthrough in the political stalemate, which eventually led to the dismantlement of the apartheid system. A more democratic and more participative management approach was proposed, focussing on the creation of a 'human rights culture' in business and ethical enterprising.

The other side of the coin is called self-interest: an orientation towards Corporate Social Responsibility and ethical enterprising serves to counterbalance 'greedy' capitalistic tendencies, in which shareholder values outweigh any other interests. Eventually, the latter can be destructive for business. Several recent cases of fraud demonstrated this clearly, e.g. *MCI WorldCom* in the United States that went bankrupt in 2002 and the irregularities at *Ahold* in 2003. When the latter came out, the value of *Ahold* shares at the stock exchange dropped spectacularly and the holding almost collapsed.

In contextualising 'African management' discourse in South Africa, a very important ideological dimension can be observed. This chapter exemplifies strong parallels between 'African management' philosophy and the debate on African Renaissance. These parallels make clear that 'African management' philosophy is a great deal about identification in a post-apartheid context. Both have appealing features that may serve as a powerful ideological tool, due its humanistic and reconciliatory rhetoric. On the other hand, both discourses may be used for a corporatist agenda. To what extent application of the 'African management' concept tends to promote an increasingly

exclusivist black African agenda and to advance *Black Economic Empowerment* (BEE) remains an open question. The debate on the relation between BEE and possible changes in South African corporate cultures has only just begun. It has to be pointed out, that BEE should not be confused with 'African management' philosophy. The small but fast growing black (African) middle class and black business elites are not at all self-evidently 'African management' advocates. Importantly, the choice for neo-liberal macro-economic policies after a sudden switch from a short-lived life of a socialist oriented, redistributive *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) ultimately evolved into a reaffirmation of dominant management perspectives.

In the process of business transformation, identity – including ethnicity – remains an unresolved issue. This chapter argues that BEE will not necessarily have direct implications for organisational climates in South Africa. Whereas in the 1970s, black African managers were advised to 'de-culturalise' and 'dump' notions of ethnicity for the sake of their job opportunities, it is unclear how this issue will evolve in the post-apartheid era. Are black African managers concerned about other issues or would they have to re-invent and re-negotiate their identity within organisations? 'African management' advocates are responding in rather opportunistic ways, by making sweeping claims about being 'cultural confusion' and 'cultural diversity management'. Clearly, 'African management' protagonists try to exploit the 'challenges of business transformation' to their advantage.

Overall, political and business elites keep on transmitting varying unclear messages, sometimes leaning towards Africanist aspirations, sometimes in other directions. The overall picture is rather fuzzy and diverse. In a fuzzy and dynamic cultural climate, an open-ended management vision is able to deploy a certain flexibility to please its users. One could confidently assert that Afrocentric approaches to management and organisation seem to fit quite well with neoliberal macro-economic policies, globalisation, and a primarily capitalist mode of production.

The next two chapters will elaborate on 'Africanness', issues around identity formation and ethnicity in (South) Africa. The similarities between 'African management' philosophy and the debate on African Renaissance will be reviewed in the broader context of Afrocentrism, to explore the ideological roots of 'African management'.

Chapter 8: ‘Africanness’ in Afrocentric perspective

Introduction

This chapter discusses notions of African identity, referred to as ‘Africanness’, or ‘Africanity’, specifically more dogmatic versions leading back to Pan-Africanist discourse, to Afrocentrism. In much of the literature, these two terms – ‘Africanness’ and ‘Africanity’ – seem fairly interchangeable. Some authors prefer either term, for reasons mostly not explained, while others use these simultaneously and practically as synonyms. However, as a literal translation of *Africanité* from French, ‘Africanity’ supposedly refers to conceptions of an African identity as a response to colonial negation in the tradition of the Négritude movement in the first half of the 20th century.³³⁷ ‘Africanness’ could mean something similar, but sometimes, though certainly not necessarily, it seems to be associated by contrast with more recent, postcolonial, postmodernist, and multidimensional identifications of ‘being African’ in an era of globalisation. The divide briefly outlined here can also be framed in terms of a generational conflict, as “vigorous battles for intellectual hegemony between an older generation of African Marxists and nationalists, and a younger generation of ‘postmodernists’” (Robins 2004: 19). However, as said before, this ‘battle’ is not necessarily nor consistently, expressed through the terms ‘Africanity’ versus ‘Africanness’. So ‘Africanness’ is understood here as another word for African identity, contracted into ‘Africanity’, and sometimes into ‘Afridentity’.³³⁸ In this chapter, ‘Africanness’ is preferred to ‘Africanity’ as a general term to indicate attempts to define an African identity, in an Afrocentric understanding or otherwise.

In order to get a more profound understanding regarding particular themes, issues, and symbols used in ‘Afrocentric management’ discourse in South Africa, it is useful to examine their ideational roots and some of the social and political backgrounds, from which a Pan Africanist ideology emerged. Section 8.1 considers important Afrocentric tenets and viewpoints, which are explored by discussing Pan Africanism, the notion of an ‘Africa-centered paradigm’ and theories of Afrocentricity. Section 8.2 is about a recent, rather politicised Afrocentric topic: the *Black Athena* debate. For various reasons, this debate is illustrative for the emergence and evolvement of Afrocentric management perspectives in South Africa. Debating identity in an Afrocentric

³³⁷ For further reading (in Dutch) on African philosophy, the Négritude movement and Tempels’ notion of ‘Bantu philosophy’, see the PhD thesis of Henk Haenen (2006), the illustrious *Muzungumzo* publication by Heinz Kimmerle (1995), and the marvellous book of Mineke Schipper (1995).

³³⁸ E.g. *Afridentity: Essays on Africa* by Bekeh (2003).

perspective is much about changing paradigms and contesting hegemonic worldviews, suggesting a shift – or at least broadening the spectrum – from an ‘old paradigm’, solely based on Eurocentric viewpoints, to (the addition of) an Africa-centred paradigm. From the entire compilation of discursive formations pertaining to ‘African management’ thought, it is difficult to make out one specific way of defining and promoting a (South) African identity. Moreover, the prevalence of one dominant, unambiguous and unified definition is already unrealistic to assume. A deeper reflection on different notions of ‘Africanness’ will make it definitely easier to recognise particular identity related elements in ‘African management’ versions.

The reflections in this chapter are intended to reinforce the argument that ‘African management’ discourse indeed tends to make use of primordial, essentialist notions of ‘Africanness’, but potentially with a strategic intention. For instance, this could concern the questioning of hitherto largely ‘unproblematic’ assumptions in conventional management discourse in South Africa that are usually characterised as ‘Eurocentric’, ‘Anglo-Saxon’ or ‘western’.³³⁹ In other words, a dialectical sequence – going from Eurocentric discourse to Afrocentric counter-discourse, criticisms, and subsequently ‘critiques on critique’ in defence of (certain elements of) Afrocentric discourse – may open up new avenues of interpretation and social action. They may facilitate conversations that possibly help breaking certain taboos in dominant management thinking, e.g. on ethnicity or ‘traditional’ religious values in modern urban organisational contexts, where ‘modernity’ meets ‘traditionalism’ (e.g. Franks 2006). Thus, they can eventually foster a process of non-essentialist identity formation and more dynamic notions of ‘Africanness’.

Obviously, there may be elements of ‘anti-western’ sentiments in Afrocentrism, although not all versions are equally ‘anti-western’ in the sense of rejecting western inventions, ideas and products, but rather opposed to a particular hegemonic position, to (‘western’) claims of universalism. This may be a slight, but significant distinction. Does the dominant ‘American’ or ‘global management’ approach not make claims of universalism? An essential contribution of Afrocentric discourse potentially lies in a fundamental questioning of the almost self-evident use of ‘Eurocentric’ or ‘western’ concepts and knowledge in (South) African contexts, perhaps even more than in the values promoted as such. Therefore, Afrocentrists propose an Africa-centred knowledge, or – more modestly – they plead for ‘polycentrism’, a *polycentric* global knowledge community. A non-culturalist approach to ‘polycentrism’ is then perhaps a better option; a decentred world without dominant discourses of identity (Boele van Hensbroek 2000: 85). If such a world is ever to exist at all...?

³³⁹ In this regard, the term ‘strategic essentialism’ comes to mind, which will be considered in the section 10.3 on ‘Africanisation’ and post-apartheid identity formation in Chapter 10.

Alternatives to Afrocentric versions of 'Africanness' are considered in the next chapter, in which 'Africanness' is characterised as African identity *in-the-making*, underlining its open-ended processual character. Such a non-essentialist approach implies a conscious distancing from pristine notions of a supposedly unchanged nature of what constitutes the essence of 'Africanness' throughout times. Such a reading would imply identifications of 'being African' without a priori images of what an African should feel like, should be like, or would have been like *before* colonial interventions.

8.1 Afrocentrism

It is important to note that Afrocentrism and Afrocentricity are not synonymous with Africanism. (Pan) Africanism generally embraces Afrocentric ideas, with Afrocentrism in the sense of positioning Africans and their experiences at the centre of knowledge about Africans, and taking Africa as the centre in the interpretation of world history. Afrocentricity is a term especially coined by the Afro-American scholar Molefi Kete Assante, who claims to be 'the founder of the theory of Afrocentricity' that he describes as a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location, and actualisation of African agency within the context of history and culture. Agency is understood here as 'an attitude toward action originating in African experiences' (Asante 2003: 3).

(Pan) Africanism

The term 'Africanism' has been in use since the 17th century, with different meanings evolving in the course of time. It has, at least, two different meanings. One variant "cherishes images of an original (or prospective) African home as a source of inspiration, identity and self-esteem," while in another variant, it would mean that Africa possesses these qualities for the specific reason that "all civilisation originates there" (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 12, footnote 3). The latter interpretation is discussed in this chapter in the section on the *Black Athena* debate.

By 1900, the term reappears in the meaning of Pan Africanism referring to "the idea and programme of an envisioned continental unity" (Davidson 1994: 79). Pan-Africanist ideas did not emerge in Africa itself, but from in North America and the Caribbean, Davidson explains, claiming equality of human value for the black people of Africa and the Americas. Africanism in the sense of outspoken 'Africanist political ideas' emerged in South Africa in the 1950s, getting stronger in the decades that followed, as still reflected in the name of the *Pan Africanist Congress*, nowadays a rather marginal political party.³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the PAC still represents political views of numerous

³⁴⁰ The PAC was formed in 1959 as a breakaway from the ANC. Influenced by the Africanist ideals of Kwame Nkrumah, it promotes the return of the land to the indigenous people. The party's support has been steadily eroded since 1994, with voters favouring the ANC. Another blow was the 2003 defection of PAC MP Patricia de Lille to form her 'African management' in South Africa Page 211 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Africanist South Africans, for instance on controversial issues such as supporting President Mugabe in Zimbabwe and his often-violent land-redistribution campaign to confiscate land of white farmers.³⁴¹ In the context of the 1960s-1980s, Basil Davidson describes ‘Africanist political ideas’ as rejecting “political cooperation with whites in the black struggle against racism” (Davidson 1994: 80). Steve Biko spoke about Africanist ideas in terms of *Black Consciousness*, specifically applied to the situation in South Africa in opposition to the apartheid system. The *Black Consciousness Movement* in South Africa called for “black unity in the face of which white domination must crumble and fall,” envisaging a non-racial egalitarian society (Biko 2004: 162-172). Pan Africanism became the ideological source of inspiration for the establishment of the *Organisation of African Unity* (OAU) in 1963, which was transformed into the *African Union* in 2002 (Van Walraven 1999; Okumu 2002).

A ‘return to Africa’ as political project

Africanism in an older meaning refers to ‘Africa of antiquity’, asserting that the civilisation of ancient Egypt had sprung from older African civilisations on the continent. Egypt would have constituted the basis for ancient Greek civilisation. When after 1830 imperialist ideologies were arising, Hegelian views on the inferiority of Africa and the blacks living in Africa – who were believed not to be fully human – replaced this notion of Africanism. From then on, it was believed that Africa could not have produced civilisations of its own. Anthropologists in the 19th century studied ‘primitive cultures’ in search for the ‘origins of culture’, and allegedly early general condition of man, in the initial stages of human development. Out of this endeavour emerged a dichotomy between ‘savage’ and ‘civilised’, in which ‘savage’ in the meaning of ‘primitive’ initially did not have a derogatory connotation, but in principle applied to any civilisation, as argued in *The Origins of Culture* (1871) by Edward Burnett Tylor (Blok 1977: 95-98).³⁴²

Gradually, however, negative connotations concerning ‘primitive tribes’ in Africa became dominant, depicting African people as savages, uncivilised, as *people without history*. There was, however, also another side to the image of ‘primitive cultures’. In European societies with rising industrialisation, it nurtured a longing for an ideal ‘better world’, imagining harmonious small-scale communities, with warm, personal social relations and ‘natural’ bonds of solidarity and mutual trust, associated with a romantic past. In the same period, particularly the 19th century, Africa suffered from imperialism and colonialism, with slavery as one of its most damaging features.

own party, the Independent Democrats (Source:

http://www.safrika.info/ess_info/sa_glance/constitution/polparties.htm#pac [accessed 1 December 2005]).

³⁴¹ E.g. *Well done, Zim, says PAC about Cosatu* Mail&Guardian, 27 October 2004.

³⁴² This issue is further discussed at the end of this chapter in the *Concluding remarks: ‘Africanness’ as Otherness? ‘African management’ in South Africa* Page 212 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Among Pan-Africanist thinkers, an apocalyptic belief was mounting that, one day Africa would be ‘redeemed from all its miseries’” Gradually, Africanism became a more outspokenly political concept, culminating in the ambition to establish ‘a great Negro state’ in Africa. To Africans in diaspora and Africans in Africa, Pan Africanism became “a shield for the persecuted and a guerdon of hope” (Davidson 1994: 80-82). In Francophone countries, a similar call for a ‘return to the native land’ was articulated with the establishment of the Négritude movement. In the 1930s Aimé Césaire wrote about this ‘return’ that – closely related to the concept of Négritude – it also meant a return to dignity, purity, personhood, or humanity. Négritude became a rallying point for black people: “...their identity tag, and part of a language of resistance to the stereotype of the African ‘savage’” and “solidarity was their strength and a weapon with which to counter Westernism’s arrogant and aggressive Eurocentric culture” (Masolo 1994: 1-2). This anti-western element can be recognised in some versions of ‘African management’ discourse as well, or can serve as a mobilising factor. However, in current ‘African management’ literature such strongly articulated expressions of antipathy are actually very rare.

African studies

Africanism also stands for African studies, an increased interest in ‘African culture’ arising in the 1950s and 1960s, both in Anglophone and Francophone countries that the philosopher Valentin Mudimbe associates with attempts of European scholars to help Africans “formulate modalities that express their own being and their place in the world” (Mudimbe 1988: 167). African scholars, however, became more independent from their European counterparts, and they tended to use

...critical analysis as a means for establishing themselves as ‘subjects’ of their own destiny, taking responsibility for the ‘invention’ of their past as well as of the conditions for modernizing their societies (Mudimbe 1988: 167).

From the 1950s onwards, Africanist discourse began to promote the idea of ‘the respectability of a possible historical knowledge of so-called traditional societies’, the idea of ‘another centre: history and its ideological activity’, moving away from the thought that Africa lacked historicity and could have impossibly produced civilisations on its own. According to Mudimbe, this marked a radical transformation of anthropological narratives, for a considerable part under the influence of Marxist theories in African studies, leading to new representations of the ‘native’ (Mudimbe 1988: 176).

Afrocentric viewpoints

It is not intended here to represent Afrocentrism as a unified body of worldviews, ideas, insights, and visions, but to discuss general assumptions and noteworthy statements to illustrate Afrocentric

thought. In order to understand Afrocentric (management) discourse better – also heuristically – supposedly, it is important to take note of such viewpoints. Literally, Afrocentrism means Africa-centeredness, putting Africa as the centre of experience and daily realities, using Africa as the frame of reference. To do so, the views of two well-known spokespersons are reviewed: Molefi Kete Asante, Professor at the Department of African American Studies at *Temple University* in the United States, and late Professor Tsehloane Keto, who lived and worked in the United States. Keto was born and raised in South Africa. He passed away early 2004, while en route to South Africa.³⁴³ They have profited from influential forerunners, predominantly with Cheikh Anta Diop as their great inspirator. Both can be seen as important contemporary scholars of Afrocentrism. Of course, there are many more Afrocentric intellectuals on the scene as well – Na'im Akbar, Ama Mazama, Maulana Karenga and Ali A. Mazrui, to mention a few – but the reputation of Asante and Keto as prominent representatives of Afrocentrism goes undisputed (e.g. Oyebade 1990: 233). Asante is perhaps more renowned of these two Africanist scholars. In view of the subject of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, however, the views of Keto as a South African are particularly interesting.

'Theories of Afrocentricity'

Molefi Kete Asante is known for his theories of Afrocentricity; he considers himself as 'the leader of the Afrocentric school of thought'.³⁴⁴ Asante believes that Afrocentrists should 'call for the reconstruction of our values'. This reconstruction concerns – among other things – acknowledging 'the power of ancestors' and 'an ideology of heritage' (Asante 2003: 3). It implies a critical questioning of values and symbols that are used in daily life and rituals (Asante 2003: 112-113). It means continuously asking the question from whose 'center' symbols are created: "The idea is that the Afrocentrist refuses to be inundated by a symbolic reality, which denies her existence. We must reconstruct on the basis of commitment, not reaction" (Asante 2003: 115). The children of Africa – meaning Africans in diaspora – have assumed new identities. They are misplaced zombies 'in the midst of stone and steel cities of the Americas'. Nevertheless, they can reclaim Africa and "Africa can redeem itself" (Asante 2003: 135). The image of the City seems to symbolise moral and cultural decay, but fortunately, there is also the prospect of redemption, that can be achieved through 'cleansing' and by returning to Africa, literally or figuratively. However, if someone is born on the continent of African ancestry and with African historical experiences, it does not make him or her automatically Afrocentric (Asante 2003: 133). Above all, becoming Afrocentric would namely be a

³⁴³ Sunday Times, 14 March 2004.

³⁴⁴ Source: <http://www.asante.net> [accessed 6 December 2005].

personal choice to move away from a 'slave mentality' and from 'the lifestyles of oppression and victimisation'. Assumably, such a transcendent process of 'becoming Afrocentric' is inherently a painful process of 'cleansing', taking on new attitudes (Asante 2003: 129). In this context, 'cleansing' would not literally mean eradicating those, who can be accused of impurity, but nevertheless Afrocentricity is extraordinarily ambitious when it comes to its overall mission. Afrocentricity demands 'a commitment to greatness', Asante contends, and 'to work for perfection in every aspect of your behaviour' (Asante 2003: 116). Becoming Afrocentric as a personal commitment is becoming part of the centrepiece of 'human regeneration', the larger African cultural project of the humanising mission of the earth that can be achieved by "remembering that the idea for culture and civilization first went down the Nile from the interior of Africa" (Asante 2003: 136). Africans, and black people in general, so it is assumed, happen to originate from Africa, as it is 'the home of the human race and the origin of civilization': "if anything, the origin of European philosophy and creative thought came from Africans" (Asante 2003: 116). Therefore, it would be self-evident to take Africa instead of Europe or North America as the centre, and as a starting point for interpreting African phenomena.

It is suggested that Afrocentrists should depoliticise the concept of 'race' and dismantle it, "because it has no biological or anthropological basis" and "the whole idea of 'race' purity as a concept to be defended is rather absurd" (Asante 2003: 124). However, these statements on 'race' seem contradictory with his own definition of Afrocentricity:

Afrocentricity is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values and perspectives predominate. [...] In terms of action and behaviour, it is a devotion to the idea that what is in the best interest of African consciousness is at the heart of ethical behaviour. Finally, Afrocentricity seeks to enshrine the idea that blackness itself is a trope of ethics. Thus, to be black is to be against all forms of oppression, racism, classicism, homophobia, patriarchy, child abuse, paedophilia, and white racial domination (Asante 2003: 2) [underscores added].

How can one assume a 'trope of ethics' because of one's skin colour, in particular if the concept of 'race' is to be dismantled after all?³⁴⁵ In addition, Asante confirms that he is not in favour of 'any type of superiority based on biology', although he does not discard essentialist notions of 'Africinity' as such: "Essentialism has been given a bad connotation" (Asante 2003: 4).

With regard to the economic sphere, Asante seems quite optimistic, as he envisages that "our encounter with Europeans in the economic arena will generate a more cohesive world dedicated to the expression of spirit and soul, and by that, dignity and integrity" (Asante 2003: 127). In this regard, he refers in the first place to American society. The latter remark is important in interpreting

³⁴⁵ Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) would call this 'intrinsic racism' because of an assumed exceptional moral status derived from belonging to a particular 'race', or for that matter having a specific skin colour.

to what extent Afrocentric perspectives can be assessed as 'anti-western'. Apparently, the 'encounter with Europeans in the economic arena' is discursively not immediately objectionable.

An 'Africa-centered paradigm' connecting history with future visions

An 'Africa-centered paradigm' implies a review of the construction of history and knowledge about the past, reconsidering the roles of 'time' and 'location'. Keto's work as a historian is about developing future visions as well, to which exploring possibilities of an African Renaissance is linked. In essence, Keto's message is about 'placing Africans at the centre of knowledge about Africans'. This would include an 'indigenous knowledge revival': conserving the lessons and knowledge of the past and preserving 'the circle of collective memory unbroken', to be used by people in the present (Keto 2001: 2). When the circle is broken, people's knowledge of the past becomes 'decentred' and people may get 'confused'. This may affect their sense of identity, their 'Africanness'. Sometimes, it takes 'unconventional ways', such as listening to 'the voices of the silenced', to restore the circle of collective memory. Keto is strongly opposed to assertions that Africans have no history and that Africans would have contributed nothing to human civilisation at large. The task of Afrocentrists is to 're-center' the history of African people on themselves and to relate the experiences of Africans to the history of humanity as a whole (Keto 2001: 5). This is consistent with Molefi Kete Asante's views, on which Keto draws a great deal. In *Vision and time: historical perspective of an Africa-centered paradigm* (2001), he pleads for an 'Africa-centred paradigm of knowledge', which provides:

...a framework for the centering of knowledge about Africans, on the experiences of Africans as subjects of history. It produces knowledge about Africans and people in Africa in the human sciences, in which Africans occupy the center and are therefore the subjects, the main players if you wish, and the makers of their own history rather than peripheral players who inhabit the margins of other people's histories (Keto 2001: xii).

Keto insists that ancient Egypt – he uses the 'Afrocentric' name *Kemet* – be positioned as 'a classical reference point for the construction of knowledge about African people'.³⁴⁶ In this regard, he admires the contributions of Cheikh Anta Diop, who insists on the connection between the civilisations of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia with the rest of Africa. However, ancient *Kemet* was not the origin of *all* African cultures: "It was a significant culmination of a process in the development of African cultures and civilizations" (Keto 2001: 87).

Keto envisages a 'multicentered' and multicultural knowledge system in the world that needs to be gender sensitive in its approach, in which neither 'the West', 'the North', 'the East' nor 'the South' dominates, implying that the 'hegemonic Europe-centred perspective' should not be the

³⁴⁶ *Obituary Professor Tsehloane Keto. Historian who pioneered the Afrocentric view* Sunday Times, 14 March 2004. 'African management' in South Africa Page 216 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

prescribed norm in Africa, or elsewhere. This is quite similar to Boele van Hensbroek's concept of 'non-culturalist poly-centrism', a decentred world without the pressure of dominant identity discourses (Boele van Hensbroek 2000: 85). Eventually, the 'Europe-centred perspective' would thus become non-hegemonic, one among various other outlooks.

I empathically disagree with those perspectives of the Europe-centered paradigm that claim universalism without a global foundation. I certainly oppose the hegemonic, totalising perspective of the Europe-centered paradigm. [...] The Africa-centered scholarship that I am proud to participate in does not seek to substitute itself in the place of a hegemonic perspective of Europe-centered knowledge nor does it seek to claim African 'superiority' over other peoples of the world (Keto 2001: xiv).

Supposedly, an Africa-centred perspective contributes to a holistic and a more comprehensive understanding of world history than in a one-sided hegemonic Europe-centred interpretation. Inducing African experiences into 'generally accepted history' as conceived to date, would add to the understanding and interpretation of global events as a whole (Keto 2001: 18-19). False foundations of a 'Europe-centred scholarship' should be systematically exposed and new theoretical models and techniques be introduced in order to prevent further tendencies of 'intellectual confusion'. Keto is doubtful about the question, whether an 'Africa-centred paradigm' presupposes a distinctive African epistemology. Mudimbe's analysis in *The invention of Africa* (1988) and in particular Mudimbe's observation that even Afrocentric descriptions depend on a 'western epistemological order' are convincing to him, although Mudimbe would lack 'centredness' (Keto 2001: 16).³⁴⁷ from an Afrocentric viewpoint, the rejection of the (Cartesian) concept of 'objectivity' in the production of knowledge appears to be particularly crucial (Keto 2001: 17).³⁴⁸

In Keto's work, there is no particular emphasis on the *Otherness* of Africa: Africa is not 'unique' or 'exceptional' in his view. His analysis rather suggests an open-minded attitude, acknowledging historical interactions between 'regions of divergence' with out-migration and 'regions of convergence' that act as 'social magnets' building new syntheses of cultures (Keto 2001: 28-29). His interpretations highlight inclusivist notions, and he disapproves of an attitude of (black) superiority that he equals with an 'anti-person' attitude.

An Africa-centered perspective should not be confused with an apologia, or a chauvinist posture tied to an exclusionist principle that encourages analytical dichotomy of studying 'them' versus studying 'us'. Properly applied, the Africa-centered perspective liberates all minds and sets an important foundation for a global perspective that does not peripheralise the peoples of Africa, of Europe, of Asia, of the Americas, or of the Pacific (Keto 2001: 19).

Apparently, the value of 'humanity of all people' is essential, as well as honouring human

³⁴⁷ Keto refers to chapter V *The Patience of Philosophy* in Mudimbe (1988), pp. 135-186.

³⁴⁸ Note the remark in section 2.1 *Reflexivity in retrospect* in Chapter 2 about methodological issues, that a qualitative, hermeneutic approach was considered a type of academic tradition that would suit Afrocentric scholars, who are very critical of a 'positivist research approach'.

diversity: “Celebration of social diversity is not a license to pursue ‘anti-person’ doctrines and dogmas. [...] To place value in one’s ethnic identity is not the same as devaluing the ethnic identities of those who are different” (Keto 2001: 90).

A future vision based on an Africa-centred perspective should recognise the idea that Africans are viewing the ‘present of a colonised past’. This has a particular meaning for the education of the younger generation. They should “learn the history of other peoples using the perspectives of other people” and become “informed citizens of culturally plural societies” (Keto 2001: 125).

The way the past is represented through the humanities and the social sciences to the youth today all over the world will influence the attitudes of the world’s future leaders towards humanity in general and people around them in particular (Keto 2001: 122).

Altogether, Keto is optimistic about the future of Africa. He puts the ambitious project of a ‘cultural rebirth’ in the perspective of a long-term historical development starting with Africa-centred histories, written in ancient Africa already 5,000 years ago. This has implications for Africa’s future leaders, in his view. Keto concludes this issue wisely with a question mark:

Can the problems of the African world posed by social disorganization, poverty, disease, self-peripheralizing and short-sighted leadership be solved through an African Renewal to face the emergence of an impatient future generation of Africans? (Keto 2001: 126)

Keto’s work reveals the aim to reverse the negative image of Africa and a denunciation of African postcolonial leaders in both academia and the media. Africans have to change a universally perceived Afro-pessimism in current writing on postcolonial Africa and make a case for Afro-optimism. In other words, Africans have ‘to re-invent themselves’ (Onwudiwe 2003: 16). This slogan seems a response to Valentim Mudimbe’s analysis of ‘the invention of Africa’ (Mudimbe 1988). Apparently, Mudimbe’s analysis has upset Afrocentrists, among whom Keto and Onwudiwe, particularly because of his observation that “the scholarly perspective through which Africans and Africanists consider Africa’s identity lies in the academic discourses originating from both western missionary and anthropological myths about Africa” (Mudimbe quoted in Onwudiwe 2003: 4).

Common features and differences

The writings of Asante and Keto, two prominent representatives of contemporary Afrocentrism, have much in common. Both agree on the centrality of ‘humanity’ and on the idea of Africa as starting point of human civilisation. To take Africa as the centre of knowledge about Africans may disclose ‘Eurocentric biases’ in conventional historiography. Therefore, a re-evaluation of Africa’s history in terms of ‘Africa-centred knowledge’, reintegrating Africa’s history in world history would result in a more complete picture. Afrocentrism, or ‘Afrocentricity’ in Asante’s words, takes

a difficult personal choice. It implies a commitment to a very ambitious mission namely towards 'human regeneration', and to make the world a better place. Black people would have lost their sense of identity somewhere. A literal or figurative 'return to Africa' promises the prospect of redemption and cleansing. African historical experiences have been largely ignored and therefore an 'Africa-centred paradigm' serves to restore collective memory, as a basis for working out useful future prospects and educating future leaders. Altogether, Afrocentric scholars are optimistic about the future for Africa and Africans.

Asante and Keto seem to differ particularly on the political implications of Afrocentrism. Asante goes further in this than Keto. Although Asante's statements are at times rather ambiguous, he ascribes a certain moral status to being black, which seems contradictory with a simultaneous claim that Afrocentrism will dismantle the notion of 'race'. Being primarily preoccupied with Africa and taking Africa as the centre of history and knowledge, it seems that the notion of *Africa as a unity* is assumed, and the *uniqueness* of Africa as well. By contrast, Keto is more careful, emphasising inclusivist notions of Afrocentrism, de-emphasising Africa's exceptional status, Africa's Otherness. Furthermore, Keto may have a less radical political stance than Asante or Mazrui, for instance. Ali Mazrui demands reparations of the economic, psychological, and emotional damages inflicted upon the African people because of slavery in the past (Mazrui 2000). This exercise makes clear that within Afrocentrism there are significant variations and differences in emphasis.

Afrocentrism in leadership & management

Leading Afrocentric scholars, e.g. Asante and Keto, have not specifically addressed issues of leadership and management in organisations, although they talk about attitudes and values for human behaviour that are assumingly also applicable in organisational contexts. Rather, they refer the idea of an African Renaissance with possible implications for leadership. Apart from 'African management' discourse in South Africa, management literature and organisational theory explicitly linked to and derived from Afrocentric perspectives (and advertised as such) seems scarce. The Afro-American scholar Jerome H. Schiele has tried to conceptualise an Afrocentric organisational model. The goal of an organisation should reflect the purpose and the needs of the community (Schiele 1990: 150). The organisation emphasises group unity and a reduction of internal differentiation in favour of consensual group processes and decision-making. From this follows a more equitable distribution of power and consequently a dislike of strict hierarchical power structures. The latter would be possible because of the capacity for human beings for self-mastery, self-direction, and self-regulation. Based on the Afrocentric notion of the 'inherent goodness of man', rigid supervision and control become less important. With these principal points in mind, *'African management' in South Africa* Page 219 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

'organisational normality' as is known in conventional organisational theory, is seriously put upside down.

Organizational normality, therefore would not be defined by the quality or efficiency of production, as in Western theories of organizations, but rather by the way an organization preserves itself – whether the behaviours employed by its members maintain the survival of the organization (Schiele 1990: 150).

Afrocentric values such as spirituality, affective qualities, feelings, and symbolic imagery do not rule out rationality, but do usually not fit in the conventional idea of rationality in bureaucracies. Not profit maximisation, efficiency, and increased productivity are the organisation's primary goals, but survival of the organisation, interpersonal relationships, the well being of employees and surrounding communities become ends in itself. A holistic, humanistic orientation and the capacity to personalise (helping) relationships would make the Afrocentric model particularly suitable for social work practice, especially in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies (Schiele 2003: 197). Such a paradigm would namely do more *justice to a plurality of values*, as Afrocentrists believe that there can be social unity among people without striving for cultural conformity. Hence, cultural differences should not be minimised even if they spoke to a cultural and ethnic group's ethos (Schiele 2003: 187).

While Schiele's model envisages implementation particularly in North American contexts, his major point concerns the contestation of 'the standard of acceptability of organisations', defying the principle of rationality (Schiele 1990: 147-151). It seems an alternative way of putting the issue of 'alienation' on the managerial agenda. This was also identified as a feature of 'African management' discourse in South Africa (in Chapter 5 referred to as 'eccentric' organisational principles (section 5.1 *Themes*); 'alienation' was also mentioned when Albert Koopman's views on management were discussed, in section 6.2 *Transition and the role of business* in Chapter 6). Schiele's model – similar to Koopman's notion of Transcultural Management in South Africa – encourages organisation members to defy conventional ideas of what is considered 'normal' and 'acceptable', especially when people don't feel comfortable in organisations that are characterised by rationality, efficiency, formality, and individuality. It is almost an invitation to organisational rebellion. The fundamental question raised here is: should people be conditioned to fit organisations or should organisations be shaped according to people's needs and preferences?

Another significant feature in Schiele's model is the need to "alleviate internal organizational conflict" (Schiele 1990: 158). Such a prospect reinforces the impression that Afrocentric management discourse refrains from rigid supervision and control and instead facilitates managerial control in more subtle ways. Hence, an Afrocentric model could be perceived as a handy instrument to promote internal consensus and reduce organisational conflict. Thus, management would be able

to identify potential problem areas in an early stage.

From this concise examination of Afrocentrism and particular Afrocentric viewpoints on several issues, next the *Black Athena* debate is discussed. Supposedly, this is a case in point, illustrating several salient aspects of Afrocentric discourse and showing both some of its flaws and its potential contribution towards challenging ‘accepted wisdom’ and underlying (‘Eurocentric’) assumptions in the construction of knowledge and truth-making.

8.2 The Black Athena debate

The *Black Athena* debate convincingly demonstrates the highly ideological character of Afrocentrism and the explosive politicised effects it can have, with special attention to underlying assumptions and ‘accepted wisdom’ in humanities, social science, and consequently in management thinking. This very debate is an extraordinary analogy of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa, in the sense of provoking supporters of dominant discourse and conventional knowledge, with sweeping claims, not always underpinned by comprehensive, solid ‘empirical evidence’, but nevertheless standing a good chance of eventually leading to new insights and – to some extent – perhaps also turning points in established worldviews.

Accusations of amateurism, pseudo history, hustling with facts, identity politics, and even racism typify this hot-blooded, academic debate. In essence, Afrocentrists openly question the ‘authenticity’ of ancient Greek culture while hinting at the ‘Blackness’ of some of the icons of ancient civilisation, such as Socrates, Hannibal and Cleopatra. In brief, the assumed non-European origins of European philosophical tradition are highlighted (Van Binsbergen 2000: 5). An important implication could be that European and thus ‘western civilisation’ results from age-old African civilisations.

A central figure in Afrocentric thought is Cheikh Anta Diop, who claims among other things that ancient Egypt would have been at the heart of Greek civilisation, and thus the latter had ultimately its origins in Africa (Diop 1991). In this view, several Egyptian elites must have had an African heritage. This powerful narrative in Afrocentric discourse has been criticised for not carrying much historical evidence. Some judge it as ‘purely ideological’. Nonetheless, Molefe Ketji Asante is of the opinion that “Diop’s achievement was to free people of African descent from their dependence on Eurocentric frames of reference” (cited in Lefkowitz 1997: 158-159). With George G.M. James, author of the book *Stolen Legacy* (1954), Diop trusts that most Greek philosophers and students used to read Egyptian philosophy and science theory. They must have spent regular study visits in Egypt. Consequently, their ideas were heavily influenced. Some academic experts refuted this claim radically, for example the American classicist Mary R. Lefkowitz.

Does ancient Greek civilisation have African origins?

Arguably, Afroasiatic cultural influences on Greek civilisation have been deliberately denied in European history and science since the 1820s, as Martin Bernal argues. He plays a crucial role in the debate that came to be known as the *Black Athena* debate, following his publications on this particular issue (Bernal 1987; 1991; 2006). In his books, Bernal has sought to make a reconstruction of the ancient history of the eastern Mediterranean world. This received, however, a lot of criticism, and with David Chioni Moore as editor Bernal published in 2001, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal responds to his critics*, in which he defended his hypotheses with new arguments and additional evidence (Bernal 2001).

One of his critics is Mary Lefkowitz, who argues strongly against the ‘hustling’ with Afrocentric views on the origins of Greek civilisation. She claims that both Diop’s and Bernal’s views are more based on myth than history, and that there is virtually no evidence to assume, for instance, that there would have ever been ‘invasions’ of Greece from Africa in prehistoric times (Lefkowitz 1997: 25-26). Some qualify her assertions as ‘Eurocentric’ and even as ‘driven by racist motives’ (Lefkowitz 1997: xii). This shows the highly politicised nature of the debate.

They assert that the real purpose of my book is to attack and disparage the work of scholars of African descent and to downplay the achievements of African civilizations, such as that of ancient Egypt. [...] Several critics have also sought to show, mainly by assertion, that I have an overt ideological or political agenda. [...] I observed that I have been called the leader of a Jewish ‘onslaught’ against people of African descent. [...] Several critics have also deduced that I am part of a ‘paranoid’ right-wing white supremacist conspiracy (Lefkowitz 1997: 180-182).

Lefkowitz rejects the claim that ‘Greek civilisation was stolen from Africa’.³⁴⁹ She comments that, if one considers history as ‘a form of fiction’ it becomes ‘pseudo history’. Then, somehow ‘all versions’ will simultaneously be true, because validity becomes dependent on a moral agenda:

It confers a new and higher status on an ethnic group whose history has largely remained obscure (Lefkowitz 1997: xiv).

Subsequently, Lefkowitz denies the probability of a ‘black Socrates’, of Socrates’ possible African ancestry, as suggested by Martin Bernal, and of a ‘black Hannibal’ from Carthage in ancient North Africa. In her view, Carthaginians were colonists of Phoenician origin and therefore not African (Lefkowitz 1997: 31). In this debate, the notion of a ‘black Cleopatra’ has almost become ‘an article of faith’. However, she is not denying the possibility – to say ‘probability’ would need evidence that is more substantial – and possible importance of connections and cultural influences from other African civilisations. Identity politics of the concerned writers becomes a factor in determining Cleopatra’s ethnicity, as it were (Lefkowitz 1997: 43-45). It thus develops into

349 Supposedly, this (non)event would have taken place in the late fourth century B.C.E.; page 6 in Lefkowitz (1997).
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 222 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

an ideological matter, turning history into *cultural* history, a matter of mere symbolism, encouraged in a context of criticising traditional history methodology.

... history is always composed in conformity to the values of the society in which it is produced, and for that reason can be regarded as a cultural projection of the values of that society. [...] The debate has moved away from facts or evidence, to perceived motivations (Lefkowitz 1997: 48-49).

Lefkowitz considers it highly dangerous to 'turn myth into history'. Consequently, 'Afrocentrists make Africa the source of the culture that they blame for their own troubles'. Furthermore, Afrocentrists appear to be 'judging African cultures by European standards', because they concentrate on Egypt while paying much less attention to other ancient African civilisations, for example as Nubia (Lefkowitz 1997: 156).

Illusive quest for 'origins'

Before the 1830s, there was less of a problem to say that the ancient Egyptians were black, or African. After 1830 with the rise of European imperialism and slavery "ancient Egypt ceased to be seen as part of Africa, and pharaonic civilization ceased to be an aspect of Africa's development and initiative" (Davidson 1994: 319-321). Consequently, the notion became stronger that:

...Africans had no history because Africans were insufficiently human... They might seem to copy but could not invent, and even their copying was a masquerade (Davidson 1994: 320).

Such a view marks the rise of a 'new racism' since the 1830s, in which it is denied that Africans would have histories of their own and that Africans possess a common humanity with other peoples elsewhere. Basil Davidson, who by the way claims to have been a friend and colleague of Cheikh Anta Diop, connects this 'specifically and even frantically an anti-black racism' with the need to justify the enslavement of Africans.

Detailed scholarly work on the subject characterises afore-mentioned Afrocentric claims as 'mythical paths' (Howe 1998). Basically, the question amounts to the problem how 'truth' is constituted in history and social science in general. There are possibly mythical dimensions to mainstream historiography, and therefore these need to be explored as well. On the one hand, this could imply exposing mythical aspects of mainstream historiography and on the other hand exploring what myths in Afrocentric accounts could tell us. Doing so, Afrocentrism is forced into open debate, despite its deficiencies and 'poor scholarship', instead of dismissing Afrocentric views as 'mythical' and a case of 'false consciousness' and thus isolating it.

Such dismissal [i.e. stating that the truth value of Afrocentrism is zero] risks to be a confirmation of the status quo, a continuation of the processes of exclusion to which black people, inside and outside Africa, have been subjected for centuries (Van Binsbergen 2000: 2).

The big challenge is to do justice to both 'empiricist' historians and to 'amateurish'

Afrocentrists by tackling the extremely difficult issues of ‘what constitutes truth’ and the methodological question of mythical dimensions in historiography. Van Binsbergen claims for instance, “the evidence on parallels between Ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa is massive, though uneven,” which leads to the following statement:

...a probable African background of modern humans [...] provides Afrocentrism with a ‘prima facie’ case too good to be ignored or dismissed off hand (Van Binsbergen 2000: 3).

Among African scholars, the argument of cultural diversity (i.e. Africa perceived in terms of absolutely distinct ‘cultures’ and the notion of ‘extreme pre-colonial multiplicity and fragmentation’) has met with much more acceptance than the argument of convergence. The latter argument concerns the image of Africa in terms of

...a very remarkable cultural unity, not for any mystique of Africanity, but as a result of clearly detectable historical processes: as first a principle source and subsequently as a principle recipient of Ancient Egyptian civilization, and finally as a result of converging Arabian/Islamic as well as – in the most recent centuries – North Atlantic colonial influences (Van Binsbergen 2000: 5).³⁵⁰

Because of this debate, the view that civilisation of Ancient Egypt came into existence thanks to cultural interactions between black African and eastern Mediterranean societies, is gaining more credibility if one is able and willing to ‘think across cultural and geopolitical boundaries’. Eventually, the hegemonic Eurocentric paradigm may turn out to be mythical as well, at least to some extent. It is likely that from the very beginnings of human history, Africa has always been part of a larger global world “both giving to the wider world, and taking form it” (Van Binsbergen 2000 5). This puts the assumed uniqueness of Africa and the image of *Otherness* in quite a different light and calls forth a perspective of universalism, suggesting continuities in space and time over large distances and across thousands of years, in contrast to an Eurocentric (or Egyptocentric) perspective. From the rather narrow question whether Socrates, Hannibal and Cleopatra were black or white, surfaces a more interesting exploration into broader questions of global cultural interactions and transcontinental exchanges in human culture since ancient times. Moreover, even if it is true that ‘Egypt has civilised Greece’, the Greeks have added their own creativity, thus producing their own specifics. It is problematic to establish to what extent ancient Egypt can count as an integral part of ‘black’ sub-Saharan Africa. What precisely has the interior of Africa contributed to Egypt, and subsequently to European civilisation? However, “from the bird’s eye perspective of the several millions of years of human cultural history, ancient Athens and village Africa far from belong to totally different worlds” (Van Binsbergen 2002: 242, footnote 12).

A crucial observation resulting from the *Black Athena* debate is that replacement of a

³⁵⁰ With regard to management and organisation, David Weir (2006) has pointed at particular parallels between Afrocentric management philosophy and the values of ‘Arab management’.

Eurocentric perspective with an opposite (equally ideologically biased) point of view cannot quite be substantiated. Therefore, this does not make much sense. Supposedly, there is a need for ‘new modes of thinking about cultural dynamics and interdependence’ (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 220). Probably, the following citation from Wim van Binsbergen is applicable beyond the *Black Athena* debate and to ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa as well.

...what we lose in the process is an, ideologically attractive, blanket concept of mystical ‘Africanness’ - focus of so much positive and negative bias. What we hope to gain is a more realistic view of the continental and intercontinental connections of the varieties of cultural achievements, borrowings and transformations [...] (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 221).

After all, how much does the question about origins matter? “Origins are almost by definition too humble than that they are clearly perceptible to empirical research” (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 36). Additionally, “quests for origins are particularly cherished in the context of the identity formation of social groups, classes, racial groups, ethnic groups, nations” (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 37).

Critique of ideology

The *Black Athena* debate clearly shows that both Afrocentric critics and their ‘Eurocentric’ opponents are fighting an ideological battle and that the ‘quest for origins’ is rather illusive. Ideology and identity are crucial aspects of Afrocentrism as well as of a ‘Eurocentric’ worldview, while these elements are usually not associated with dominant discourse and conventional wisdom. In the case of Martin Bernal’s efforts to ‘prove’ the Afroasiatic roots of classical civilisation, identity is involved as well. His sympathy with Afrocentric perspectives and aspirations is not too surprising after all, because his mission had a very personal, ideological reason. Allegedly, he was driven by a sense of guilt and embarrassment over the possession of a tea plantation in Malawi, from which his mother’s family gained their wealth (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 42). Some critics actually doubt whether Bernal sincerely wants to understand ancient Greek civilisation, mainly due to his assumed political idealism. Nevertheless, Bernal’s contribution lies as well in drawing attention to the ideological context of knowledge production, also in mainstream (‘Eurocentric’) historiography. In this perspective, the *Black Athena* project is largely a critique of ideology. It is doubtful whether it is at all possible to produce entirely non-mythical academic knowledge.

The (preliminary?) conclusions of the *Black Athena* debate are such, that there is sufficient ground to assume that Afroasiatic cultural influences nourished ancient Egyptian cultural developments. Vice-versa these fed back into ancient African civilisations.³⁵¹ As a consequence, the

³⁵¹ In fact, it is preferred to speak of ‘Afroasiatic’ influences instead of ‘(purely) African’, referring to the speakers of Afroasiatic languages. Afroasiatic languages comprised Semitic (e.g. Phoenician, Ugaritic, Hebrew, Akkadian, ‘African management’ in South Africa Page 225 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

notion of Africa as a continental unit seems indeed problematic. This is more so, when one considers the Eastern Mediterranean as the key geographical scene of cultural interactions for several millennia after 3000 B.C.E.³⁵² In the course of approximately two thousands years, Africa has become the name for the entire continent, whereas initially it was used to indicate the North African region only (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 221). North East Africa, as part of this larger region, consists furthermore of Asian and European areas, and Egypt – though of distinguished importance in antiquity – should not be taken for Africa as a whole.

With regard to the origins of Greek civilisation in antiquity, a complex ‘multicentered pattern of intercontinental interaction’ should be assumed, according to Bernal, rather than an entirely autonomous, independent and essentially authentic development. These influences concerned cultural processes of ‘modified diffusion’ and creative localisation, other than mechanical ‘wholesale’ adoption (Van Binsbergen 1997a: 31). Eventually, the origins of any cultural ‘product’ can hardly be recognised; it has been transformed and modified and thus becomes localised – be it Greek or African – with features that people tend to identify as ‘authentic’, ‘unique’, and something of their own creation.

The foregoing debate makes a few points clear, apart from the issue of the connection between ancient Greek and ancient Egyptian, Afroasiatic civilisations. Through Afrocentric critique, the taboo of mythology in (‘western’ or Eurocentric) historiography has suddenly appeared on the academic agenda. Secondly, the *Black Athena* debate not only throws light on the idea of ‘Ancient Greece’ and on the concept of ‘Africa’ but also demands critical evaluation of the ‘culture’ concept in a broader sense: the perspective of global cultural interactions and processes of cultural diffusion, highlighting the principle of universalism. Thus, the unitary idea of Africa is questioned and notions with regard to authenticity and Otherness of Africa. Ironically, this may be an outcome of the debate that Afrocentrists had not foreseen. Perhaps they had not wished for such an outcome. Analogous to the *Black Athena* debate, it is unlikely that an Afrocentric perspective will ever entirely replace a Eurocentric perspective in the domain of management and organisation. As stated in the previous section, “Africa-centered scholarship [...] does not seek to substitute itself in the place of a hegemonic perspective of Europe-centered knowledge nor does it seek to claim African ‘superiority’” (Keto 2001: xiv). At a discursive level, Afrocentrists celebrate social diversity (Keto 2001) and aim to ‘do more justice to a plurality of values’, also in terms of management and leadership (Schiele 2003). Similarly, however, with a profoundly high-energised campaign it has

Aramaic, and South Arabian and Ethiopic languages), and non-Semitic languages (ancient Egyptian, Chadic, Beja, Berber, and Cushitic), as noted in footnote 17 on page 17 in Van Binsbergen (1997a).

³⁵² The Eastern Mediterranean area stretched from Macedonia in Greece in the North West, to Libya and Egypt in the South, Phoenicia in the Near East to Asia Minor and the Black Sea in the North East.

the potential of challenging and influencing dominant perspectives on leadership and management in (South) Africa as well as elsewhere, and changes accepted perceptions of organisational normality.

Concluding remarks: 'Africanness' as Otherness?

By way of concluding remarks to this chapter on Afrocentrism, a number of opinions will be evaluated to show why Africans may find it problematic to identify with 'Africanness' in an Afrocentric tradition. To some, for instance, 'Africanness' implies a "'victimhood' mentality of the African," as a means to express contempt for Africanist intellectual discourse (Shivji 2003: 9). Consequently, terms such as 'Africanist' and 'Afrocentric' become blurred, if one fails to identify underlying premises. In this context, the concept of retraditionalisation is also discussed. To some, it may mean 'cultural regression', while others interpret retraditionalisation as a form of 'cultural decolonisation' or in terms of 'weapons for radical criticism'.

Imagined identities?

African identity is nothing but 'a product of imagination', says Valentim Mudimbe, a philosopher who originates from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He does simply not believe in 'identity', as he states in an interview.³⁵³ A living person is like 'a project', he explains. One can choose to become what one wants, continuously change one's orientation, and start anew. Anything is possible. Mudimbe has been accused of placing himself 'outside his own historical experiences' and 'distancing himself from the African cultural self' (Archie *date unknown*). Mudimbe thinks that identity – either as a woman, an African, or as a European – cannot be reduced to just one element. He analyses the idea of Africa as a product of the imagination of 'the west', the outcome of a whole range of reports, stories, and interpretations that Mudimbe calls the 'colonial library'. Put simply, Africa is 'invented' in the narratives of travellers and pioneers, who 'discovered' Africa, in anthropology, philosophy, arts, by missionaries, colonial administrators, *and* in African reactions to that. The African became 'the Other', anything that supposedly 'the westerner' *was not*, and thus the key with regard to identity of the civilised ('western') self. With the invention of Africa, 'the west' could define itself by mirroring Europe with Africa, suggesting total difference, a clear-cut dichotomy. Imagery of primitivism and 'the Savage' served to create an identity of the European as a 'thinking subject' in contrast with the African 'Other'.³⁵⁴ These ideas are about ethnophilosophy: Tempels' 'Bantu philosophy' lies at the basis of this category.

³⁵³ Interview with Valentim Mudimbe in *Filosofie Magazine*, September 2002, pp. 36-39.

³⁵⁴ Interview with Valentim Mudimbe in *Filosofie Magazine*, September 2002, pp. 36-39.

‘Bantu philosophy’

The Belgian Franciscan missionary Tempels made a paramount contribution to the establishment of the overall colonial view of Africans as ‘primitive people’ that should be rightfully ‘civilised’ with his publication *Bantu Philosophy* (1946).³⁵⁵ They were believed to have an implicit ‘unconscious’ philosophy that was supposed to be authentic, but could only be articulated with the help of analytical instruments of ‘western philosophy’. African wisdom, allegedly caught in Bantu philosophy, could supposedly be ‘read’ from narratives and myths in local languages that were translated into European languages, so they could be subjected to systematic philosophical analysis. Bantu philosophy reflected to a large extent 19th century colonial views on Africans, later on more and more with *a touch of sympathy* with the Bantus.

The influence of Bantu philosophy on conceptualising Africa and ‘Africanness’ has been quite substantial, also among African scholars after Tempels. Being mindful of this, many authors, such as Mudimbe, refuse to define their ‘Africanness’ against this background: ‘Their argument, in its demonstration, runs parallel to primitivist theories on African backwardness and savagery’ (Mudimbe 1988: 151). Claims of African tradition can be used to supply ‘signs and meanings of African authenticity’. On the other hand, traditional ‘authentic African elements’ may also be used as ‘weapons for a radical criticism’ by means of strategic essentialism (Mudimbe 1988: 153). In such instances, a claim to ‘original alterity’ occurs, a state or quality of being other, being different.

Cultural decolonisation through retraditionalisation

With ‘authentic’ ideas of Africa at hand, rooted in an image of Otherness, Africanists take up their ‘weapons for radical criticism’ in the 1950s and 1960s against western notions of modernity. A move towards ‘cultural decolonisation’ emerges, as the Kenyan Afrocentric scholar and publicist Ali Mazrui describes it, evoking a renewed respect for indigenous ways and the conquest of cultural self-contempt, captured in the term ‘retraditionalisation’ (Mudimbe 1988: 169). This African critical trend was often phrased in terms of a “cultural renaissance of African nations, new scientific vocation, and developmental applications, almost grudgingly accepting the fact that non-Africans might offer contributions to this struggle for power and truth” (Mudimbe 1988: 168-169). Terms such as ‘cultural renaissance’ and ‘retraditionalisation’ are easily associated with a romantic desire for a return to the past – likewise with criticisms on ‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa – but to equate it with backward civilisation and regression would be a gross simplification. “The paradigm of renaissance accounts for theories that essentially affirm *the positivity of being*

³⁵⁵ This book was written by Placied Tempels (1946) and originally published in Belgium in Dutch and in 1949 in French (Elisabethville: Lovania). Only in 1959 it was translated into English (Paris: Présence Africaine).

oneself" (Mudimbe 1988: 169) [emphasis added]. African theorists and ideologues started making critical analyses establishing themselves as their own subjects of their destiny, while increasingly aware of the limits of Africanism based on 'myths'. Projects of 'cultural renaissance' and 'retraditionalisation' could further shatter the master plan for modernist development of Africa. After all, modernity has failed in Africa, as some observers have stated. To make things worse, the bloody conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990s have further upset western notions of modernity: "It makes us wonder about the potential barbarity present in all of us" (Chabal 1996: 36). Obstinate insistence on 'civilisation' and 'progress' relate to the belief in development as a linear process, in which 'retraditionalisation' would logically have no place. Supposedly, the notion of 'progress', seen as a linear developmental process, is about identity more than anything else (Chabal 1996: 32). Equally, notions of 'cultural renaissance' and 'retraditionalisation' are very much about identity.

Mudimbe is very critical of fixed ethnophilosophical ideas concerning the assumed alterity and authenticity of Africa. He is very outspoken about the ideological character of Africanist thought that he considers equally ideological as the colonial anthropologists' perceptions of Africa and Africans (Mudimbe 1988: 164-5). Nevertheless, a new intellectual élan began to surface in Africa since the 1950s and 1960s, with emphasis on establishing self-confidence and pride, based on notions of Otherness born out of Tempels' ideas on Bantu philosophy. This trend of being critical with regard to 'western' notions of modernity could develop in an era when new ideologies were emerging – neo-Marxism, existentialism, and Négritude – and when social sciences and humanities went through fundamental crises on the significance of subjectivity versus objectivity, history and reason, essence, and existence. Several politically engaged ('western') scholars and activists committed themselves to liberation struggles in Africa; doing their bit through academic work, amongst other things by teaching Africans 'to read their Otherness'.

This chapter throws light on some of the origins and main tenets of more dogmatic and essentialist versions of defining 'being African', largely influenced by colonial discourse on Africa and based on the notion of 'race'. However, the way Africans perceive and experiences their 'Africanness' started to change since the 1950s and 1960s. The following chapter will first examine ethnic identity discourse, culturalist nationalist ideologies, and the concept of 'ethnicisation', and subsequently examine more fluid and open-ended ways of identifying and defining 'Africanness'. It is argued, that 'African management' discourse in South Africa is part of this transcending process of repositioning 'Africanness'.

Chapter 9: 'Africanness' as open-ended

Introduction

This chapter shows alternative ways of defining and experiencing 'African identity' that are not based on 'race': several perspectives on social identification, ethnicity in African contexts, and experiences of belonging and 'being African' that are not necessarily linked with (dogmatic versions of) Afrocentric thinking. Assumingly, it is useful exploring different dimensions of 'Africanness' in a general sense, when assessing more specifically 'African management' discourse in South Africa.

As we have seen in chapters 3, 4 and 5, 'African management' discourse provokes debate and criticism, in the business community, in the media, and in academic circles. This often occurs – to some extent purposefully – in confrontational ways, while frequently calling upon key tenets of Afrocentrism. Therefore, it is important to explore some of the general characteristics of Afrocentrism, as was done in Chapter 8. This is, however, not a necessarily unchangeable outlook: eventually less static, more flexible, more open and processual ways of looking at identification and ideas around 'African identity' in South Africa may emerge. As argued in this thesis, 'African management' discourse in South Africa could be positioned somewhere in between uni-dimensional essentialist orientations and processual and open-ended views on 'Africanness'. It is also noted, that it is actually quite impossible to fit 'African management' discourse in one specific category or phase; rather, one should speak in terms of an assortment of discursive formations within the broader context of 'African management' thought.

This analysis starts with reviewing critiques on orthodox tenets of Afrocentrism, placing these in the perspective of social identity theory, and in the perspective of historical political developments (Pan Africanism and nationalist ideologies after Independence). Subsequently, the strategic use of ethnicity is discussed and the notion of ethnicisation, leading to an argument about ethnicisation and 'the tribal illusion'.

Two remarks are important in this regard. Firstly, critical perspectives on ethnicity and culturalist nationalist discourse in Africa at the continental and national level cannot be automatically applied to the domain of management and organisation. It is therefore not quite appropriate interpreting 'African management' discourse in South Africa *a priori* in similar terms.

Secondly, notwithstanding the illusory, 'invented' and 'fabricated' nature of this notion, ethnicity left its traces on people's identity make-up, as argued in the section on 'race', ethnicity,

and class in South Africa.³⁵⁶ After 1994, there seems to be a resurgence of ethnicity in South Africa and increased popular support for traditional leadership. As will be explained, this popularity is, however, not unconditional.

A crucial question in this debate is whether identity, and identification, is entirely a matter of free choice, like Valentim Mudimbe and Amartya Sen argue (Mudimbe 1988; Sen 2006). Or, are there certain constraints in this regard that cannot be ignored?

Subsequently, in 9.2 *Identity in-the-making*, a more dynamic notion of ‘Africanness’ *as performed* is examined, representing a more *inclusive view*, as opposed to stereotypical images of Africans. In this respect, it is argued that Africans are becoming increasingly part of the battle to control the discourse on African identity, about *themselves*.

Noting the complexities in analysing identity-related issues, in 9.3 *Multiple identities* the question is raised whether identification – and ethnicity – is a matter of free choice or not. While it is asserted that for instance African identity is ‘not a birthmark’, there are serious constraints in taking on a ‘new identity’. Moreover, a variety of identifications may coexist concurrently, and additionally, these multiple identifications are not unalterable but dynamic. In this context, the notion of *fragmented* multiple identities in African contexts is discussed as well. These theoretical considerations highlight complexities in analysing identity-related issues, which are possibly augmented in the context of postmodern and postcolonial theory. What does postmodernism and postcolonialism have to contribute to understanding ethnicity and contemporary Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa? Alternatively, does it merely lead to ‘conceptual vagueness’, as for example the Afrocentric scholar Paul Tiyambe Zeleza argues? In this thesis, it is argued that postcolonial theory offers relevant insights, in particular if one views postcoloniality in terms of continuities from colonialism, as will be elaborated in Chapter 10.

This chapter concludes with a schematic overview with seven dimensions in relation to identification and African identity, to be used as a tool for interpreting Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa.

9.1 ‘Race’ and ethnic identity discourse

Talking about ‘race’ and ethnicity refers to processes of identity formation, in this regard in African contexts in times of globalisation. Relevant issues to be examined are the strategic use of ethnicity, post-independence nationalist identity discourse, the assumed ‘uniqueness’ of Africa, racist foundations in more dogmatic versions of Pan Africanist discourse and related moral notions.

³⁵⁶ The section ‘Race’, ethnicity, and class in South Africa can be read as an elaboration of Chapter 6 of this thesis, particularly of section 6.1 *A long history of coercive labour*.

Furthermore, ethnic identity discourse in South Africa is discussed, such as notions of ethnicity and traditional values in the past and in contemporary use, as well as the meaning of the adjective 'African', e.g. in 'African management' and in 'African science'.

Cultural identity and social identity are expressions of identity and identification that are somehow related. Cultural identity focuses on the inside of a boundary, one's individual image, or perception of the main cultural features of a social category: "the person's individual image of the cultural features that characterize his or her group(s) ... and of the reflection (or lack of reflection) of these features in his or her self-representation" (Ferdman 1995: 38). It is like an individual's road map of how the social category guides her or his behaviour, together with his or her own feelings and reactions to that. In order to understand human interactions, intergroup perspectives offer a useful analytical framework. This involves "individuals perceiving themselves as a member of a social category or being perceived by others as belonging to a social category" (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 339). Henry Tajfel and John Turner's *Social Identity Theory* refers to the image that the individual has of the boundary around a particular category, the demarcation between in-group and out-group, between 'we' and 'they' and the associated effect (in Ferdman 1995: 51-52). Social identity theory entails that "individuals tend to classify themselves and others into social categories and that these classifications have a significant effect on human interactions" (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 339). However, there are also limitations to social identification, i.e. aspects of identity, which are not chosen. For example, childhood experiences and everything people learnt at a very young age are aspects of identity, which are incorporated and implicit (Eriksen 2001).

The extent, to which other people's perceptions influence one's social identity, is still under debate. What defines social identity, the identity of a category of people, depends on the results of comparisons at group level, both inside and outside a category. Individuals compare themselves with other individual members, but as a whole, comparisons are made with other contrasting categories. In this perspective, social identity is "about identifying oneself with others or in relation to others" (Ghorashi 2002: 31).

Whereas Tajfel and Turner seem to emphasise the element of self-definition, Nkomo and Cox Jr. consider the "categorical 'locations' attributed to one person by other people" as key in understanding social identities (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 339-341). In this regard, Nkomo and Cox Jr. point at the importance of 'contextual forces', which play a role in the construction of identities, such as in the case of emergent ethnicity. Ethnic identity is not something, which an individual comes up with by himself or by herself, but is induced by political and cultural contexts. Many identity groups – for instance, in organisations – represent both 'physical distinctiveness (phenotypes) and cultural distinctiveness (cultural identity)'. Members of identity groups vary in the

extent, to which they *display* both the cultural and even the physical characteristics, which are prototypical of the group (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 343; emphasis added).³⁵⁷ Research on racio-ethnicity and gender that focuses, for example, on race and gender differences in organisations, is usually highly problematic:

The type of studies done reflect an assumption that racio-ethnicity and gender are objective, essentialist properties of individuals. That is, differences in identity would reflect innate differences between racio-ethnic groups and men and women (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 344).

Leadership style and management capabilities, for instance, are often explained from race and gender differences, whereas empirical evidence of systematic differences between ‘blacks’ and ‘whites’ in leadership style is very weak. These theoretical perspectives were used in Chapter 5 in assessing the impact of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa in the domain of management and organisation.³⁵⁸

Nationalist ideologies and ‘consolation ideologies’

In a context of globalisation, discourses of identity have gradually received more attention and as such taken over some of the functions of the class concept. As far as formation of African identities is concerned, there are on the one hand, the romantic, unanimously positive ways to depict ‘the African race’, as Edward Wilmot Blyden did in the early 20th century (Blyden 1908). Otherwise, especially outside Africa, there is generally a negative judgment of anything African, “...be it physical appearance, spirituality, intelligence or sexual behaviour” (Boele van Hensbroek 2000: 79). Romanticising, nationalist perspectives on African identity have clearly been examples of the ‘assembled nature’ of collective identities, resulting from ‘banal political strategies of power’. Nationalist rhetoric, such as in the tradition of ‘African radicalism’ and ‘nativism’, is to a large part to be held responsible for the persistence of primordial notions of African identity (Mbembe 2002).

‘Africanness’ is often associated with negativity or difference. There seems to be a general tendency “to explain away what happens in Africa by way of its ‘Africanness’ and thereby explaining nothing at all” (Chabal 1996: 47). A notable commonality between utterly positive and negative images of Africa is that both perceive Africa as a unity with a unique identity. Apparently, both assume an inherent ‘relationship of difference’ with ‘the west’. A denial of the (western) claim of universalism is often implied in African identity discourse. Alternatively, ‘Africanness’ could be associated with ‘polycentrism’. A non-culturalist interpretation of ‘polycentrism’ envisages a decentred world without dominant discourses of identity (Boele van Hensbroek 2000: 85). In a culturalist perspective, everyone is supposed to belong to a particular social category, ethnic group,

³⁵⁷ The authors cited from Taylor Cox Jr. (1994).

³⁵⁸ Reference is made to Chapter 6, section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid*.

or to a specific ‘culture’, in order to become ‘authentic human beings’; cultural variations are considered to be symptomatic of ‘separate cultures’ (Boele van Hensbroek 2000: 81). Examples of culturalist identity discourse can be found in nationalist ideological philosophies aimed at nation building. Political ‘philosopher’ leaders of young African states, such as Nyerere (Tanzania), Nkrumah (Ghana), and Kaunda (Zambia), made use of nationalist identity discourses, sometimes to cover up for ‘unflattering practices of a small elite’, or to distract public attention from disappointing social developments and development failures.

Dominant African discourses are characterised by the conviction that ‘race’ is at the foundation of morality and nationality and by ‘territorialized identity and a racialised geography’, while the “Africans’ failure to control their own predatory greed and their own cruelty also led to slavery and subjugation” is largely ignored (Mbembe 2002: 257).³⁵⁹ African identity discourse has been used as a means to turn away from unfavourable aspects of Africa’s history and politics in the past.

Discourse of identity becomes a particularly useful ideology when times are getting tough, and glorification of a rich past and the defence of cultural uniqueness and authenticity vis-à-vis the big world out there, offers some consolation (Boele van Hensbroek 2000: 83).

In extreme cases, one could speak of ‘consolation ideologies’ as a healing ritual in protest to the ‘unfairness’ and ‘injustices’ of the global community, without questioning (internal) economic and political processes. In this regard, the notion of ‘the neurosis of victimization’ comes into view, fostering “a mode of thought that is at once xenophobic, racist, negative, and circular” (Mbembe 2002: 252). In other instances, when people for example perceive that their ‘existential identity’ is destroyed, ethnicisation may come to their ‘rescue’, leading to the formation of ‘contrastive identity’:

Ethnicization thus becomes a strategy in the struggle not only for political and economic power, but particularly for the *rebuilding of an eroded worldview* within new boundaries, the reconstruction of existential identity through contrastive identity [...] (Van Binsbergen 1997b: 98; emphasis added).

The term ‘contrastive identity’ may be a useful contribution to the debate on ethnicisation and Africanness. It suggests a kind of ‘emergency measure’ in processes of identity formation, a sort of last resort for those who feel that their existential identity is under threat. This represents a bottom-up perspective of the marginalised.

Identity is thus seen as a reflection of social and political processes, a product of society, rather than the building stones for it. Identity politics can be both a tool in the hands of the powerful and of political entrepreneurs, and a means of the powerless for self-assertion and self-expression (Boele van Hensbroek 2000: 83). Claims of identity are symptoms of political decisions, personal

³⁵⁹ Mbembe cites here from *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade (1730-1830)* by Joseph Miller (1988).

decisions, not something that is innate.

Processes of slavery, colonialisation, and apartheid would have caused ‘nameless suffering’ and immense alienation of the African self from itself, culminating in a ‘lifeless form of identity’. As a result, Africans would have developed a desire to know themselves “to recapture their destiny (sovereignty) and to belong to themselves in the world (autonomy)” (Mbembe 2002: 241-242). Achille Mbembe scorns the lack of self-reflexivity among supporters of what he calls ‘Afro-radicalism’ (‘the Marxist and nationalist model’), and of ‘nativism’ that promotes “the idea of a unique African identity founded on membership of the black race” (Mbembe 2002: 241).

The basic underpinnings of nineteenth century anthropology, namely the evolutionist prejudice and the belief in the idea of progress, remain intact; racialization of the (black) nation and the nationalization of the (black) race go hand in hand. Whether we look at negritude or the differing versions of Pan-Africanism, in these discourses the revolt is not against Africans’ belonging to a distinct race, but against the prejudice that assigns this race an inferior status (Mbembe 2002: 254).

Mbembe observes a contradiction between Africans trying to seek universal recognition in an attempt to move away from 19th century racist ideas depicting Africans as ‘non-humans’, while still claiming that their race, traditions, and customs are very essential aspects of the African self, while at the same time asserting Africa’s uniqueness. The utilisation of (black) ‘race’, to which inherently all Africans would belong, is quite problematic. Is this about ideological differences, or are there alternative explanations as well?

The animated responses to Mbembe’s writings highlight a growing divide between a younger generation of ‘postmodern’ scholars and Africanist intellectuals claiming loyalty to the anticolonial and nationalist struggles. [...] ...the more fervent nationalists label the ‘postmodernists’ as alienated, self-hating cosmopolitans who have lost their African roots (Robins 2004: 18-19).

Thus, disagreements between Africanist nationalist scholars and their critics – e.g. Achille Mbembe, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Valentim Mudimbe – is perhaps also a matter of generational conflict. Have ideas on ‘African identity’ changed between generations? Are younger scholars, be they based in Africa or outside Africa, more critical about Africanist ideology?

The use of the adjective ‘African’

African universities were conceptualised according to ‘the western template’. A fundamental presupposition of ‘western science’ is the existence of one intelligible universe, denying the existence of several, equally valid but mutually exclusive, forms of knowledge (Van Rinsum 2002: 29). What is then the use of the adjective ‘African’ as in ‘African science’ – or as in ‘African management’ for that matter?

The emphasis on establishing an ‘African interpretation’ of things, on creating one’s own schemata of self-mastery, of understanding oneself and the universe, of producing endogenous knowledge have led to demands for an ‘African science’, an ‘African democracy’, an ‘African language’. This urge to make

Africa unique is presented as a moral and political problem, the reconquest of the power to narrate one's own story – and therefore identity – seeming to be necessarily constitutive of any subjectivity. Ultimately, it is no longer a matter of claiming the status of alter ego for Africans in the world, but rather of asserting loudly and forcefully their alterity (Mbembe 2002: 255).

In the example of academisation in Africa, the development of science through its global hegemonic position, acquired in the late-colonial and postcolonial era, led to a marginalisation of local knowledge systems (Van Rinsum 2002: 31-32). Shortly after Independence, universities in various African countries became objects of 'Africanisation': "The quest for African identity dominated the thinking about and within African universities" (Van Rinsum 2002: 35). The oppositional Négritude movement for instance, as an expression of 'nativism', tried "to mirror the western discourse and pattern of norms and values with the essentialist counter-image of 'being African.'" An African 'essence' as an inversion of a dominant western norm, was added. The notion of 'African personality' – associated with the primacy of emotion, intuition, and participation inherent in 'the African' – was articulated in terms of western discourse and was ultimately intended for a western audience (Van Rinsum 2002: 36). Simultaneously, development of academia in Africa contributed to an increased awareness of a sense of alienation that deprived Africans of their identity, their rituals, and beliefs. Nevertheless, African critics tended to perceive universities, churches, and schools as 'agencies of intrusion'. They had all been established by the colonial governments of Africa. This alluded to some kind of conspiracy on the part of 'the west' to predominate the global field of academia (Van Rinsum 2002: 43). The kind of superstitious thoughts, such as on 'agencies of intrusion', could be read as a sign of the 'neurosis of victimisation'.

This hatred of the world at large (which also marks a profound desire for recognition) and this paranoid reading of history are presented as 'democratic', 'radical' and 'progressive' discourse of emancipation and autonomy – the foundation for a so-called politics of 'Africanity'. Rhetoric to the contrary however, the neurosis of victimization fosters a mode of thought that is at once xenophobic, racist, negative, and circular. In order to function, this logic needs superstitions. It has to create fictions that later pass for real things (Mbembe 2002: 252).

Superstition, racist reasoning, and cultivating a sense of victimisation seem typical elements in keeping a (particularly dogmatic Africanist version of the) discourse on 'Africanity' alive.

Moral solidarity

Talking about 'Afro-radicalism' and Pan Africanism, it is helpful to distinguish between the ways the pre-war generation of Afro-Americans tended to define their sense of 'Africanness', and how the post-war generation of ('British') Africans generally did so. Pan-Africanism through the eyes of 19th century Afro-Americans concerned a common vision of an independent united Africa. This ideal had emerged against a background characterised by experiences of fierce racial discrimination

against black people in the United States. Afro-American intellectuals forged the links between 'race' and Pan-Africanism. In Pan-Africanist thinking, 'race' was thus used as a basis for moral solidarity.

Without the background of racial notions...[the] original intellectual grounding of Pan-Africanism disappears ... however, it seems that it is the fact of a shared race, not the fact of a shared racial character that provides the basis for solidarity' (Appiah 1992: 17).

This notion of 'shared race', experienced as if belonging to 'one big family', implied among other things, that Afro-Americans should actually return to Africa as 'the proper home of the Negro'. This 'dream' could be perceived as a longing for self-imposed segregation, a withdrawal into a safe and homogeneous 'Negro state' without racial conflicts. More recently, the ideal of a (literal or figurative) return to Africa that promises the prospect of redemption is also found in Molefi Kete Asante's idea of Afrocentricity (Asante 2003).

Insofar as Pan-Africanism is based on racist ideology, it concerns a racialist view, and more specifically *intrinsic racism*. In Appiah's definition this would mean that, each race has *a different moral status* that may give reason for preferring a person of the 'same race' to someone else, which differs from extrinsic racism. Extrinsic racism is about discrimination between people based on the assumption that members of different races differ in certain *morally relevant qualities*, such as honesty, courage or intelligence that would justify differential treatment (Appiah 1992: 13-17). Appiah considers intrinsic racism a 'moral error', by which he criticises Pan-Africanist ideas: "Africans share too many problems and projects to be distracted by a bogus basis for solidarity" (Appiah 1992: 26).³⁶⁰ In his view, there are other moral bases conceivable for Pan-Africanism than 'race'. And this is an important principle in the conceptualisation of a more open and fluid approach to 'Africanness'.

The post-war generation of ('British') Africans primarily tended to understand 'Africanness' in the sense of 'shared experiences', the idea of having a great deal in common, and for that reason being connected to each other. Moreover, many Africans on the continent "largely accepted the European view that this meant their shared race" (Appiah 1992: 9-10). Assumingly, Africans who had spent some time in Europe were not as hostile to 'whites' and 'white culture' as Afro-Americans of the pre-war generation. The former groups would have experienced lesser degrees of 'alienation'.

The unrelenting use of the adjective 'African' – as for example in 'African university' and in 'African management' – seems to demonstrate a firm belief in Africa's uniqueness. However,

³⁶⁰ Kwame Anthony Appiah is Africanist, Ghanaian British by birth, affiliated with *Princeton University* in the United States, where he is the Lawrence Rockefeller Professor in Philosophy and at the *University Center of Human Values*. 'African management' in *South Africa* Page 237 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

'Africanness' is not necessarily linked to 'race', accompanied by superstitious thoughts, or even not to an explicit desire for 'universal recognition'. This suggests that there is significant diversity within the categories of Pan Africanism and 'Africanness'. The latter terms require careful consideration if used in a particular context, for instance in leadership and management. Moreover, meanings attributed to these concepts at an official political level are not necessarily identical to meanings in other domains.

Ethnicisation and 'the tribal illusion'

Ethnic identity can be used as a strategic tool; a powerful means to promote social mobility and emancipation (Koot & Rath 1987). External differences between social categories, particular cultural and even physical characteristics, are displayed and emphasised in a selective way, exaggerated, and considered as essential features. These differences may actually appear rather minimal and insignificant, whereas other characteristics of the own category are downplayed or even ignored. In this way,

...the dichotomized cultural differences thus produced are vastly overstated in ethnic discourse, and so we can relegate the more pernicious myths of deep cultural cleavages to the category where they belong: as formative myths that sustain a social organization of difference, but not as descriptions of the actual distribution of cultural stuff (Barth 1994: 30).

This view reveals the illusionary notion of ethnicity, however 'real' people can experience this and live up to it, sometimes to their own detriment, as Edward Said explains:

Freud showed that, in the case of peoples with a deep-rooted sense of identity, there is always somewhere an alien element. If you recognise that, your identity opens up. But if you suppress it, you hang on to your identity fearfully... Pure ethnicity is a delusion (*DevISSues*, Vol. 5, No. 2, September 2003).³⁶¹

Similar to what Nkomo and Cox Jr. say about the importance of 'contextual forces', which play a role in the construction of identities, Koot and Rath argue that ethnicity – as a social identity – is highly determined by socially relevant factors. Identities of social categories may change over time however, responding to developments in society, such as 'racialisation'. Ethnicisation is a process, by which certain change agents or opinion leaders 'decide' to use ethnicity as a strategy for social mobility. This could be done by making ethnic differences organisationally relevant, to achieve certain goals, such as improvement of social conditions; to get maximum profits or a better share in the distribution of resources; to attain security, but for example also to realise 'togetherness', attain a sense of 'belonging' or a positive self-image. This tool will only be effective, if there are somewhere deeply rooted notions of ethnicity, and if an ethnic group is able to exploit its 'human

³⁶¹ The article in *DevISSues* was based on an interview by Heiko Jessayan published in *Het Financieele Dagblad* 2 June 2003.

capital' to its fullest extent. It may occur for various reasons, for instance (a) in a situation where resources are scarce, (b) when population groups find themselves in a historically disadvantaged situation, (c) when there is a perception of a negative or hostile attitude towards concerned categories. Ethnicisation may tend to be more successful, if the leaders of the concerned ethnic groups are familiar with the language and institutions of the majority, and when the leadership has developed an ideology of ethnic resistance. A cultural-pluralistic social model, based on an ideology of cultural relativism, will be more conducive to tendencies of ethnicisation, since there will be more space for and acceptance of various ethnically defined social categories. Likewise, a climate, in which established political institutions in society do not take sufficient care of the interests of the concerned ethnic groups, is more prone to ethnicisation.

Ethnicisation is, however, no guarantee to achieving desired collective political goals. Usually, it is a long and difficult road and a fairly complex process and not without risks, that can meet with unexpected obstacles or even bring about negative responses, such as racism and forms of segregation. Ethnicity and its strategic use are frequently debated in African studies on conflict and democracy in Africa. Social pluralism of African societies, among other things typified by ethnicity and clientelistic and patronage politics, is often seen as an obstacle to democratic nation-building (Berman; Eyoh & Kymlicka 2004). With regard to ethnicisation, it would be inappropriate to assume that in any circumstances people were just passive followers of what their leaders told them to do or to 'believe', or that "the politicisations of ethnicity as phenomena manufactured by corrupt elites and consumed by more or less gullible masses" (Berman; Eyoh *et al.* 2004: 3). In reality, ethnic communities in Africa are quite dynamic. Ethnic communities and their elites should not be treated as homogeneous and univocal. An internal dimension to the process of ethnicisation – although contested – is referred to as 'moral ethnicity': membership in an ethnic group entails subordinating one's behaviour to certain *moral imperatives* when dealing with other group members.

...many Africans have in their ethnic group and ethnic identity...tied up with a complex web of *social obligations* that define people's rights and responsibilities, and that protect people when they are most vulnerable or alone ... (Berman; Eyoh *et al.* 2004: 4; emphasis added).

Emphasis on social obligations has also been observed as a feature in 'African management' discourse in South Africa. There is a distinction between the internal dimension of 'moral ethnicity', i.e. group relations of trust and solidarity, however minimal and often inegalitarian, and 'political tribalism'. The latter concerns relations between an ethnic group and the state. These are mostly amoral, as the group tries to maximise its resources at the expense of the state.

Here success is defined as maximizing the power and resources available to one's own group, whatever the consequences for either groups or for the functioning of the state as a whole (Berman; Eyoh *et al.* 2004: 5).

Ethnicity is thus used to turn class conflict into ethnic conflict over the state. Ethnic and political brokers are tempted to manipulate ethnicity in political power struggles through a focus on ethnonyms (ethnic names) suggesting the inescapability of ethnicity,

which makes actors reduce complex structural issues to identified social groups; and its spatial and temporal imagery (evoking, for example, the idealised village home), which renders ethnic constructs highly persuasive (Van Binsbergen 1997b: 93).

Although, assumingly, there are important advantages to moral ethnicity – e.g. the aspect of caring for each other – there is not much reason to romanticise this notion. Usually, relations *within the group* are namely not so egalitarian or harmonious.

...moral ethnicity gets perverted into political tribalism when ethnic groups collide in competition for resources in state-ordered arenas and the measure of effectiveness of political representation is the ability of elites to promote interests of their primary community through state institutions dominated by ethnic patrons and their clientele (Berman; Eyoh *et al.* 2004: 11-12).

Ethnicisation suggests the persistence of separate ethnic groups, in Africa often referred to as 'tribes'. Rather, the 'tribe', as the sum of 'a total bounded and localised culture', is principally a tribal illusion that was created throughout the colonial period and reinforced by Christian missions and anthropology. Africans swiftly adopted colonial inventions of ethnicity and tribalism.

Historians of Africa now readily accept that the notion of ethnicity, like that of the nation, is largely an invention, that our original assessment of the continent's ethnicity was essentially a figment of our historical imagination and that Africans were not slow in exploiting the ethnic language devised by the colonial mind (Chabal 1996: 46).

Ethnicity is thus viewed as 'invented' and 'fabricated'. It is a 'fictive kinship', not an inherent property of a social category, but exists primarily *between* groups. Ethnicity is therefore relational and situational (Eriksen 2001: 46). Hence, it is preferred to speak in terms of (ethnic) *identification*, rather than (ethnic) identity. This process applied to colonies all over Africa, including South Africa. The long history of 'coercive labour' in South Africa, as analysed in Chapter 6, was an exponent of this broader development in colonial times. Anthropological literature on ethnicity in Africa seems to support the argument of the 'tribal illusion'. South Africa was not exceptional in this regard. Although 'invented' and 'fabricated', notions of ethnic identity left their traces on people's identity make-up in South Africa.

Inventing ethnicity did involve ascribing monolithic identities, and also involved tremendous upheaval and affront to the 'taken-for-granted' world. Many historians have described how under colonialism bounded ethnicities replaced previously much more fluid multicultural and multilingual networks of interaction and identity (Ranger 1996: 274).

Ethnicity is assumed to represent a rigid social classification system, but in fact depends on flexibility and manipulation. Rather, ethnicity is multidimensional, situational, and constructed.

Ethnicization marks the process by which ethnic identity is made into a militant political idiom taking precedence over an individual's other identities, as a basis for political action (Van Binsbergen 1997b: 92).

In such a perspective, ethnicisation has an outspoken political character with ethnicity dominating other identities. The role of leaders and brokers is vital in this regard; they know the language and institutions of the majority. According to Van Binsbergen, brokers are "in a position to exploit the opportunities at the interface between ethnic group and the outside world." Language, political and ceremonial symbols (e.g. circumcision), as well as the mechanism of glorifying the past, are all identity markers in order to signify ethnic boundaries.

Ethnicization entails the construction of ethnonyms to mark ethnic boundaries, and the redefinition of local culture so as to offer distinctive boundary markers. The cultivated sense of a shared history lends meaning to experiences of powerlessness, deprivation, and estrangement, and kindles hope of improvement through ethnic self-presentation. The ethnonym and the principle of ascription then produce for the members of society the image of a bounded, particularist set of solidary people. The vulnerable individual's access to national resources, and the formal organization (state, industry) controlling them becomes the object of group action. In postcolonial Central Africa, ethnicization increasingly has included cultural politics (Van Binsbergen 1997b: 92-93).

In pre-colonial times, people used to live in scattered groups, with a variety of regional cultural characteristics. However, by singling out a few minor features and articulating them as 'ethnic boundary markers', the respective differences that distinguish regional groups are augmented, and ethnicised. In reality, these boundary markers have proven over time to be unfixed and flexible. For instance, the idea that ethnonyms (ethnic names) are indicative for a specific 'culture', to which an individual would belong, fully determining his or her life, is problematic, since "cultures do not exist" (Van Binsbergen 1999). Rather, it would be preferable to speak of *cultural orientations*, which may change over time, partly overlapping, intersecting, and producing 'kaleidoscopic effects in irregular unsystematic patterns'.

Ethnicisation in organisations

The situational use of ethnicity in organisational contexts is fairly similar to what Erving Goffman calls 'front region', 'back region' and 'outside the stage' region (Goffman 1959).³⁶² Organisational 'front region' behaviour, following the rules of universalism, is embodied by formal roles to play in the presence of an audience, sometimes like in disguise, trying to be consistent with the norms, mores and laws that prevail, in order to make a 'good impression'. However, in the 'back region', and even more so 'off stage' behind the scenes, one can be more at ease and drop the disguise,

³⁶² See for instance: www.cfmc.com/adamb/writings/goffman.htm [accessed 10 November 2004].

letting go some of the 'façade' and revealing one's 'true' agenda.

'Off stage', one could develop personal impressions and illusions consonant with the desired goals of the actor. In the back region situation, 'performance' of 'impression management' may have a somewhat informal character. It is actually located very near to the central stage where the 'real' play is going on. In formal organisational contexts, ethnicity can amount to:

a structure of redistribution and patronage, which undermines the universalist principles of the formal organization, but at the same time informally ties a significant section of the population both to the redistributing official and to the organization, and ultimately to the state (Van Binsbergen 1997b: 94).

Thus, ethnicity is interpreted as distinctively situational, in the sense that it can suddenly come to the surface in specific settings and encounters – smartly exposed and strategically articulated – and then disappears again to remain latent some time. This requires the recognition of ethnicity on all sides: both from the broker identifying himself and the other person, trying to connect to the formal organisation, and from the official representative, who responds to the appeal to ethnicity.

The 'back region' or 'off stage' situation, where universalism encounters particularism – e.g. expressed through ethnicity – may provide ideal opportunities for ethnicity to make headway and reach individual and organisational goals. Such an interface binds two worlds together, connecting ethnicity – and its related interests – with state bureaucracies or formal organisations, for instance. After Independence, human resources were largely Africanised. Then, ethnicisation was also used to obtain better opportunities (e.g. access to and control over the colonial state, its bureaucracies, industry, and large-scale agriculture).

If wealth flows from the state, ethnicity provides a network to redistribute it; if the state can no longer deliver, ethnicity provides counter-structures for such things as security, distribution, and assertion of group rights (Van Binsbergen 1997b: 97).

Ethnicity, used for social mobility and emancipation or to assert a more positive self-image, can both be a response to negative tendencies in society, and simultaneously evoke negative responses by itself. Eventually, change agents and opinion leaders may always 'decide' again to give up ethnicity for strategic reasons, and drop the idea of ethnic boundary markers.

'Race', ethnicity, and class in South Africa

In times of intensified globalisation, when people become increasingly aware of the global, and of the local, they would also have an inclination to develop stronger local ethnic identities (e.g. Van Marrewijk 1999: 38). In this logic, African identity or 'Africanness' in a sub-Saharan African context could then come out stronger than ever.

As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, Roland Robertson would probably see such an emphasis on the local as an obvious consequence of globalisation (Robertson 1995). Mike

Featherstone would possibly interpret this as an oppositional or ‘deglobalising reaction’ (Featherstone 1995).³⁶³ Consequently, debating ethnicity – or ‘race’ if one wishes – is hard to avoid in a deconstruction of Afrocentric management approaches. Until recently there was little serious scholarly study into the social meanings of ‘race’ in South Africa and little critical research of racial discourses as sources of power, whereas in the 1960s “every facet of life in the country was saturated with the effects of racial thinking and practice” (Posel; Hyslop *et al.* 2001: i-ii). There was a ‘theoretical silence’, academics failed to engage the question of what ‘race’ actually meant. In South Africa, it was rather a question of a ‘race paradigm’ and racism, more than just a discussion restricted to physical features (Boonzaier 1989: 58).

For a very long time, the focus of analysis was on the ‘race-class debate’. In brief, Marxist scholars argued that racial discrimination and segregation were just instruments of capitalist exploitation, whereas liberals generally felt that the combination of apartheid and capitalism was an unhealthy relationship, hindering free economic development. Liberal scholars believed that the ruling Nationalist Party had used the apartheid state since the 1950s as an instrument of political power to promote Afrikaner interests. Marxists on the other hand did not opt to explore and problematise the concept of ‘race’. In a way, they displaced it with class, and anything that was not class should refer to this undefined thing called ‘race’. There was also a kind of discomfort to engage with this question, according to Deborah Posel. On the left, the issue of race was highly charged due to a commitment to the principle of non-racialism. All this suited the apartheid state’s strategies to ‘normalise’ race in the discourses and experiences of South Africans (Posel; Hyslop *et al.* 2001: vii). The emergence of the *Black Consciousness Movement*, expressing the realities of race, had a confrontational impact on the left, as it challenged their principle of non-racialism. Only since 1999, when President Thabo Mbeki took office, an open public engagement with issues of ‘race’ and racism in South Africa seemed to emerge and ‘past silences’ became recognised (Posel; Hyslop *et al.* 2001: xiii).

‘Race’ can be seen as a social construction, but it is acting in practice as if it is an essential reality. It is somewhat odd to reaffirm of non-racialism in principle, while in practice essentialist assumptions about ‘race’ are still in use and implied (Posel; Hyslop *et al.* 2001: xiii). Some feel that ‘race’ should be celebrated as the basis of positive social and cultural identities (e.g. Mangcu 2001). In a post-apartheid era, “people cannot be expected to throw away their evolved identities and values,” such as *ubuntu*, even if ‘Blackness’ is a political and ethical construct.

Are current economic and material circumstances for the majority of South Africans favourable

³⁶³ For a discussion of ‘glocalisation’, see the introductory chapter of this thesis, in section 1.1 *An Afrocentric management approach as a case of ‘glocalisation’*.

to a 'politics of popular identity' reawakening and reinforcing ever-latent sentiments of ethnicity? A rising pressure from a newly established political alliance across racial lines between an emerging black middle-class and the previously privileged white middle-class, sharing similar economic interests may lead to black elites 'assimilating' into 'white' norms and standard (Sharp 1998: 246-247). As a result, the South African government may be less inclined than expected to take drastic measures for the purpose of economic transformation and redistribution of wealth and income. Eventually, this could end up in 'a total lack of concern for mass impoverishment'. Along the way, a black middle-class may entirely lose or ignore "all aspects of black cultural experience" (Sharp 1998: 247). This scenario, however, could be counterbalanced by a (Africanist) call to 'primordial solidarity' in an attempt to link black people across class divisions together (Sharp 1998: 247-249).

Talk of 'non-racialism' and removing 'race' from dominant discourse may appear politically correct, but does not make 'subtle forms of racism and of inequality along racial lines' automatically disappear. The race paradigm in South Africa is like religion: "It has the ability to create moods in the minds of humans and to provide justification for action" (Boonzaier 1989: 65-66). Yet, it is plausible that in certain instances people do not want to do away with 'race'. This could be the case when trying to restore values of self-respect, self-reliance, and dignity to the black community (Mangu 2001: 18-20).³⁶⁴ Amongst other things, the *Black Consciousness Movement* gave people a sense of identity with 'race' as a cultural concept, whereas non-racialists saw 'race' as "a burden that had to be transcended in a broader search for universal values such as freedom and justice" (Mangu 2001: 22). In this view, a non-racialist framework is predicated on scientific, modernist assumptions about development, similar to the economic and modernist strategies of the South African government after 1994.

Modernism is a technocratic approach to development that is pretty much consistent with non-racialist universalism in which there is no room for the role of cultural identities in development policy. Within this non-racial politics the universal language of global economic progress displaces attention to local cultures (Mangu 2001: 24).

Inspired by Steve Biko, one of the future prospects for South Africa is a 'pluralising African identity' and a 'joint culture', in which the majority respects the cultural rights of minorities. Minorities would not need to feel threatened as long as they "identify with the broader political culture" (Mangu 2001: 25). However, there may be a tension between 'pluralising African identity' and confirmation to an African hegemony. Can one indeed observe a strengthening of Africanist tendencies in South Africa after 1994, more specifically within the ANC: an "intensity

³⁶⁴ In this regard, Xelela Mangu's views seem quite similar to Van Binsbergen's arguments about ethnicisation and the formation of 'contrastive identity' when people feel that their 'existential identity' is under threat.

of Africanist feeling” (Filatova 1997: 48)?³⁶⁵ In earlier times, when *The Freedom Charter* was approved in the 1950s, the ANC spoke about non-racialism, cultural diversity and equal rights for all people, e.g. to use their own language, develop their own folk culture and customs. In the 1950s, Joe Slovo of the *South African Communist Party* foresaw one united nation and “a national culture that embraced all ethnic communities.” Does the ANC today rather envisage South Africa as a multicultural society under a sky of African hegemony? If this is the case, it might well be for particular political and strategic reasons, since “Africanism is a much more powerful card to play than ‘rainbowism’” (Filatova 1997: 54). The idea of ‘flowering of cultures’ has perhaps become less pronounced than in the past and does the rainbow nation ideal no longer apply.

In the past, the apartheid regime used ethnicity as an excuse to create ethnic ‘homelands’ for black people, for the sake of a separate cultural development.³⁶⁶ For this purpose, allegedly traditional leadership was put in place, established through myriads of laws that were established in the course of time. Therefore, one might reasonably expect an amount of repugnance among many South Africans to notions such as ‘traditional leadership’. Nevertheless, a renewed interest in traditional leadership and common law can be observed after 1994.

...surprising, in my humble vision, was why it is that an organisation such as the ANC which fought for a democratic unitary state after apartheid would embrace the institution of traditional leadership and its incumbent with their notorious record under apartheid (Ntsebeza 2005: 258).

In response to his afore-mentioned question, Lungisile Ntsebeza argued that the position of the ANC on traditional authorities had always been quite ambivalent. Moreover, strategic political reasons are part of the explanation. The formation of the *Congress of Traditional Leaders in South Africa* (CONTRALESA) was welcomed, probably not so much because the ANC was in favour of retribalisation, but rather in order to mobilise chiefs in the support of the ANC in rural areas. Thus, the ANC envisaged counterbalancing the influence of Inkatha in KwaZulu Natal and traditional leaders supporting the *Inkatha Freedom Party* of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. In addition, CONTRALESA could be instrumental in reaching a political settlement with the IFP to end the system of apartheid.

However, this ‘post-1994 version of retribalisation’ may also match a global trend of asserting political autonomy, legitimised by cultural difference. In Chapter 1, this process is referred to as ‘glocalisation’. In the new constitution of the Republic of South Africa, traditional leaders obtained official recognition. They maintained many of their prerogatives in the domain of local administration, land distribution, and local justice in family affairs. Because of a combination of

³⁶⁵ Irina Filatova refers to the ANC discussion document *Nation-Formation and Nation Building*, released in 1997.

³⁶⁶ This was described in 6.1 *A long history of coercive labour*.

factors, traditional leaders were put in a position of gaining 'power of definition'. Thus, they were able to define to a considerable extent their own role in the new democracy. So they were in a position to 'decide' what life in rural areas is meant to be like, in contrast with urban life, in terms of people's values and preferences in the realm of local governance and justice.

This considerable popular support for traditional leaders is, however, not fixed and unconditional, but has a dynamic and negotiated character. Interestingly, it tends to be higher among people in relatively developed areas. Motivations for people to support traditional leaders in South Africa vary considerably. It cannot be simply reduced to having notions of ethnic identities and explained by culturalist uses of ethnicity by political elites. The ideas of 'chiefly subjects' are however not merely reflections of traditional worldviews and nostalgic representations (Oomen 2002: 32). Traditional leaders themselves, on the other hand, successfully practised ethnicisation up to the point that traditional leadership attained a central position in President Thabo Mbeki's representations on African Renaissance, whereas this aspect had been absent in his earlier accounts in the years 1996-1997. Traditional leadership thus became a symbol of an African identity in South African society (Oomen 2002: 118-119). This strategy was based on the premise of cultural difference.

...When it comes to cultural rights legislation, for which the very rationale is the official acknowledgement of difference, it is often the most exotic, the most outlandish voices within the community concerned that get to speak loudest. Whether in New Zealand or in South Africa, it is mostly the voices speaking for 'indigeneity', for 'difference' that find their way into the granite of law (Oomen 2002: 286).

To some extent, 'traditional' cultural orientations are persistent in South Africa: "...a large part of the population firmly believes in core values derived from communalism, religion, and reverence for traditional authority and for the spiritualised world" (Oomen 2002: 117). Nevertheless, the fact that the government granted recognition to specific cultural orientations and systematically classified these in different legal categories that are meant to be permanent is quite a different story. Some believe that ethnicity has only just started to emerge as an important social force in South Africa, whereas others still feel that ethnicity is a manifestation of earlier racist policies.

Why is ethnicity, and its association with 'traditional values', only emerging as an item of popular interest *after* Independence from colonial rule, or *after* liberation from oppressive systems, such as in the case of apartheid? The principle that competition and conflict may generate ethnicity is a possible answer. Before, different ethnic groups were united in opposition to colonial rule or ethnic claims were suppressed under authoritarian rule (e.g. Malawi under Banda). Ethnic groups re-emerge in the struggle for power after the struggle against colonial rule or when the power of authoritarian rulers declines (McAllister 1997: 99-101). When analysing ethnicity, it is important to

take on a perspective from below.³⁶⁷ Ordinary people may experience the need for ‘traditional values’ because of insecurities, particularly among migrant workers in South Africa as in other countries in the southern African region, created by rapid and radical social change.

These [ethnic] ideologies were encouraged particularly by migrant workers, since they provided the workers with a sense of security and control and helped minimize concerns about family and land back home. In this sense, ethnic identity was both backward- and forward-looking. It was based on largely invented notions of a golden past and the antiquity of custom, but was programmatic in attempting to provide for social coherence in the face of disruption. (McAllister 1997: 99).

The complexities in understanding ethnicity in southern African indicate the ‘constructedness’ of ethnicity. For example, Zulu ethnic identity can be problematised, since Zulu political identity actually started to emerge only after the 1920s, when the old social order started to crumble (McAllister 1997; la Hausse de Lalouvière 2000).

Another example is Afrikaner ethnic identity formation in South Africa; a slow and painful process, and not without resistance. A highly emotional public debate on the use of Afrikaans as the main medium of instruction in higher education at the *University of Stellenbosch*, reveals ambivalent positions among members of the Afrikaner community that touches the very soul of Afrikaner ethnic identity. Among the more conservative ‘language activists’, who would prefer a more exclusivist approach, language symbolises ‘the culture and social cohesion of Afrikaners’. The promotion of cultural diversity at the university then becomes a threat of losing their Afrikaner identity. This illustrates the pressures that Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner ethnic identity are facing after 1994. At least, there are now different orientations emerging, as regards the role of Afrikaans as a language in public life in relation to the sense of Afrikaner identity, bringing about a significant change of thinking about Afrikaner identity (Van der Waal 2002). These cases demonstrate the kind of conservative reactions and claims to traditional values that may occur, when social identity, ethnicity, is perceived to be under threat, and how ethnicity is used as a tool in struggles over scarce resources.

9.2 Identity in-the-making

If not defined with reference to ‘race’, ‘Africanness’ can be conceived in terms of openness, rather than thought of as ‘substance’. Not what Africans *are*, but what they are *becoming* can be constitutive of African identity (Diagne 2001: 22). What does ‘Africanness’ mean?

³⁶⁷ Patrick McAllister draws here on *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*, edited by Leroy Vail (1991).
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 247 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Superiority? Inferiority? Why not the quite simple question to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself? (Melber 2001: 6)³⁶⁸

In such a view, 'Africanness' is understood as performed, as identity *in-the-making*. The image of African theatre helps to illustrate this idea, referring to the influential book by the Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, originally published in 1986 (Thiong'o 1997). Thiong'o experimented with new forms of African theatre, introducing the open space of a village instead of colonial-style closed theatre space, with villagers as co-creators as it were. He discovered how "meaning now flows from the audience to the author, or rather emerges from the confusion of the audience, the actors, and the other" (Diagne 2001: 20). Interaction with an audience in order to perform 'Africanness' is thus a strong image to envision the idea of African identity *in-the-making*. Even if social identities are to be based on 'true stories' rather than on illusory racial or tribal differences, some amount of 'mystification' probably remains unavoidable. How 'true' and how 'rational' can social identities after all ever be? History has shown that economic interests operate through ideologies, and in this respect, there is "no large place for reason in the construction [...] of identities." African identity needs to be constantly reshaped and fought for "to meet the economic and political exigencies of the modern world" (Appiah 1992: 177).

...the inscription of difference in Africa today plays into the hands of the very exploiters whose shackles we are trying to escape. 'Race' in Europe and 'tribe' in Africa are central in the way in which objective interests of the worst-off are distorted (Appiah 1992: 179).

The international Pan-Africanist project needs to be 'released from bondage to racial ideologies' and from 'racialised Negro nationalism', according to Kwame Anthony Appiah. Only then, it has the potential of becoming a progressive project of solidarity and sisterhood that in fact transforms Pan Africanism into a political morale instead of basing it on 'race'. Thus, 'Africanness' becomes a conscious political choice. Perhaps, it is impossible to make generalising statements on this matter: "Because the value of identities is thus relative, we must argue for and against them case by case" (Appiah 1992: 180).

Beyond typecasting Africans

In a non-essentialist perspective on African identity, "Being African is not a birthmark," but a process, negotiable, multiple, complex and dynamic: "...each act, each signification, each decision risks opening new meanings, vistas and possibilities" (Nyamnjoh 2001: 30). Many people in Africa refuse 'to be fenced in by particular identity markers'.

³⁶⁸ Melber acknowledges *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon (1963), as the source of inspiration for his rhetorical questioning.

If others continue to label and pigeonhole Africans in very essentialist terms, then the temptation to fall back on primordial notions of identity, even for the most diasporic and cosmopolitan Africans, remains great (Nyamnjoh 2001: 32).

This quote underlines the role of ‘contextual forces’ in the construction of identities, such as in the case of emergent ethnicity (Nkomo & Cox Jr. 1996: 339-341). The ‘global community’ has an important influence either on the persistence of primordial notions of African identity, or on recognising new, more flexible, dynamic, diverse, and multifaceted notions of ‘Africanness’. Identity is not only about (self) identification, but also about how others categorise and recognise or reject the individual or a category. Whether the rest of the world easily accepts such a change of perception is rather doubtful.

One might well ask, how much of our so-called identities or the lack thereof are a result of an obsession with boundaries and belonging, as well as a readiness to pigeonhole even the unpigeonholeable? [...] Doesn’t our obsession with neat and easy labels or categories distort and oversimplify the hybrid reality of our actual circumstances? (Nyamnjoh 2001: 31)

If Africans are prepared to think in broader terms about identity in the sense of going beyond primordial conceptualisations of their ‘Africanness’, the rest of the global community should be receptive to such a repositioning as well. In addition, Africans of European or Asian descent should not be excluded from ‘Africanness’, nor should people in Africa be dismissed as *non-Africans* “who have found attraction in the current Western consumer culture for purpose of prestige and power” (Nyamnjoh 2001: 28). This represents an *inclusive view* on ‘Africanness’ countering typecast images of Africans.

Modernisation theory produced expectations of ‘what ought to have happened in the post-colonial period’, which comprised among other things the view that Africans would in time ‘evolve’ into ‘identifiable citizens’:

Africans can no longer rely on what we tend to see as their ‘age-old’ traditions than they can depend on the types of identity inherited from their colonial experiences or gleaned since their perception of a ‘post-modern’ Western world. [...] They cast themselves as mobile-phone wielding businessmen while keeping contact with the village spirits. They reinterpret Rambo from the memory of their initiation ceremonies. [...] There is no fixed unchanging identity on the continent – traditional or otherwise (Chabal & Daloz 1999: 51).

People are able to reconstruct their sense of identity according to their individual and collective experiences rather than taking some general homogenising cultural features for granted (Barth 1994: 12-14). Usually, people do not particularly appreciate over-generalisations made about them; there is a lot of ‘resistance to being typecast’ (Ferdman 1995: 43). Moreover, there can be good reason *not* to be identified with certain social categories: “In particular, people from marginalized groups have often felt that they had to separate themselves for the group to be seen positively” (Ferdman 1995: 47).

Identification and identity politics of 'Africanness'

Conceptualising identity as fluid and changeable makes identity formation different from being a 'birthmark' or just a voluntaristic choice. Prevailing power configurations is an important factor as well. People may use ethnic and other social identities to pursue consciously particular goals, e.g. to mobilise people or in competition over resources. Goals and interests may change from time to time. Accordingly, ethnic boundaries may become more fluid, and – with that – corresponding identities. Although outcomes of social relations are seldom predictable, it is not too difficult to think of circumstances, in which essentialist notions of African identity prevail over open-ended ideas of 'Africanness'. In this regard, it is indeed accurate to speak of identity politics.

In particular, marginalised groups in Africa may use their social identity in daily survival struggles in creative and strategic ways: "In this post-colonial African context, discussions of identity must be informed by the reality on the ground of the creative quest for survival" (Nyamnjoh 2001: 30). The element of choice concerning (African) identity formation should therefore perhaps not be overestimated. In extreme cases, terrifying circumstances can be quite compelling to answer to aggressive identity politics imposed by powerful groups. In more secure and affluent situations, more space for self-determination and self-identification may be assumed. Moreover, it is likely that external identifications, imposed by dominant discourses in a specific timeframe, could overshadow personal identifications (Ghorashi 2002: 30).

Can we choose any time the kind of identity we prefer? There probably are serious constraints in this respect. In practice, people are not always able to simply 'choose' or change identities freely, because often they almost literally forced to take on certain identities. Moreover, not in all instances people make conscious decisions in these matters: "How conscious are individuals in their practice of life and the ways they define it?" (Ghorashi 2002: 25). Identity may also be determined by what Bourdieu calls 'habitus', understood as 'embodied history' that "gives the process of identity formation a certain amount of continuity" (discussed in Ghorashi 2002: 26-27).

However, firm statements on the free choice of identity might as well be interpreted as a call to move away from stereotypical thinking about Africa and Africans, pleading for a more critical attitude towards discourses created in the European imagery on Africa. It would mean that Africans are becoming increasingly part of the battle to control the discourse on African identity, about *themselves*.

9.3 Multiple identities

Every individual can be linked to multiple groups and categories and a variety of identifications may coexist concurrently. While experiencing multiple identities, people can perceive their

individual uniqueness, a personal identity (Ferdman 1995: 46). The idea of having the freedom to choose from 'a collection of identities' is however problematic. If one accepts that identities are constantly being revised and rearranged, it is quite impossible to choose an identity that one had 'used' before, because it would never be the same again. In essence, these critical notes come from Homi Bhabha, from which some relevant suggestions can be drawn, as Halleh Ghorashi aptly summarised.³⁶⁹

I agree with Bhabha in seeing the word multiple in relational terms and especially in the context of power relations. Second, Bhabha's criticism helps us to think twice about some fashionable terms like multiple identities, sometimes easily taken for granted. His emphasis on the ambivalent, negotiating and relocating character of identity is especially useful (Ghorashi 2002: 30).

Multiple identities can be complementary to each other, although not in all circumstances equally important and not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, a person can be South African, Zulu, and Christian at the same time. Sometimes these partial identifications are in internal tension with one another. If they are explicitly presented in opposition to each other, it reveals something about the person's identifications in terms of his or her political stance, for example expressed through ethnicity: "I am *not* South African. I am a Zulu." Ethnicity is not the only relevant aspect when discussing 'Africanness': "...ethnic identities are merely a small fraction of the many identities mobilized in the postcolonial politics of everyday life" (Werbner 1996: 1).

Fragmented identities in African contexts

Identity strategies in contemporary Africa, as elsewhere supposedly, can be a constructive but also a destructive force. Therefore, 'the cultural politics of identities' in postcolonial Africa needs careful and sophisticated study (Werbner 1996: 23). As studies have shown, in pre-colonial Africa most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities, which is quite a different image than one of a single tribal identity (Ranger, cited in Werbner 1996: 22). Simplistic stereotype views of Africa that persist up to this day, may have their historic roots in the endeavours of colonial authorities and missionaries in Africa to 'clean up the complexity':

The main thrust of their efforts was towards new social rigidities, the creation of stabilised, well-defined tribes, the reifying of custom in inflexible codes, the tightening of control over subjects less able to negotiate their own identities (Werbner 1996: 22-23).

Basically, identity issues in Africa should not be understood differently than elsewhere in the world (Werbner 1996: 8). Ambivalence is, therefore, also an aspect of the cultural politics of postcolonial identities. In a particular situation, the same identity strategy can have different, even

³⁶⁹ Homi K. Bhabha is an Indian born scholar involved in literature and cultural studies. He writes among other things on postcoloniality and the connections between colonialism and globalism. In 1994, he published *The Location of Culture*.

contradictory meanings from opposed perspectives (Werbner 1996: 16). The wide range of postcolonial identity strategies should be analysed by locating the utterances in changing socio-political contexts and by tracing the different arguments in a new politics of identity and belonging:

...our arguments about cultural politics in diverse postcolonies start from the distinctive postcolonial realities of multiple arenas, fluid identities, and positional relations of power... (Werbner 1996: 1-2).

Concerning the relationship between power relations and identity formation, it could be assumed that powerful elites have the ability of influencing processes of identity formation. For example, some argue that the South African government has been making efforts to move away from 'older primordial identities', by encouraging the emergence of sub-national identities as part of its nation-building strategies (Bekker; Leildé & Puttergill 2003: 128). Sub-regional identities combined with horizontally (class differences) and vertically (cultural divisions) crosscutting sub-identities result in a rather wide and complex spectrum of fragmented sub-identities. For example, Bekker *et al.* suggest that the multiple identities that residents experienced prior to their arrival from rural areas into urban places in the Western Cape, became even further fragmented afterwards. In identity formation there could be a relationship between class position (poor/affluent) and the level that people have as their main reference (local/regional/national):

In direct contrast to affluent people, the poor are local people 'par excellence'. While provincial and national issues are seldom mentioned, the poor centre their narratives on local problems and institutions. They seem to draw little meaning in their daily lives from the national sphere (Bekker & Leildé 2003: 152).

If now also *fragmented* multiple identities are to be discerned, as a sub-category of multiple identifications, which is in itself a multifaceted concept, one may rightfully wonder how more complicated the study of identities can get. Again, it stresses the need to study these issues with great care. In scholarly literature, the idea of postcoloniality is often associated with interpreting identity issues. Postcolonial identities in Africa are therefore another relevant theme to look into.

9.4 Postmodern or Postcolonial: either, neither or both?

What do the notions of postcoloniality and postmodernity contribute to debates on 'Africanness' and Afrocentric management approaches, or do they merely produce 'conceptual confusion'? Notably, criticism on these two terms sometimes harbours a degree of anti-western sentiments. An amount of confusion and suspicion around the 'explosion' of the 'posts' emerged in the 1980s and the 1990s, and were for instance typified as discursive systems in Northern institutional locations (Zezeza 2003: 229-231). The philosophical 'anarchy of postmodernism' would not have any practical value to Africans, according to the Afro-American Afrocentric scholar Paul Tiyambe Zezeza (Zezeza 2003: 285). Academic debates around the 'posts' would be characterised by internal

contradictions; they are both appealing and problematic.

They tend to argue against theory building when they themselves advance theoretical positions. [...] ...they claim to oppose the privileging of any position, to be against truth, but go on to privilege themselves, glibly making truth claims... (Zeleza 2003: 231-232).

Where postmodernism meets post-structuralism, it implies that 'representations and the power inherent in the discourses that surround us' became subject to critical examination and deconstruction (Zeleza 2003: 233). The effect of this would supposedly make the 'grand narratives' disappear, but that is actually not what happened: "...the capitalist market as the universal elixir of the most grandiose narrative of all" has become stronger rather than weaker. Postmodernism is therefore not the end of modernities in the world, especially not in 'the Third World'. They have just become manifest in different ways (Zeleza 2003: 235). Overall, neither postcolonialism nor postmodernism has brought any new insights to the debate: "Postcoloniality simply puts a new gloss on old studies of African pluralism" (Zeleza 2003: 279). Amidst this conceptual confusion, "previously silenced voices, especially from women and people from or associated with the South" have been coming out, although due to the 'depoliticising effect' of postmodernism, such emancipatory narratives and projects are immediately rejected (Zeleza 2003: 237-238). In contrast, others believe that postcolonial theory does offer valuable insights, both with regard to former colonial societies and former colonising countries.

Postcolonial theory and criticism (or postcolonialism, in short) represents an attempt to investigate the complex and deeply fraught dynamics of modern Western colonialism and anticolonial resistance, and the ongoing significance of the colonial encounter for people's lives both in the West and the non-West (Prasad 2003a: 5).

In this thesis, insights from postcolonial theory are appreciated as useful in interpreting 'African management' discourse in South Africa, as is shown in the next chapter, in spite of the 'conceptual confusion' that Paul Tiyambe Zeleza noted. In addition, Zeleza's comment about 'the capitalist market as the universal elixir' is acknowledged.

Continuities from colonialism

In spite of the lack of clarity and consensus over these notions, the postmodern is considered 'an apolitical description of conditions in advanced capitalist societies', whereas the postcolonial can be ascribed more political engagement, as liberating, dealing with 'global inequalities':

The postcolonial seeks to deconstruct the ideological discourses that naturalize Western hegemonic representations and formulate the knowledges and identities authored and authorised by colonialism by foregrounding the cultural, problematizing the categories of colony, nation, community and cultural tradition; dismantling the binaries that divided the world into the West-rest, tradition-modernity, colonizer-colonized, and emphasizing interdependencies and dialectical interconnections (Zeleza 2003: 239).

Postcoloniality assumes continuity from the colonial into the postcolonial, and does not suggest that conditions *after* colonialism represent a total break with colonialism. Nor should colonialism be taken as monolithic and undifferentiated. In addition, suggestions of ‘stability’ and ‘unity’ under colonialism are disputable. Colonial Africa was much more like postcolonial Africa than generally assumed, and vice-versa. African studies should therefore be cautious with the use of a colonial–postcolonial dichotomy. Unfortunately, processes of ‘cultural violence’ and disruptions in the social, economic, and religious domain and ‘violent insecurity’ have continued to exist after independence (Ranger 1996: 276-278). The term postcoloniality is not exclusively applicable to former colonies. Postcoloniality has as much to do with ‘Third World’ countries, as with former colonial powers and their societies, or perhaps even more.

There is indeed more talk today about the postcolonial than there was at the time of the end of empire. Nor is the notion of postcolonial meant to reflect the condition of African countries after independence. In the sense in which it is used in current cultural and ideological parlance, it refers to the implications of the postcolonial or post imperial condition for the definition of our own identity in the West today. It is therefore more a concern about ourselves than about those who do live in actual postcolonial societies (Chabal 1996: 37).

Consequently, postcolonial identities do not relate exclusively to process of identification in former colonial countries: “In Europe, and in particular in the former imperial countries, the term has arisen to reflect the necessary coming to terms with the legacy of our own colonial past” [...] (Chabal 1996: 37). This reflection does not necessarily imply recognition of ‘colonial guilt’ or welcoming immigrants from former colonies to the ‘autochthonous’ populations of European societies. On the contrary, sometimes people in Europe even derive a certain ‘national pride’ from colonial achievements in the past, prompted by a sense of postcolonial identity. How people in Europe think about postcolonial identity influences significantly how they tend to interpret phenomena and developments in Africa:

In the face of a formerly colonised world in which there is often a violent ‘fundamentalist’ backlash against westernisation and modernism – which is mirrored by the xenophobic movement in Europe – our ability to understand contemporary African societies is necessarily influenced by the extent to which we accept or reject the argument about our postcolonial identity (Chabal 1996: 38).

Therefore, the ways in which a European scholar researches and interprets ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa for example, is to a considerable degree related to his or her understanding of postcolonial identity. The ultimate implication of postmodernist thought might be that clear-cut cleavages between distinct geographically defined social identities disappear: “The thrust of the postmodernist argument is that the contemporary world is one, in which individual identities are increasingly cross-cultural and values increasingly relative” (Chabal 1996: 40-41). Would this imply that Africa as well as societies in Europe, America and Asia, has become part of a

joint global postmodernist community? Arguably, Africa may no longer be 'unique' after all. On the other hand, to assume one 'global postmodernist community' seems somewhat far-fetched.

Postmodernist discourse influences the perception and interpretation of postcolonial cultural developments in Africa. Changes in the ways that Africanists in Europe and probably their counterparts at African universities perceive and interpret Africa are partly a result of paradigm shifts in the social and human sciences and changes in political doctrines and dominant ideologies (Mudimbe 1988: 165-167). Because of postcoloniality, 'the self-confident rationality of imperial science' becomes challenged and its assumptions deconstructed (Ranger 1996: 271-272). Knowledge and theory about Africa and Africans produced there does usually not enjoy much of popular support from social movements, but still had a significant role to play in the history of social thought (Zezeza 2003: 265-267). These developments seem to have created space for "subjectivity, the unconscious, existence, relativity of truth, contextual difference, and otherness," an atmosphere, in which Africanism could further develop (Mudimbe 1988: 166). Hence, 'African management' discourse, to some extent at least a product of Africanism, was able to emerge and evolve in South Africa, owing to 'paradigm shifts in the social and human sciences' and to the space created for subjectivity and relativity of truth.

However, according to Paul Tiyambe Zezeza, postmodernism should be denounced altogether. The main reason for this is the link between postmodernism and the notion of 'Eurocentric universalism', despite its positive contribution towards highlighting issues such as identity, the production of knowledge and discourse (Zezeza 2003: 285). In the end, he calls rather for 'real' empirical research on the ground in African societies to be preferred to 'speculations' and postmodernist reflections on texts (Zezeza 2003: 287). Particularly, non-African Africanists are blamed for this reason, because they would adhere to the 'posts' of writing on Africa without doing much field research.³⁷⁰

Counterculture to modernity

Postcoloniality, understood as 'concern about ourselves' (i.e. in 'the west') and as those conditions, in which identities are formed in European or North American societies, involves (re)thinking ethnicity and identity in Europe, North America – eventually also affecting Africa – with more room for blending cultural forms. Through shipping and trade, have created a global networks were established that connected Europeans with Native American, African and Asian people. This resulted in a cultural 'contact zone', i.e. the *Black Atlantic*. The *Black Atlantic* represents, as it were,

³⁷⁰ Interestingly, Achille Mbembe, whom Zezeza accuses of having homogenising and dehistoricising views on Africa, makes a similar remark in his book *On the Postcolony*, in Mbembe (2001), pp. 5-8.

a counterculture to modernity, a “transnational space of traversal, cultural exchange, production, and belonging” (Gilroy 2003: 49). Ideas about nationality, ethnicity, authenticity, and cultural integrity, characterised by an absolute sense of ethnic difference, are typically ‘modern’. These ideas have not become redundant; rather they have grown. ‘A new assertive mood’ in the restructuring of ethnicities and ‘newly hybridised identities’ have contested the idea of cultural nationalism, resulting in ‘re-evaluating ethnicity’ and a mounting recognition for the neglect of slavery and the descendants of black slaves in Europe and North America (Gilroy 2003: 59). Essentialist Africanist views on ethnic identities, leadership, and nationality in black (Afro-American) political discourse have become subject to contestation, towards increased pluralism and openness – much similar to notions of ‘Africanness’ as fluid, dynamic and changeable – leaving the unitary idea of black community.

The community is felt to be on the wrong road, and it is the intellectual’s job to give them a new direction, firstly by recovering and then by donating the racial awareness that the masses seem to lack. This perspective currently confronts a pluralistic position, which affirms blackness as an open signifier and seeks to celebrate complex representations of a black particularity that is internally divided: by class, sexuality, gender, age, ethnicity, economics, and political consciousness. There is no unitary idea of black community here... (Gilroy 2003: 68).

What consequences does this emerging ‘counterculture of modernity’ within the ‘overdeveloped countries’ have for Afro-Americans, African Europeans, and Africans in diaspora, and for people inside Africa?³⁷¹

Black voices from within the overdeveloped countries may be able to go on resonating in harmony with those produced from inside Africa or they may, with varying degrees of reluctance, turn away from the global project of black advancement once the symbolic and political, if not the material and economic, liberation of Southern Africa is completed (Gilroy 2003: 71).

³⁷¹ Note the analogy in the use of the term ‘diaspora’ in ‘African diaspora’ and ‘Jewish Diaspora’. In Afrocentric discourse, there are ambivalent positions with regard to Judaism and Jews. The use of the term ‘diaspora’ suggests a commonality in the human suffering of both Jews and Africans, and their descendants, as a result of forced movements throughout the world. Like denials of the Holocaust, the human suffering related to the ‘African diaspora’ has long been denied or underfor a long time belittle and marginalised. Illustrative in this regard is a citation of Franz Fanon (1967): “...an Anti-Semite is inevitably an Anti-Negro” (p. 122). Allegedly, there are ‘African Jews’ in southern Africa, like the Lemba in Malawi and Zimbabwe, for which DNA samples would provide evidence that the Lemba actually had ancestral connections to Judaic populations (see for instance: <http://www.freemaninstitute.com/Gallery/lemba.htm>). In Afrocentric discourse, there is a narrative claiming African origins in Jewish customs and tradition (Lovemore Mbigi referred to this assertion at various occasions). On the other hand, in the United States, Mary Lefkowitz (1997) was accused of being “the leader of a Jewish ‘onslaught’ against people of African descent,” because of her academic critique on the idea of the *Black Athena* about the assumed African origins of ancient Greek civilisation. With regard to Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa specifically, there is often a tendency to make generalising statements on ‘Jews in South Africa’ as a whole, with elements of both antipathy (due to their supposed economic successes) and appreciation. Overall, a sense of appreciation rather than antipathy seem to prevail in ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa, e.g. as in the Foundational Study by *Africa Now* (2003) on leadership in South Africa that was commissioned by *Eskom*. Joe Matsua (*Eskom*) pointed at the many similarities between cultural codes among the Jewish community and traditional African values, such as *ubuntu* (interview on 11 March 2004). In this research, at any rate no explicit anti-Semitic sentiments were found in verbal expressions or publications on Afrocentric management perspectives.

Here is a striking parallel with Appiah's remarks about the uncertain prospects of new Pan Africanist alliances, regarding intercontinental linkages and within Africa, that are not based on essentialist views of 'Africanness' with reference to 'race'. Obviously, the postmodern and the postcolonial mean different things to different people. Supposedly, to Kwame Anthony Appiah postcoloniality represents a cry for the 'ethical universal', demanding respect for human suffering in Africa, and humanism: "And on that ground, it is not an ally for Western postmodernism, but an agonist, from which I believe postmodernism may have something to learn" (Appiah 1992: 155).

Concluding remarks: dimensions of 'Africanness'

In summary, it is possible now to typify broadly different ways of identification in African contexts, alluding to a sense of 'Africanness'. At the one end of the spectrum, there are versions of an essentialist tradition in defining 'Africanness'. This (Pan Africanist) tradition is largely based on the notion of (black) 'race' as the principal unifying factor and identity marker, in which a categorical solidarity and morality is assumed, among Africans on the continent and beyond. Allegedly, traditional African values and the notion of 'cultural decolonisation' seem particularly important aspects, with the purpose of disposing of the 'neurosis of victimisation', although articulated in varying ways. In this perspective on African identity, the integrative function of identity is apparently very important.

Secondly, at the other end of the spectrum, there is a growing non-essentialist tradition in conceptualising 'Africanness', phrased in terms of African identity *in-the-making*, and 'as performed'. This orientation represents a more differential, dynamic and fluid perspective and seeks to move away from primordial notions of 'African culture', and away from 'race'. The following citation from Lesiba Joe Teffo, South African philosopher and expert on the *ubuntu* concept, illustrates a transcending, more flexible and situational interpretation of the *ubuntu* concept:

The Africanness of *ubuntu* is how we localize or express it. [...] *Ubuntu* will assist us in developing a social approach that suits our situation in relation to our varied cultures and values (Teffo 1995: 1).

Consequently, alliances with social movements of diasporic Africans are no longer self-evident. This approach appears to be more inclusive, also towards people living in Africa from European or Asian origin. In both perspectives, however, it remains important to acknowledge the "distinctive postcolonial realities of multiple arenas, fluid identities, and positional relations of power..." (Werbner 1996: 1-2). These theoretical considerations together should now be made useful by developing a practical tool for interpreting Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa.

Dimensions of 'Africanness'

From reviewing (a selection of) the body of literature on identity formation in an Africa context, as discussed above, a number of interpretations in the identity politics of 'Africanness' can be derived and reworked into a basic analytical framework, recognising the multiple character of (ethnic) identity and identification in relational terms and in situational terms. It roughly distinguishes seven dimensions in interpreting identity politics of 'Africanness': (1) the ethical dimension; (2) the integrative dimension; (3) the protest dimension; (4) the legitimating dimension; (5) the creative dimension; (6) the protective dimension and (7) the consolation dimension. This list is neither exhaustive, nor mutually exclusive, but covers practically all theoretical perspectives discussed so far in a rather comprehensive way. Such a framework is intrinsically somewhat reductionist, but can nevertheless serve as a practical tool for the analysis of phenomena in Africa that are strongly identity-related, such as Afrocentric perspectives on leadership and management. It is likely that in specific cases more than one dimension deserves consideration simultaneously. In Chapter 10, the basics of this framework are applied to interpretative viewpoints on 'African management' discourse in South Africa.

A discussion on postmodernist and postcolonial (African) identities is particularly interesting insofar as it has implications for understanding 'Africanness' in relation to identification and ethnicity, as summarised in Table I. Although it is somewhat dangerous to make firm statements in this regard, at first sight, it seems that the 'protest dimension' and the 'ethical dimension' are likely to get more emphasis in a context of postcoloniality.

Dimensions	Description/features
Ethical dimension	Prescribing notions of moral behaviour, an ethical code of conduct, centring on humanity and human values, with prophesying tendencies
Integrative dimension	Unifying, homogenising, consensus seeking, reinforcing a sense of belonging and commitment (e.g. nation-building projects at national level; creating 'strong organisational cultures', facilitating 'teambuilding' or 'cultural diversity management' at institutional level)
Protest dimension	Confrontational, provocative, emancipatory, mobilising social protest, fighting off inferiority and alienation, seeking universal recognition, contesting dominant perspectives, e.g. (Eurocentric) cultural hegemony
Legitimating dimension	Mystifying, rhetorical use of identity to legitimise existing power configurations and status quo and to avoid criticism; concealing lack of transparency, fraud and corruption practices; potentially repressive
Creative dimension	Consciously 'toying' with identities, objective-oriented, extremely flexible, calculated manoeuvring, entrepreneurial, opportunistic
Protective dimension	Primarily aimed at survival, either giving in, and reluctantly adopting another identity, or denial, intentionally avoiding imposed identification
Consolation dimension	Hidden subjugated identity, a source of comfort in bad times, e.g. in instances of oppression and exploitation

Table I: Seven dimensions in relation to identification and African identity

In addition, the 'legitimizing dimension' may come increasingly under fire, as in times of distrusting 'grand narratives' there may be less unconditional support for Africanist ideology, or any other dogmatic ideology for that matter.

Mindful of Appiah's suggestion 'because the value of identities is thus relative, we must argue for and against them case by case', the relational and strategic dimensions of identity and identification should remain in focus. Therefore, one should be prepared to look for different layers in the ways that people and institutions represent themselves and 'explain' their understanding of identity and intentions accordingly. On the surface, for example, the ethical dimension of 'Africanness' may be openly displayed and advertised, whereas at a deeper level a more opportunistic and creative dimension can be observed. This is not a moral judgement on the discursive use of 'Africanness', but merely a comment on social identification and the strategic use of ethnicity in African contexts.

The aim of this chapter is exploring ways to approach African identity, 'Africanness', and to discuss prevailing issues, concerns, priorities, sensitivities and relevant historical and cultural contexts in which particular debates have emerged. In definitions of 'Africanness', broadly two perspectives can be distinguished. Firstly, an Afrocentric perspective; secondly, the idea of African identity *in-the-making*, 'Africanness' *as performed*. Afrocentrism claims to capture a distinct African worldview, highlighting the Otherness and uniqueness of Africa (and Africans), with specific moral implications about Africans, and black people in general. Represented as an Africa-centred paradigm, Afrocentrism seeks to contest 'Eurocentric' cultural hegemony that is supposedly universalistic and as such rarely challenged. Although sometimes by means of 'poor scholarship' and brought in provocative, ideologically loaded ways, it nevertheless succeeds in drawing attention in popular media and academic debate, occasionally leading to revisiting 'conventional wisdom'. Afrocentrism receives also a lot of criticism for its – sometimes – rather rigid ideas on 'Africanness' and its generalising and homogenising tendencies, employing questionable notions of Otherness and 'victimisation', as if there would be no other ways of being African.

By contrast, 'Africanness' can also be defined in terms of 'becoming', emphasising the open-ended, dynamic and fluid character of (African) identity, and its multiplicity in practical use, in particular when understood in relational terms and in the context of postcoloniality. Postmodernist and postcolonial theory seem to reinforce non-essentialist conceptions of 'Africanness', although essentialist notions of 'Africanness' seem quite persistent in public discourse, for various reasons. This is partly due to mechanisms of external identifications: as long as others, not in the last place the 'global community', continue to perceive Africa and Africans in rigid and typecasting essentialist terms, it remains difficult to change the dominant imagery. When for obvious reasons,

essentialist notions of ‘Africanness’ cease to be productive for Africans, they will automatically adopt other ways to define themselves and gain control over the discourse *about themselves*.

Supposedly, Afrocentrism lends itself quite easily to mobilise protest and rally ‘alienated’ and discontented people in Africa – unhappy for various reasons. It may be a way to develop and articulate ‘a counterculture to modernity’.

Afrocentric discourse, of which ‘African management’ philosophy is one of the offshoots that happens to be localised in South Africa, deserves serious academic examination. It needs to be contextualised and historicised in broader Afrocentric discourse, also taking into account the various criticisms. Otherwise, any interpretation would be incomplete and invalid, or at least one-sided. Both underlying motives and strategic interests ‘under the surface’ should be looked into, exposing the ‘creative’ or ‘mystifying’ use of ‘Africanness’ in different managerial and organisational contexts, and the ethical dimension and the protest dimension of Afrocentric discourse as well. Potentially positive contributions ought to be acknowledged and examined as well.

This chapter, jointly with the previous one on Afrocentrism, is a prelude to developing four interpretative viewpoints on ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa: a historical dimension; management strategies for business transformation; ‘Africanisation’ and post-apartheid identity formation, and finally a critical perspective from management guru theory. These are addressed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 10: An interpretative framework

Introduction

This chapter does not aim to summarise the previous chapters, but to provide the reader with four distinctive but related interpretative perspectives to view ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. Naturally, these viewpoints concern the researcher’s interpretation. They are not definitive by any means, as meanings and interpretations may change again over time, and supposedly, there is no such a thing as ‘the ultimate interpretation’. The challenge is to bring all related complexities and manifold perspectives down to no more than four feasible focal points: (1) the historical dimension, (2) the process of business transformation, (3) processes of post-apartheid identity formation, and (4) a ‘management guru’ perspective.

The foregoing chapters have strongly suggested the importance of contextualisation in interpreting the social phenomenon of ‘African management’ discourse. ‘Contextualisation’ is not defined here merely as backgrounding with ‘context information’ but as situating “discourse deeply in social structure and social processes” (Blommaert 2001: 13).³⁷² In this thesis, contextualisation is operationalised in the first place by highlighting the historical and political dimension, underlining that ‘African management’ discourse has not just come ‘out of the blue’. Hence, the ‘pre-emergence’ of the discourse was included, pointing at continuities with the past, without neglecting the drastic changes, especially after 1994, amongst other things in labour relations and in the domain of management and organisation.

The historical dimension is recaptured and analysed in section 10.1, in which ‘African management’ discourse is seen through the theoretical lens of postcolonialism and organisation studies. In section 10.2, the process of business transformation in South Africa is taken as the focal point. Hein Marais has made meaningful theoretical contributions to South Africa’s transformation process and how Afrocentric perspectives have surfaced in that context (Marais 2001). His views need to be elaborated by specifically focusing on an analysis at micro level: how do emergent Afrocentric visions of management and organisation fit in the context of South African business transformation? Part of such an analysis concerns the contested ‘marriage’ of *ubuntu* and capitalism. Amongst others, this relates to the translation (contextualisation, indigenisation or ‘Africanisation’) of global management perspectives into (g)localised versions, simultaneously giving back something to the global (the idea of ‘glocal *ubuntu*’). Moreover, ‘African management’

³⁷² In Chapter 2, the meaning of ‘context analysis’ and ‘contextualisation’ in the context of this research was explained.
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 261 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

discourse can be seen in terms of the 'integration perspective' (Martin, J. 2002). The latter is particularly useful in order to understand the role of 'African management'-style transformation workshops as 'truth and reconciliation exercises' at corporate level.

Section 10.3 treats 'African management' discourse in view of identity formation, in the light of broader (re-)emergent debates on Afrocentrism and 'Africanisation' and as a case of (g)localisation, spelled out in utterly differentiated ways. The latter is seen against the background of a rather ambivalent ideological space – if not to say an 'ideological vacuum' – that occurred when apartheid ideology became obsolete. Processes of identification and identity formation are a key concept in this effort to deconstruct 'African management' discourse. Theorising identity formation (in African contexts) and global cultural processes (as discussed in chapters 8 and 9) are linked in this section to the empirical findings as presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5. This section draws attention to at least two points. Firstly, an Afrocentric perspective on management and organisation may be presented in a specific cultural idiom, but may mean quite different things. Secondly, in view of the previous remark, 'Africanisation' in the context of 'African management' discourse does not appear to aim at an immediate take-over, an attempt to 'hijack' dominant management discourse, as non-Afrocentrists might fear. Rather, its symbolic meanings seem to be its most vital feature, with the search for intellectual and cultural recognition as a crucial element.

Finally, section 10.4 introduces, as an 'extra bonus', an atypical additional theoretical perspective with regard to deconstructing 'African management' discourse in South Africa, 'management guru theory' and concepts such as 'management fads' and 'management buzzwords'. This offers an opportunity to look at 'African management' discourse, for a moment disregarding its claims to 'Africanness'. As such, 'management guru theory' would be hopelessly insufficient as a single interpretative perspective, but as an additional tool, it makes a contextualised approach more comprehensive. First, the historical dimension will be considered.

10.1 The historical dimension

In 'African management' discourse, one can find abundant references to an idealised pre-colonial past. South Africa's 'precolonial past' is an imprecise concept to say the least, an era that probably ended some time in (or before) the 16th century, although the term 'end' and 'beginning' are capricious. There was never a specific historical moment in time that suddenly everything started to be 'colonial' and ceased to be 'precolonial'. Similarly, problematic are for instance distinctions between 'colonial' and 'postcolonial' and between 'apartheid' and 'post-apartheid'. Notably, 'African management' discourse emerged approximately *more than three centuries after* the arbitrary ending of 'precolonial times'. 'Everything' started to change drastically from that moment

onwards: “Well, there goes the neighbourhood!” as the famous cartoonist Zapiro once expressed in a drawing commemorating the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck and his company at Cape Good Hope in 1652?³⁷³ Why was there ‘suddenly’ a call for something with roots that go back so long ago and why did this longing not surface before? For some reason, at a particular place and moment in time, a group of people specifically began to revert to a largely unknown world that existed before European settlers set foot on African soil at the southern tip of the continent. Was it because life used to be ‘better’ before the introduction of colonialism, more peaceful and harmonious before that, or was it precisely because it was so long ago, that more or less anything could be made up and fantasised to be associated with these so-called ‘precolonial times’?

Elements of ‘magical realism’

With less difficulty, references in ‘African management’ discourse to ‘precolonial times’ could be understood metaphorically, as postcolonial symbols of an idealised world. This might be seen as a longing for a ‘reconstructed’ and ‘romanticised’ past, with ‘imagined communities’ (e.g. Anderson 1983). It seems somewhat incorrect to speak about this subject in terms of ‘invented tradition’ in the sense of mimicking institutions and ceremonies of (former) colonial authorities (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). It does not concern so much an *invention* of the past, as if nothing had been there before and as if most was copied from preceding suppressors, but a continuous reconstruction of different histories and cultural elements pulled together, existing once (or not) in different places, contexts, and time frames. This process has produced serious misconceptions of indigeneity and authenticity. The anthropologist Adam Kuper, originating from South Africa, has criticised the idea of the ‘noble savage’, the idealisation of ‘primitive society’, and the upsurge of ‘indigenous peoples movement’ in southern Africa, especially if the descendants of these supposedly indigenous peoples should have exclusive rights, e.g. to land, and if ‘immigrants’ should therefore have less rights (Kuper 2003; 2005).³⁷⁴ Kuper hints at the role of external actors, such as international NGOs and financing agencies, which have considerable complicity in making the reinvention of ‘primitive society’ happen.

In the reconstruction of ‘imagined communities’ as represented in ‘African management’ discourse, various cultural sources have been tapped into: oral histories, mythologies, and even fantasies, varying from southern, eastern, and northern African civilisations in ancient times, Khoikhoi and San peoples many centuries before the 1600s, to ‘Bantu societies’ from various

³⁷³ The cartoon was created by ‘Zapiro’ and was published on 5 April 2002 in the Mail&Guardian (courtesy of Jonathan Shapiro).

³⁷⁴ The idea of the ‘noble savage’ and the assumed dichotomy between ‘savage’ and ‘civilised’ was discussed in the section A ‘return to Africa’ as political project in Chapter 8 of this thesis, section 8.1 *Afrocentrism*.

locations in more recent times.³⁷⁵ This mixing is part of an eclectic process, creating a new way of seeing the world. Moreover, 19th century colonial and anthropological writings have proved useful sources in conceiving a sense of ‘traditional African society’, to be imagined and used in contemporary contexts.³⁷⁶ Arguably, ‘African management’ discourse combines imaginative and realist elements. By means of imagination, it becomes possible to “escape from the politics of dominance and subservience” (Ashcroft; Griffiths & Tiffin 1989: 35). A brief excursion to African literature may be instructive. Between the 1950s and 1980s, there was a powerful influence of socialist realism in African writing, in opposition to imperialism.³⁷⁷

...works of realism have tended to manifest parochial ideas around the concept of an African ‘golden age’ before the advent of colonialism... (Gaylard 2005: 24).

As assumed, ‘African realism’ displayed ‘an obvious *realist* heritage from the West’ (Gaylard 2005: 11). At the time, African literature was largely ‘prescriptive’, whereas it had to be ‘truly African, indigenous’ and “advancing resistance to cultural imperialism via glorification of tradition” (Gaylard 2005: 19, 20). The parallels between Gaylard’s analysis of postcolonial African literature and, in this case, Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa are definitely striking. When explaining postcolonialism in African literature, Gerard Gaylard cited Richard Rorty’s argument that the ‘founders of a new form of culture’ would be inclined to use the old cultural idiom. Only at a later stage, these terms were to be challenged (Rorty 1989: 56, in Gaylard 2005: 12). Once the yoke of colonial domination had been shaken off and the harsh realities of postcolonial society became manifest, elements of ‘magical realism’ crept into African literature, still mostly describing ‘reality’ rather than ‘fantasy’. A magical ‘non-realistic’ longing also appears to have entered organisational discourse, amongst others becoming manifest through ‘African management’ philosophy. In a similar way, some of the harsh realities of post-apartheid South Africa were gradually becoming evident with the passing of colonialism and the abolition of apartheid. At that point, ‘African management’ discourse was evolving, and reaching a modest but ever wider audience – as analysed in chapters 3, 4 and 5 – getting the message across in a rather prescriptive style, in the sense of providing (or claiming to provide) clear guidelines (e.g. ‘How to...?’) and in a rather compelling and masculine ways (e.g., ‘We should...’). For instance, this is clearly illustrated by multiple lists of bullet point-wise recommendations and instructions in Lovemore Mbigi’s writings. Simultaneously, the notion of an imagined harmonious community life emerged, which

³⁷⁵ This is discursively justified by reference to the notion that the essence of ‘Africanness’ would be the same all over Africa; there would only be ‘minor’ regional cultural differences. This is an illustration of the principle of indigenisation.

³⁷⁶ The work of Valentim Mudimbe (1988) is relevant in this regard, as discussed in 8.1 *Afrocentrism*.

³⁷⁷ In this regard, *The Empire Writes Back* by Ashcroft; Griffiths, *et al.* (1989) equally provides interesting insights in postcolonial literature, with a scope much broader than postcolonial African literature only.

was conveyed through the concept of *ubuntu* and the projection of an idealised precolonial African village. To many this appeared as quite appealing to contrast the growing realisation that not quite everything was ‘just fine’ after apartheid.

One can encounter in ‘African management’ discourse elements of ‘realism’ and elements of ‘fantasy’ (or ‘magical realism’?), if one wishes to continue the analogy with African literature.³⁷⁸ Supposedly, this feature is a demonstration of South Africa’s transitional stage after 1994, as reflected in the discourse. It seems typical of moving from one stage to another, from opposing the former status quo of colonialism and apartheid, while yearning to ‘be truly African, indigenous’ and ‘advancing resistance to cultural imperialism via glorification of tradition’, analogous to a similar ‘socialist realism’ in African literature in opposition to imperialism. The new stage of post-apartheid brought about difficulties, disappointments, and as a result ideals and dreams. Elements of ‘realism’ concern its specifically prescriptive nature, using a ‘realistic’ cultural idiom, mainly produced by colonial administrators, ethnologists, and apartheid ideologues.³⁷⁹ Altogether, they resemble pretty much ‘old’ Anglo-Saxon and Eurocentric organisational discourse, while simultaneously aspiring to be ‘truly African and indigenous’, seeking cultural/intellectual recognition. Elements of ‘fantasy’ (‘magical realism’) concern images of an idealised precolonial African village, as well as references to African mythology, and African spirituality. Moreover, the idea of the ‘return to Africa’ is a vital element in this regard. As discussed in Chapter 8, this is a prominent feature in Pan Africanist and Afrocentric ideology. Supposedly, it stands for a literal return to Africa of (Afro-American) descendants of slaves, who had been abducted from the African continent to the Americas and the Caribbean, but also a symbolic return, in the sense of ‘rediscovering’ one’s cultural roots and redefining one’s ‘centredness’ in the world. The latter aspect touches upon issues of identity formation, in section 10.3 of this chapter.

Ritual purification

The desire to ‘return to Africa’ and to be ‘truly African, indigenous’ creates the impression that the producers of the discourse invoke a sense of *purification*, reaching out to an authentic, unchanged and unspoiled state of affairs that once was. Chapters 8 and 9 analysed the flaws in such thinking and the illusory nature of such a project. The notion of ‘purification’ also became manifest in a project referred to as ‘decolonising the mind’. This project was initiated in African literature with

³⁷⁸ It is not suggested here that ‘elements of fantasy’ and ‘magical realism’ are synonymous. ‘Magical realism’ refers to developments in postcolonial African literature, as analysed by Gaylard (2005), which still implies rather realistic features. Perhaps, ‘African management’ discourse could be labelled a case of ‘magical realism’ as well, but then in the realm of management visions.

³⁷⁹ As discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, section 6.1 *A long history of coercive labour*.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as its illustrious representative (Thiong'o 1997).³⁸⁰ In post-apartheid South Africa, this notion was introduced into the domain of management and organisation by UNISA's *Research Unit for African Philosophy* in 1995 (Malherbe 1996).³⁸¹ This event brought an 'African management' vision in view. It not only aimed at the 'previously disadvantaged' but also organisational leaders, who held responsible positions before and after 1994, who were challenged to 'decolonise' their mindsets. The captivating capacity of 'African management' philosophy and an (Afrocentric) 'decolonisation of the mind' approach has a certain logic in view of a widely felt need in South Africa to 'de-racialise': the process of "the unpacking of 'racially constructed' understandings of the self, the other, and the world one lives" (Franchi 2003: 185).³⁸² Is it therefore not a bit patronising to criticise the idea of 'decolonising the mind' and 'African management' philosophy as illusory? It would assume that the producers of the discourse, many of whom presently belong to South Africa's intelligentsia and corporate leadership, were not aware of the unfeasibility of transforming the metropolitan business community of Johannesburg into a rural village community. Rather, specific *emphasis on symbolic meanings* pertaining to this venture, and appreciating an effort of what could be labelled as 'ritual purification' puts 'African management' discourse in a different perspective than that of a project initiated by a group of allegedly frustrated daydreamers. 'Ritual purification' could also be simply read as 'awareness raising' about the new political realities affecting business and labour relations in South Africa, taking cognisance of the 'fears of whites' and the 'aspirations of blacks', precisely by drawing attention to the past. This aspect stood out clearly during the days of CBM, as pointed out in Chapter 3.

From binarism back to hybridity

Framing 'purification' in terms of 'decolonising the mind' and 'raising political awareness' supposedly makes 'African management' discourse quite different (and probably less 'dangerous' to some) from contemporary forms of occidentalist 'purification', as expressed in extreme acts of Muslim fundamentalism. In Occidentalism, the City is an image that symbolises moral and cultural decay (Buruma & Margalit 2004). A process of 'cleansing' is thus deemed necessary, which can for instance be achieved by a physical destruction of the City. Afrocentrism and Occidentalism share the symbolism around the image of the City. They share a cry for spiritual freedom, a wish for a – what is believed to be – profound spiritual culture, for purity, and a desire of returning to an imaginary past. In Afrocentrism, there is also the prospect of redemption from the impurities of the

³⁸⁰ The notion of 'decolonising the mind' and the contribution of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in that regard was discussed in the previous chapter, in section 9.2 *Identity in-the-making*.

³⁸¹ This was discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, in section 3.2 *Distribution*.

³⁸² The issue of 'de-racialisation' was discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid*.
'African management' in South Africa Page 266 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

City, especially for Africans in diaspora, by a return to Africa, literally or figuratively. Africans in diaspora would have become lost ‘zombies in the midst of stone and steel cities of the Americas’, but nevertheless, they can reclaim Africa and ‘Africa can redeem itself’ (Asante 2003: 135).³⁸³

A Dutch long-time foreign correspondent based in Nairobi, Kees Broere, drew a parallel between fundamentalist Muslims and Africans who he found increasingly angered about their ‘arrested history’, about a loss of ‘cultural roots’ and the fact that their development came to a grinding halt because of colonialism. In Broere’s reading, ‘the west’ would therefore be co-responsible for the mounting anger among radical Africans and fundamentalist Muslims that may sway to a desire for martyrship.³⁸⁴ Linking the notion of purification to Occidentalism comes near to a reading of ‘African management’ philosophy as a form of cultural protest. However, the pretentious aspect of purification goes simultaneously and paradoxically with the acknowledgement of influences from ‘the North’, ‘the West’, and ‘the East’. All of these influences would be reflected in corporate cultures and organisational climates in South Africa, with ‘southern’ and ‘eastern’ orientations being less prominent than ‘western’ and ‘northern’ orientations. This is exemplified by Ronnie Lessem’s influential ‘Four World Model’, richly cited by prominent ‘African management’ protagonists, such as Mbigi and Boon.³⁸⁵ Again, these are highly essentialist images, treating ‘the Afrocentric’ and ‘the Eurocentric’ as sharply distinct categories. All the same, the hybrid (‘western’ and ‘non-western’) nature of South Africa’s corporate cultures and management perspectives was acknowledged, implicitly recognising past colonial influences. By implication, management views and practices in South Africa that are otherwise perhaps too easily labelled as ‘Anglo-Saxon’, ‘western’ or ‘Eurocentric’, would carry ‘non-western’ (African and Asian) features, although this is seldom openly stated.

The binary distinction [...] employed by organization and management theorists often masks the hybridity of their origins. They disguise the fact that management and organization texts are not distinctively western [...] but rather a hybrid product of the colonial encounter (Frenkel & Shenhav 2006: 859).

For various reasons, it makes good (business) sense for management views and practices to reflect – at least partially – the wide range of cultural diversities of the society in which it operates

³⁸³ See Chapter 8 of this thesis, section 8.1 *Afrocentrism*.

³⁸⁴ *Van woede naar geweld* [From anger to violence], Volkskrant, 21 August 2006.

³⁸⁵ Lessem associated the ‘northern world’ with rationalism (‘the mind’), the ‘western orientation’ with pragmatism (‘the body’), the ‘eastern orientation’ with integration and holism (‘the heart’), and the ‘southern perspective’ with humanism (‘the soul’), as also described in Chapter 3, section 3.1 *Emergence and externalisation*. This model resembles very much Carl Jung’s analysis of personality and the role of archetypes in perceiving (observation or intuition) and in assessing (thinking or feeling) organisational realities. From this, four dimensions can be derived, four different ways of constructing social reality. Altogether, it was believed that a balance between these four dimensions would be most preferable. Amongst others, Gareth Morgan (1992) discussed this analysis in his book *Images of Organization*, pp. 219-224.

(e.g. Glastra 1999). Perhaps, in somewhat extreme and theatrical ways, this is what ‘African management’ discourse tries to agendise for South Africa, without disturbing society’s prime foundations in terms of macro-economic policies or production mode(s). In the 1970s and the 1980s, black managers and black professionals were only in marketing and advertising firms able to move up to senior positions. In this type of business there seemed to be awareness about the need of recruiting people who were familiar with the likes and dislikes – also in cultural terms – of the majority of consumers in South Africa’s internal market. In retrospect, a similar awareness was part of Mike Boon’s rationalisation of why he became engaged with an Afrocentric leadership approach, and *Group Africa*’s marketing philosophy of ‘experiential communication’: learn about the habits and values of your (potential) customers, and genuinely make contact with them.³⁸⁶

In other words, ‘African management’ discourse aims to make ‘the southern aspect’ stronger and more visible, while seeking a more balanced, hybrid, and ultimately less essentialist perspective that assumingly suits local South African contexts better.³⁸⁷ Moreover, it acknowledges the presence of ‘non-African influences’. All this takes a struggle for cultural recognition, expressed in Afrocentric ways and using essentialist representations, to contest what is generally declared as ‘obvious’, as ‘unquestionable’. There are no clear-cut criteria to assess the ‘balancedness’ or ‘appropriateness’ of any preferred management approach for South Africa, if such a thing is at all conceivable, or desirable. All this is not a matter of judging what is right and what is wrong, but remains largely subject to power processes. One can only speculate about the outcome.

With regard to ‘African management’ discourse, acts of ‘purification’ seem to be of a symbolic nature rather than that they would call for some kind of ‘take-over’ or physical destruction. This is supported by the feature that discursively there is apparently no fundamental problem with a capitalist mode of production or a neo-liberal macro-economic policy framework, supposedly unlike tenets among Muslim fundamentalists. However, attendants of ‘African management’-type of workshops (i.e. those who were not very pleased with the contents and methods of such workshops) have repeatedly perceived such events as ‘insulting’, as research data revealed.³⁸⁸ Now could this be interpreted as *intentional* vocal violence brought upon them, by means of some sort of verbal public punishment for injustices committed in the past? If this is the case, it might have adverse consequences as well: what does it help if the alleged defendants feel utterly offended and turn their backs to the process?

The purifying aspect of ‘African management’ discourse concerns the urge to represent its

³⁸⁶ Mike Boon’s ideas of the ‘African way’ of leadership were described in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

³⁸⁷ A notion like a ‘truly South African management’ approach would be untenable, because of the diversity factor.

³⁸⁸ This observation was made in section 4.2 *Mbigi’s Rainmaker Management Consultants: a key actor* in Chapter 4 *African management flows: utilisation*.

approach as ‘purely African’ (or ‘purely Afrocentric’) by contrasting it sharply with ‘Eurocentric’ and ‘western’, displaying a binary epistemology. Can culture be conceived as ‘pure’, and can ‘African culture’ be understood to be ‘pure’? It looks like a powerful claim. It suggests difference, but this does not say much about its contents. What does it say? It could imply a negative meaning – ‘that which is not Eurocentric’ – and supposedly a positive meaning, concerning ‘(re-)appropriation’: “Africans apparently want to (re-)appropriate their authentic identity” (Boessenkool & Van Rinsum 2006: 186). Boessenkool and Van Rinsum suggested that Afrocentrism could be seen as ‘a metaphor for liberation’, referring to the work of Paul Ricoeur about the creative use of language, the use of language as strategy, and about the creation of a ‘novel reality’ (Ricoeur 1973).

...one may argue that ‘afrocentric’ could then well serve as a metaphor for liberation, liberation from a hegemonic Eurocentric science and technology; liberation from a hegemonic rationalist and instrumental organisational theory; liberation from a neo-liberal market ideology with the commercial interests of Global Big Business (Boessenkool & Van Rinsum 2006: 186-187).

Seeing the ‘African management’ project as a metaphor attempting to *reinscribe reality*, and a metaphor for *liberation* is supported by this thesis, but it would not be a metaphor for liberation from a neoliberal market. On the contrary, the research data point at a symbiosis with a neoliberal market and with a capitalist mode of production that is discursively not considered problematic.³⁸⁹ In practice ‘African values’ seem to coexist and merge quite well with ‘Eurocentric’ value orientations, thereby basically refuting the ‘Afrocentric’ versus ‘Eurocentric’ management dichotomy.³⁹⁰ If they can coexist, is there any real ground left for opposition?

In critical views of the culture concept, the aspect of creolisation and the notion of a continuous process of cultural diffusion and change were particularly highlighted.³⁹¹ In addition, from the perspective of postcolonial theories in connection with organisation studies, one is urged to view any perspective on management and organisation as the result of a long historical and irregular development. Postcolonial theory has been hardly applied to the field of management and organisation to date. The ‘relevance of the colonial encounter for a management and organization history’ needs to be recognised (Frenkel & Shenhav 2006: 856). Such a theoretical view would highlight ‘African management’ discourse as a *hybrid* social construction, with the other pole of the binary opposition having a similar hybrid nature. Both in an Afrocentric and in an Eurocentric perspective, the fusion between (*former*) ‘coloniser’ and the (*former*) ‘colonised’ with a corresponding hybrid epistemology usually remains concealed (Frenkel & Shenhav 2006: 855). The

³⁸⁹ This observation was made in Chapter 5 of this thesis, especially section 5.2.7 on ‘*African management*’, *capitalism*, and *trade unions*.

³⁹⁰ As also discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in the section 5.2.6 *Afrocentric/African - Eurocentric/Western binarism*.

³⁹¹ The notion of creolisation was discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, and the notion of cultural diffusion in Chapter 8, section 8.2 *The Black Athena debate*.

latter view is linked to an (older) notion that,

...colonial/imperial institutions, structures, and practices are characterized by considerable heterogeneity. [...] ...the overriding consequence of such practices, *as far as the colonized peoples were concerned*, was broadly the same, to wit, the attempted domination and subjugation of the colonized. From the perspective of the colonized, therefore, it makes ample sense to see a kind of overall *uniformity*, rather than heterogeneity in colonial/imperial practices (Prasad 2003a: 6) [Italics in original text].

In similar ways, colonial authorities created stabilised, well-defined 'tribes' in African contexts, allegedly 'to clean up the complexity', which colonial administrators found highly confusing (Werbner 1996: 22-23).³⁹² Supposedly, the 'colonial' signifies brute control and domination, mostly implying a one-way direction of influencing.

Imitative players, counterplayers, and non-players

In the realm of management and organisation, a 'western' or 'Anglo-Saxon' perspective in South Africa is easily associated with similar notions: top-down one-way influencing, managerial control. Such associations are particularly strong in postcolonial contexts, and beyond, referred to as 'ideological colonisation'. Ideological (neo-)colonialism is thus characterised by a tendency to create 'clarity' by constructing clear-cut social categories and binary conceptions that are easy to understand and make control easier. Responsive cultural resistance is usually framed in similar binary ways. Thus, 'African management' discourse could be understood as a case of cultural resistance to ('ideological') colonisation (or 'second colonisation'). The 'non-western' nature of such an expression of cultural resistance, or the 'Africanness' in itself, seem less important then, and rather seems to have a metaphorical significance. One could argue that particularly the negative aspects of contemporary dominant management discourse were partly the result of the 'colonial encounter', and we have to deal with these today, whether we live in South Africa, in Europe, or elsewhere. Colonialism has affected cultural repertoires and cultural priorities on both sides, which makes it problematic to perceive the colonised as 'losers' and the colonisers unilaterally as 'winners'. Are we not all 'losers' in the colonial game? Similarly, to represent 'African management' philosophy as the 'better alternative' is open to discussion, as it may carry similar deficiencies, because similar restricting binary conceptions. Either management perspective, whether framed as 'western' or 'non-western', carries elements of the past 'colonial encounter'. It has affected either side, the home of the former Empire in 'the West' and the areas that used to be dominated.

A clear example is the redefinition of meanings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in Britain, as

³⁹² The historical roots of the concept of 'the Tribe' was discussed in the previous chapter, in section 9.3 *Multiple identities*.

a result of ‘the setting up of a homology between sexual dominance, and political/military dominance’, which was reflected in colonies of the British Empire, such as India (Prasad 2003a: 16). Consequently, ‘any hint of femininity in men’ came to be regarded as ‘highly dangerous and harmful’. In India a parallel development occurred, where the ‘colonial ideology of hyper-masculinity’ was becoming internalised and a new cultural identity for India was proposed, highlighting notions such as warriorhood, violence, virility, that were framed as ‘true Indianness’ (*Kshatriyahood*). The parallel with ‘African management’ discourse is noteworthy, in which firm, masculine styles of leadership are promoted (e.g. Reuel Khoza and Mpho Letlape of *Eskom*), with strong images of warriorhood (e.g. Mike Boon), and abundant references to ‘King Shaka Zulu’ (e.g. Phinda Mzwakhe Madi).³⁹³ Emphasis on determination and taking ‘bold decisions’ are notable masculine features of an ‘American management’ approach. Probably, in interaction with external American management influences, through (cosmopolitan) protagonists of Afrocentric management perspectives, such as Mbigi and Khoza, masculine characteristics might have entered the discourse, which became further reinforced in the wake of neoliberalism.

Insistence on ‘indigenous culture’, ‘Africanness’, and ‘traditional values’ (e.g. Lovemore Mbigi) suggest remarkable similarities between ‘African management’ discourse or Afrocentrism more in general and the Indian ideology of *Kshatriyahood*. This is to illustrate how colonialism (read: the British Empire) has culturally affected former colonies and its own society. In practice, of course, ‘colonialism’ worked out in quite different ways, as well as acts of ‘resistance to colonialism’. In the case of management and organisation, there were for instance the ‘imitative players, the ‘counterplayers’, and the ‘innocent non-players’.³⁹⁴

In his analysis of resistance to colonialism, Nandy makes an important distinction between the resistance, on the one hand, of those he calls the counterplayers – who continue to pay ‘homage to the victors’ even in defiance (Nandy 1983: xii) – and on the other hand of the innocent nonplayers who are unwilling to be either players or counterplayers. Noting that the modern colonizing West has produced in colonies “not only its servile imitators and admirers but also its circus-tamed opponents and its tragic counterplayers performing their last gladiator-like acts of courage in front of appreciative Caesars” (Nandy 1983: iv). Nandy observes that both the imitative players as well as the defiant counterplayers continue to offer obeisance to the idea of the West as universal: what distinguishes the counterplayers from the [imitative] players is that, unlike the latter, the former seek to surpass and defeat the West at its own game (e.g., by fashioning a national culture that is more aggressively hypermasculine than even the dominant culture of the West) (Prasad 2003a: 17).

Following Nandy, Prasad considers the ‘unheroic innocent non-players’ as vital change agents to eventually topple (neo)colonialism. Namely, they offered the value of ‘the ethically sensitive and

³⁹³ Does Shaka Zulu indeed provide a suitable source of inspiration to South African top-managers to become more Afrocentric, and thus more democratic and ‘humane’? Is not an alternative interpretation at least equally plausible to say that Shaka Zulu was a terribly tyrannical ruler, which should be a warning to all South African organisational leaders to please be not like him, as suggested for example by Kets de Vries (2004)?

³⁹⁴ In this regard, Anshuman Prasad refers abundantly to *The Intimate Enemy* by Ashis Nandy (1983).

culturally rooted' (Nandy 1983: xvii) response to colonialism, as they mobilised 'the wisdom of their own stock of cultural traditions' (Prasad 2003a: 18). Although notions of 'western culture' and 'non-western culture' are considered problematic in this thesis for their homogenising and generalising tendencies, the question arises what Prasad's insights, greatly acknowledging Ashis Nandy's contributions, have to offer in terms of interpreting 'African management' discourse in South Africa?

Firstly, an archetypal distinction between categories of 'imitative players', 'counterplayers', and 'innocent non-players' in a context of (neo)colonialism seems quite helpful for our analysis as well, however *not* in the sense that the main 'players' in 'African management' discourse in South Africa could be easily placed in either category. One could not just recount the Indian situation in a similar South African version. Although (consequences of past) cultural influences of the British Empire are present in both cases, the contexts are too different to be seen in terms of a one-to-one comparison.

Secondly, Prasad's views on postcolonial theory and organisational analysis help to illuminate the practical implications of the 'colonial encounter' in the past, which affected both worlds, the world of the 'colonised' and of the 'colonisers'. Prasad's views are useful in the interpretation of some of the ambiguities or apparent paradoxes in 'African management' discourse. Several ambiguities and paradoxes were observed in Chapter 5 (section 5.2 *Deviations and critiques*), such as the embeddedness in capitalist society guided by neoliberal policies, and clear masculine, even hypermasculine characteristics found in typifications and manifestations of 'African leadership' discourse in contrast with its 'softer' humanistic outlook.

Would it be hard to imagine 'African management' producers of the early 1990s for instance as 'tragic counterplayers performing their last gladiator-like acts of courage in front of appreciative Caesars', while paying 'homage to the victors' even in defiance and 'seeking to surpass and defeat the West at its own game?' 'African management' producers of the early 1990s, as examined in Chapter 3 of this thesis, could to some extent indeed be identified as 'counterplayers'. What united them was a common aversion to undemocratic labour relations and corresponding organisational climates, developed since colonial times and thrived in a context of apartheid ideology and policies. At a somewhat later stage after 1994, many representatives of 'the formerly disadvantaged' assumed responsible positions within companies or government institutions. Some among them started displaying tragic elements of what Prasad referred to as 'gladiators'. Reuel Khoza could be a good illustration of this archetype, in particular ever since he became chief non-executive officer of *Eskom Holdings Ltd.*, making substantial efforts, assisted by his intellectual associate Eric Mafuna

of *Africa Now*, to promote the concept of ‘African Business Leadership’.³⁹⁵ The contention that ‘African management’ advocates, such as Khoza – to use the words of Nandy and Prasad – sought to ‘surpass and defeat the West at its own game’ is not entirely out of line. Perhaps, Afrocentric leadership protagonists like Khoza not only challenged the legacy of colonialism and apartheid in the domain of management and organisation, but furthermore wanted to – in postcolonial terminology – ‘provincialise Europe’ (Prasad 2003a: 7). The latter comes close to the Afrocentric management notion of ‘glocal *ubuntu*’, as illustrated in the book title *Ubuntu Management Philosophy. Exporting ancient African Wisdom into the Global World* (Broodryk 2005).³⁹⁶

The image of ‘gladiator’, submissively waiting for a decisive gesture from Caesar – will his thumb go up or down (supposedly with Caesar as metaphor for dominant worldwide neoliberal discourse) – would not do justice to Khoza’s contributions to the debate. He in particular insisted that Africans should not relentlessly indulge themselves with the Africanist saga of ‘victimisation’, about which Achille Mbembe has been so vocal.³⁹⁷ In plain words, Khoza called Africans to ‘stop moaning’ and – above all – to ‘work hard’. Several senior managing directors in *Eskom*, as research data clearly show, echoed this rigorous view. For instance, when asked to describe *Eskom*’s organisational culture, *Corporate Communications Division* Managing Director Joe Matsau did not mull over ‘Africanness’, but simply answered:

The organisational culture here is: delivery, delivery, delivery, efficiency, efficiency, efficiency. [...] That is our culture: push, push, push (interview with Joe Matsau on 11 March 2004).

From a counterplaying gladiator, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, Khoza and his followers may very well have performed simultaneous roles of ‘imitative players’ as well. The rhetoric differed, the symbols differed, and the proclaimed values differed, but most seemed easily reconcilable with modern competitive ways of management and doing business, as persuasively illustrated by quotes of *Eskom*’s Managing Directors Matsau and Letlape, for instance when the latter stated that ‘management should not be too lenient on poor performers’.³⁹⁸ This statement was discursively justified by a reference to the *ubuntu* concept: division managers would have an *obligation* to *Eskom* as a community (in contrast to the allegedly ‘western’ individualistic notion of

³⁹⁵ Eric Mafuna’s involvement with Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa was described in Chapter 4 ‘African management’ flows: utilisation, especially 4.1 Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users in the case description of *Eskom*’s ‘African business leadership’.

³⁹⁶ The term ‘glocal *ubuntu*’ in management was introduced in the first chapter of this thesis, in section 1.2 *Between Optimism and Opportunism*.

³⁹⁷ Achille Mbembe’s critical comments on Africanist perspectives were discussed in Chapter 9 ‘Africanness’ as open-ended.

³⁹⁸ Presentation *Becoming Global Power Company of the Year* by Mpho Letlape at the fifth Annual Institute for Organisation Development and Transformation Conference, Boksburg, 12 November 2003.

having a *right* to something, e.g. an ‘end-of-the-year’ bonus).³⁹⁹ Khoza, Matsau, and Letlape as leading persons in a huge South African ‘public enterprise’ resemble gladiator-like counterplayers ‘seeking to surpass and defeat the West at its own game’. Yet, at the same time they perform roles of ‘imitative players’, as illustrated by IBM’s role in establishing a ‘strong culture’ in *Eskom*. In other words, key Afrocentric organisational leaders make it happen that an originally typical ‘western’ company, such as IBM, has a crucial role in assuring that *Eskom* will have a (‘western’) profile of a ‘strong organisational culture’.⁴⁰⁰ Among their subordinates, however, both inside *Eskom* as well as outside, one would come across numerous unheroic ‘innocent non-players’ who are currently submerged in an Afrocentric framing regarding leadership and management, who have had their share of apartheid experiences, racist labour practices, and authoritarian management styles.

Afrocentric ‘office guerrillas’

Eventually, ‘African management’ discourse could reach a stage, in which the ‘innocent nonplayers’ constitute a critical mass to resist ‘(neo)colonialism’ in organisations, whatever that means, and challenge organisational orthodoxies in South Africa.⁴⁰¹ They would not represent a new ‘social movement’, a messianic evangelical group or some extremist political faction, but rather free-thinking noiseless ‘office guerrillas’, inspired by leading Afrocentric ‘corporate crusaders’ (Koopman; Nasser *et al.* 1987). Supposedly, they attach importance to certain cultural traditions in resisting dominant organisational cultures with which they do not feel comfortable, but in a quiet way, less dogmatic, not as key players, not as leading ‘gladiators’ working in the spotlight. This concurs with the ‘protest function’ of African identity that was discussed in the final section of Chapter 9.

Protest dimension	Confrontational, provocative, emancipatory, mobilising social protest, fighting off inferiority and alienation, seeking universal recognition, contesting dominant perspectives, e.g. (Eurocentric) cultural hegemony
-------------------	---

‘Protesters’ in management would be able to find an own way and create ‘a new reality’, while

³⁹⁹ As cited in this thesis in Chapter 4 ‘*African management*’ flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users* in the case description of *Eskom*’s ‘*African business leadership*’.

⁴⁰⁰ IBM was assigned a contract in 2002 to help *Eskom* in leadership development and in creating a similar ‘strong culture’.

⁴⁰¹ CIDA City Campus could be seen as an example classified as ‘Afrocentric’, in the sense of promoting unconventional ways of thinking about management and leadership, supposedly based on and inspired by ‘African values’ putting emphasis on humaneness (see Chapter 4 ‘*African management*’ flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users*. Assumingly, *CIDA City Campus* promotes this way of thinking among its students, part of a future generation of (black) South African managers, entrepreneurs, and business leaders.

aware of the flaws in dominant management perspectives.⁴⁰² One possible outcome is that these ‘innocent nonplayers’ will be crucial in bringing about a shift from a rather essentialist Afrocentric perspective to a multidimensional, open-ended tradition in defining ‘Africanness’.⁴⁰³ The purpose of these tentative contemplations is to put the static, essentialist features of ‘African management’ discourse, as advanced by Afrocentric political and business elites, in a longer-term perspective. A discourse characterised by static elements and essentialist representations may lead to and motivate cultural perspectives that are eventually far less static.

False prophets or heroic counterplayers?

One of South Africa’s best-known ‘bearers of indigenous authenticity’, striving for recognition of ‘traditional culture’ and Africa’s ancient wisdom, was ‘Sanusi’ Dr Credo Mutwa.⁴⁰⁴ David Chidester made a devastating analysis of Mutwa’s manipulations to become an authority in this domain, with the support of dubious international sponsors. He pointed forcefully at Mutwa’s ‘false prophecies and illusory fantasies’ and at his construction and exploitation of ‘indigenous authenticity’ (Chidester 2004: 72, 74). According to Chidester, Mutwa’s credibility was appropriated for divination workshops for business executives (Chidester 2004: 78-79). In his concluding remarks about this ‘false prophet’, Chidester was a little mild. He considered the religious aspects in Mutwa’s work ‘important’, for instance in producing an ‘innovative mythology’ and by creating ‘new possibilities for African religion in the contemporary world’ (Chidester 2004: 83).

Although he exhorted human beings to be like superhuman gods, Credo Mutwa also insisted that representatives of Western civilization, who had constantly treated Africans as if they were a subhuman species, [...] had falsely arrogated themselves a supremely superhuman status. [...] Mutwa’s reports about extraterrestrials [...] might be regarded as reinforcing this challenge to the ‘superhuman’ status of Western human beings (Chidester 2004: 84).

This assessment is not to praise Mutwa’s achievements, but to exemplify that one could derive an unprecedented status of owning ‘indigenous authenticity’ from a combination of ‘real religious work’ (even if fake), modern means of communication (the internet), and brusquely challenging the superior status of ‘representatives of western civilization’. It is tempting to draw an analogy with Professor Lovemore Mbigi. Without using the kind of qualifications that Chidester applied to Mutwa, it is noted that Mbigi tends to ascribe himself a reputation of bearing ‘indigenous

⁴⁰² In the interview with Taddy Blecher and secondary data on *CIDA City Campus*, the so-called ‘ubuntu university’, the element of ‘enlightened self-interest’ came out strongly (Chapter 4 ‘African management’ flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users*).

⁴⁰³ The idea of a non-essentialist approach to ‘Africanness’ was discussed in the previous chapter, in 9.5 *Towards analysing ‘Africanness’*.

⁴⁰⁴ Chidester’s critical views in this matter were mentioned earlier in section 4.2 of Chapter 4 in this thesis, in a discussion of *CIDA City Campus* in Johannesburg, the so-called ‘Ubuntu University’.

authenticity’, thus acquiring an almost messianic status – praised by some, contempted by others – while Mbigi has never really tried to hide his admiration for Credo Mutwa.

The observation that is most relevant in this regard is the use of ‘indigenous authenticity’, conveyed in a religion-like fashion – fake or not fake – to defy the notion of ‘western superiority’. This trend is nothing but a contemporary form of postcolonialism, a rebellious strategy perhaps. With a parallel to postcolonial literary theory, it could be read as a challenge to reordering “the world-view that can polarize centre and periphery in the first place” (Ashcroft; Griffiths *et al.* 1989: 33). It suggests an analogy with the writings of Franz Fanon, who chose to defy the ‘coloniser’-‘colonised’ dichotomy, “in which the primary sign is axiomatically privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship” (Ashcroft; Griffiths *et al.* 1989: 125). Fanon realised the potential of resistance in the construction of new liberating narratives by employing a similar ‘radical division into paired oppositions’. Mbigi’s Afrocentric rebellious strategy is political to some extent, faintly echoing Fanon’s thoughts on Black consciousness, but not an unselfish one. It does not disregard his own commercial interests.

Occidentalist proclivities

According to the dominant view, ‘the Eurocentric’ is considered the superior pole in ‘Afrocentric’-‘Eurocentric’ binarism and the Afrocentric as the other extreme, the ‘non-western’ inferior pole. In racist 19th and 20th century anthropological and political discourse, in which Africans were denied ‘a common humanity’, a justification was found for colonial domination, in brief to ‘civilise’ Africa, thus supposedly to make it ‘less inferior’, yet as secondary in relation to Europe.⁴⁰⁵ South Africa had its own version of this experience, as became manifest in 20th century politics of official discourse (Ashforth 1990).⁴⁰⁶ At least partially ‘Afrocentric perspectives’ on management and organisation can be interpreted as *an attempt to undo* this particular status of inferiority, and in addition perhaps to change the status of superiority of ‘the Eurocentric’ (Prasad 2003a: 12). This is in line with theoretical views on Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism, as discussed at length in Chapter 8 and consistent with research data presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5. It was found that the quest for academic and intellectual recognition is an element that stands out clearly in ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa.⁴⁰⁷ In addition, the idea that the world has something to learn from Africa, and more specifically the notion of ‘glocal *ubuntu*’ in management sounds very pretentious and self-confident: an obvious attempt to challenge Eurocentric/Anglo-Saxon hegemony

⁴⁰⁵ Reference is made to the work of Davidson (1994), discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis, section 7.1 *Afrocentrism*.

⁴⁰⁶ Adam Ashforth’s scrupulous analysis was discussed in detail in 6.1 *A long history of coercive labour*.

⁴⁰⁷ This issue was dealt with in this thesis in Chapter 5 *Themes, deviations and critiques*, in section 5.2.4 *Search for (intellectual) recognition*.

in management, inside and beyond South Africa. Would the ultimate aim be to reverse discursively that inferior status previously attributed to Africa and to Africans, and to replace *negative* connotations and prejudice with unilaterally *positive* values? Such a drastic change leaves the principle of binarism intact, and the age-old (colonial) Europe-Africa divides. In addition, it affects the notion of rights, as ‘human rights’ advocates claim universalism and move ‘very often away from ‘culture’’ (Chanock 2000: 16).⁴⁰⁸ Thus, culture is used in Africa with the purpose to describe *difference*.⁴⁰⁹ The quest for authenticity in ‘traditional culture’ and a tendency towards essentialising culture is in Chanock’s view the result of an external global context (international market forces) and an internal context (national elites ‘under pressure’) (Mamdani 2000: 2-3). Allegedly, this would hinder a cultural move towards universalism, such as in the debate on ‘human rights’.

The elite controllers of institutions (perhaps more importantly, state education systems) and of symbols, can resist internal generational, gender and other challenges by the deployment of images of an essentialised culture under external challenge. ‘Authenticity’ and a consequent cultural patriotism, become a routinised response to globalisation. Such essentialising responses to change are ways of exerting authority, and they display partial immunity to discursive challenge, especially if it comes from an external source, as such challenge frequently serves to strengthen convictions (Chanock 2000: 21).

Chanock emphasised the role of elites, such as in South Africa, who tend to portray changes in ways of thinking and living of their citizens in terms of *disintegration*. He argued that ‘non-western elites’ use culture and establish for instance an explicit difference between ‘individualism’ and ‘communalism’ to construct identities in opposition to imagined features of (undifferentiated) ‘western societies’. This might facilitate a process of integration and unification internally. He called this ‘occidentalising’ in contrast to the process of orientalisating of ‘non-western cultures’ by former colonial powers (Chanock 2000: 21). Chanock’s analysis shows striking similarities with the work of Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit (Buruma & Margalit 2004). This clarifies at least to some extent why Afrocentrists are often fascinated by ‘Asian culture’ and the so-called ‘Japanese model’. Asian and Afrocentric culturalists share their occidentalist proclivity, consuming it for reasons at home.

The quest for cultural recognition touches upon a very touchy issue: ethnicity. Key concepts that make up the core of Afrocentric management philosophy, especially *ubuntu*, represent particular values that may have a strong appeal, especially to those who for whatever reasons wish

⁴⁰⁸ Since the year 2000, a ‘patriotic history’ was proclaimed in Zimbabwe, for which purpose Zimbabwean past had to be ‘rewritten’. In that endeavour, as argued by Ranger (2004), amongst others “African culture as strategic *unhu/ubuntu*, African ethics” was declared a crucial element in capturing the ‘true soul’ of African culture. *Unhu/ubuntu* was presented in opposition to the notion of ‘false universalism’, implying “the white liberal view of the world as the only model of civilization” (page 223-224).

⁴⁰⁹ See also the discussion on nationalist ideologies and ‘consolation ideologies’ in the previous chapter, section 9.1. ‘African management’ in South Africa Page 277 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

to identify with 'the New South Africa', whether they are black, white, African, Asian, or European by origin.

In the case of South Africa, apartheid ideologues have manipulated the concepts 'the tribe', and 'indigenous culture'. This makes 'African management' philosophy suspect and therefore problematic to some. Notably, not all contemporary 'African management' advocates in South Africa seem to be aware of this blemished legacy. For example, Johann Broodryk, who received a doctoral degree from UNISA, pointed out that he of course knew about the 'homeland' policies. He did not know about the arbitrary use of 'the Tribe' in this context.⁴¹⁰ The lack of awareness on how 'Tribe' and 'indigeneity' were used by apartheid ideologues in justifying 'bantustan' policies, in other words the lack of historical knowledge, is remarkable, especially for people who claim to revitalise 'ancient wisdom'.

The quest for cultural recognition, conveyed through the notion of *ubuntu* in the context of 'African management' discourse, draws attention to ethnicity. Ethnic identity can be a signifier for a political project, or 'a form of political critique':

...the fundamental political question is that of demanding an equal right with others what one might become, not of assuming some fully-fashioned identity, which is merely suppressed (Bhabha 1994: 345).⁴¹¹

Such a cultural strategy may arise 'at points of social crises' – in these terms South Africa's transition period could be characterised – when "identity is claimed either from a position of marginality or in an attempt at gaining the centre: in both senses: ex-centric" (Bhabha 1994: 254). Although Homi Bhabha did not specifically have the South African situation in mind, his words seem applicable here. The majority of the South African population come from a marginalised position, and there is certainly an attempt 'at gaining the centre'. So, to what extent 'African management' protagonists are more 'ex-centric' or *eccentric* than others remains to be seen, but research data pointed at the proclamation of particular 'eccentric organisational principles' in the context of 'African management' discourse.⁴¹² This does not preclude the possibility that they meet with a certain degree of popular support, amongst others from people in 'ex-centric positions', due to the employment of an Afrocentric identity outlook. These supporters might not be the most marginalised in society, but yet be ambitious to reach the centre and climb the ladder to the top in business organisations, receptive as they may be to Afrocentric narratives about the past, which – interpreted in Eagleton's terms of a political project – may have an amazing mobilising capacity.

⁴¹⁰ Conversation with Johann Broodryk, on 27 October 2006 in Pretoria, one day after the launch of the book *Ubuntu: Life-coping Skills from Africa* by Broodryk (2006).

⁴¹¹ Citation from *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* by Eagleton (1990), pp. 414.

⁴¹² This element was discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, section 5.1 *Themes*.

10.2 Management strategies for business transformation

An Afrocentric management approach that claims to be authentically African, more democratic and humane has found followers in management consultants, entrepreneurs and organisational leaders in South Africa, who supposedly also expected particular institutional, material and immaterial benefits from this.⁴¹³ Life histories are a factor in this regard. Research data presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5 reflect parts of the life histories of management consultants and organisational leaders. These data suggest in several cases a relationship between past political engagements – in particular relating to the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s and the 1990s – and an affiliation with Afrocentric management perspectives on leadership and management. Some were (anti-apartheid) political activists in their younger days, or at least politically engaged in some way. This supposedly relates to identity aspects as well. The life histories of Lovemore Mbigi, Reuel Khoza, Monhla Hlahla, and Gavin Andersson illustrate this point.

In addition, the need for integration in organisations is discussed, which might be a strategic consideration to use ‘African management’ philosophy. Then, there is the ethical function as part of a strategic in the context of business transformation, the use of ‘African management’-type workshops as ‘mini-TRC’s at corporate level’, and the aim of achieving cultural justice.

Past political engagement

Lovemore Mbigi’s life history leads back to his rural upbringing in Zimbabwe by his grandmother, who used to be a spirit medium.⁴¹⁴ She taught him about African tradition and ‘Shona culture’. As a young boy, Mbigi attended St. Mary’s, an old Anglican mission school, just outside Harare. Later he joined a college run by Jesuits. The college had a school of social science and catered for a positive intellectual atmosphere.⁴¹⁵ An inspirational education together with his ‘traditional upbringing’ formed the basis of Mbigi’s later social and professional development. To his own recollection, he developed an extraordinary passion for reading. Simultaneously, he undertook commercial activities at a rather young age, foreshadowing his entrepreneurial aspirations. Altogether, the Jesuits can be attributed a significant role in Mbigi’s thinking. They introduced him to *Christian Care*, a not-for-profit organisation doing humanitarian work in (what was then still) Rhodesia.⁴¹⁶ This was a starting point of his professional career and dragged him into the independence war.

⁴¹³ This aspect is discussed in section 10.3 ‘*Africanisation*’ and *post-apartheid identity formation*.

⁴¹⁴ This was mentioned in Chapter 3 of this thesis, in section 3.1 *Emergence and externalisation*.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 28 June 2003.

⁴¹⁶ “*Christian Care* has operated in Zimbabwe since 1967. Its mission is to improve the quality of life and self-supporting capacities of disadvantaged people” (source: www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/aid/2002/1104tackle.htm [accessed 14 March 2007]).

They [the Jesuit teachers at the school of social science] were white, but very involved in the struggle. [...] The principal, Father Rogers, was very active in the Justice and Peace Commission. Then he introduced me to *Christian Care*, which was supporting families of prisoners, doing their education. Then I finally became their Vice-Chairman [...] and later on, I became Chairman. So during the war, if someone was detained, we would then support the family and support him in prison, with education, paying for their lectures with UNISA. We also had hospitals, clinics. [...] During the night, I would recruit and meet the comrades. [...] The police would question (me), but because of my involvement with *Christian Care* and the protection by the international organisation, the police would hesitate to mess up with me. [...] Then I would say: “No, I am visiting one of our projects,” but in the meantime meet with guys from the Front and discuss, give them medicines, carry messages, because *Christian Care* had access to the leaders inside. [...] When Independence came, we were very busy with the Land Resettlement Scheme (Interview with Lovemore Mbigi, 28 June 2003).

A glance at Mbigi’s life history throws light on the cultural, intellectual, and political resources that influenced his actions and his views on leadership and management, both politically and as an entrepreneur.

To Mike Boon, his engagement in the South African army was a decisive factor in his personal and professional development. Traumatic experiences during military missions abroad during the 1980s and disconcerting incidents back home upon his return to ‘civilian society’ caused a lot of confusion. Mike Boon was particularly disappointed about the lack of understanding for what white officers and black soldiers were going through collectively in military operations abroad. In addition, white people’s demeaning behaviour towards black people, in sharp contrast with a strong sense of interdependence in real combat situations, was something that disturbed him tremendously. This created such a shock and bewilderment, that Mike Boon turned his back on his ‘own community’. Having grown up in Natal, he was able to speak Zulu fluently. He then sought solace from the Zulu community in townships near Johannesburg, gradually identifying more with Zulu people than with white South African communities. He made this drastic turn in his personal life eventually a business asset. From his commercial marketing activities in townships and in rural areas, he developed his own communication and leadership ideas, strongly influenced by notions of ‘African culture’ and the assumed virtue of warriorhood.⁴¹⁷

Reuel Khoza originates from Limpopo Province, formerly called the Northern Province. He was trained in psychology (BA Hon) and marketing management (MA) and has a background in marketing communications and management consulting. Khoza has been a prominent member of the *Black Management Forum* for long and was active in the *Consultative Business Movement*.⁴¹⁸ In general, he used to be very vocal about the promotion of black managers in the South African corporate sector and more in particular about the need to promote ‘African values’ in relation to

⁴¹⁷ Boon’s concept of *Interactive (African) leadership* was discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, section 3.1.4 ‘Zulu versions’ of ‘African management’ philosophy.

⁴¹⁸ CBM was a major actor in the transition from apartheid to democracy as far as the corporate community was concerned, as argued in Chapter 6, section 6.2.

management and leadership (e.g. Khoza 1986; 1994; 1999; 2003b; 2003a; 2006). Though he was never a political activist in the usual sense of the word, he was always quite militant in the way he furthered his mission in the context of the CBM and the BMF, which was certainly politically driven, especially before 1994. Moreover, Khoza has regularly made public statements about his commitment to the ideals of an African Renaissance.⁴¹⁹ His ideological stance is clearly illustrated in the following citation:

We are not dark to ourselves! We have absorbed the wisdom of millennia through our black skins and are in a position today to retrieve these riches and disseminate them (Khoza 2006: 16).

As one of the few black managers in South Africa who were able to make a career already in the apartheid era, Khoza must have been aware like few others about the obstacles for black people to reach the top. Part of these obstacles concerned the way people thought about themselves. Several well-known Africanist thinkers in South Africa, such as Es'kia Mphahlele, have openly praised Reuel Khoza's views on management and leadership. Already in 1971, Khoza had cited from Mphahlele's work on 'African humanism', while he also referred to Mphahlele in his book *Led Africa Lead* (Khoza 2006: xix).⁴²⁰ *Eskom* is a salient example of how an Afrocentric management vision is exploited in the context of business transformation in South Africa, exemplifying its ideological and strategic use.⁴²¹

Monhla Hlahla was presented in this thesis as a high-level managing director of a large South African company, ACSA. Without explicitly using these terms and slogans in daily organisational conversations, apparently she sympathises with 'African management' philosophy and the *ubuntu* concept.⁴²² Like Khoza, Hlahla originates from Limpopo Province. As a student, she was a political activist, sympathising with the *Black Consciousness Movement* and the student organisations that were influenced by Steve Biko's revolutionary ideas. For her political activities as part of the liberation struggle, she was detained for short periods several times. In Monhla Hlahla's case there seems to be a clear line between her involvement as a political activist in the past and a rather strong affiliation with *ubuntu* in relation to management.

Gavin Andersson worked for several years in a senior management position at LeaRN, the *Leadership Regional Network*, sponsored by the U.S.-based *W.K. Kellogg Foundation*. WKKF itself is a case in point to illustrate the connection between (anti-apartheid) political engagement and promoting 'African management' discourse. Kellogg's has a reputation of a company that

⁴¹⁹ African Renaissance was discussed in section 7.3 of Chapter 7 *Challenges of business transformation*.

⁴²⁰ The influence of Es'kia Mphahlele was mentioned in Chapter 3 *African management' flows: emergence and distribution*, section 3.2 *Distribution*.

⁴²¹ As examined in this thesis in Chapter 4 *'African management' flows: utilisation*, section 4.1 *Five cases of 'African management' end-users* in the case description of *Eskom's 'African business leadership'*.

⁴²² See section 4.1 *Five cases of 'African management' end-users* in Chapter 4 *'African management' flows: utilisation*.
'African management' in South Africa Page 281 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

repeatedly criticised the South African apartheid government over labour policies. It was the first known company in South Africa that recognised a black trade union.⁴²³ Andersson was born in South Africa, but moved with his parents to Botswana when he was still a child. He went to Johannesburg for his studies and became politically involved in the student movement, and later in trade union activities.

I eventually left university just before my final exams to take up the position of secretary of what is now called NUMSA, the National Union of Metal Workers, but then it was called the *Metal and Allied Workers Union*, MAWU.⁴²⁴

Andersson was fascinated by African Humanism, Black Consciousness, and *Ujaama*.⁴²⁵ Ideologically, Andersson seemed to fit perfectly well in a non-governmental institute that sought to promote Afrocentric perspectives on leadership and management throughout southern Africa. However, he had to leave LeARN for other reasons. Nevertheless, his case seems to support the argument of a significant link between political activism and a zeal for an approach based on ‘African management’ philosophy.

Need for integration

Next to personal motives, strategic considerations play a prominent role, especially in a context of business transformation. This goes for the ‘producers’, the ‘distributors’, and – probably even more so – for the ‘users’ of the discourse. Hein Marais pointed at the manipulative use of *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ discourse on a macro level, when linking it to African Renaissance. There are two angles in this line of critique. The first angle of critique concerns the domestic consumption of ‘African management’ philosophy, which would mystify ‘less responsible’ or ‘less respectable’ behaviour in organisations. In this critique, management consultants and organisational leaders call for *ubuntu* while insisting on ‘very ruthless and paternalistic labour policies’ (Maloka 1997: 42). The *ubuntu* concept is judged here as an ideological tool, as it suggests togetherness and belonging, while it is allegedly intended to make organisational leaders immune to criticism. This conjures up the ‘legitimising dimension’ of the African identity in the domain of management and organisation:

Mystifying, rhetorical use of identity to legitimise existing power configurations and status quo and to avoid criticism; concealing lack of transparency, fraud, and corruption practices; potentially repressive (mentioned in the final section of Chapter 9, *Concluding remarks: dimensions of ‘Africanness’*).

This particular research, however, did not find substantiation for this line of critique. No research data were found that strongly hinted at the function of legitimation in the use of ‘African

⁴²³ The Star, 20 August 1979.

⁴²⁴ Interview with Gavin Andersson on 2 September 2003.

⁴²⁵ *Ujaama* refers to the policy of ‘African socialism’ and ‘self-reliance’, proclaimed in the 1960s by Julius Nyerere of Tanzania.

management' discourse, except perhaps in the case of LeaRN. At least, one of the key persons who suffered in the restructuring process of LeaRN had perceived it as a top-down measure, without any proper consultation, despite LeaRN's active promotion of a contemporary version of Afrocentric leadership in southern Africa.⁴²⁶ This was allegedly done in a quite un-*ubuntu* fashion and very 'un-African' way although, others involved in the process felt it was necessary and 'just a next stage in our development'. In this case, 'African management' discourse was perhaps not used as camouflage, but rather as an excuse to push for harsh restructuring to serve a higher goal, which appears contradictory to 'African values' it was seeking to promote.

The second angle hints at the use of the African Renaissance project and *ubuntu* management philosophy as 'ideological tools' to advertise the ambition of regional, continental, and international corporate expansion as a project of 'pan-African revival'.⁴²⁷ Eskom's 'African Business Leadership' as examined in Chapter 4 '*African management*' flows: utilisation could be taken as an example, supporting this critical view. However, other aspects are equally relevant to take into account. Eskom's adherence to the (Afrocentric) notion of 'African Business Leadership' has much to do with the wide-ranging transformation from a parastatal utility, previously dominated by Afrikaner elites, to a more outward looking 'public enterprise', with a culturally diversified staff at all levels. In other words, internal factors should also be considered in interpreting Eskom's motivation to adopt an Afrocentric leadership philosophy. In addition, Eskom's public profile and its corporate social responsibility efforts, e.g. the support to female entrepreneurs and community projects, is motivated on the basis of a similar ideology. One could only wonder what ideological course Eskom would have taken without the high-flying leadership of Reuel Khoza. This calls theoretical questions to mind about the role of organisational leaders with regard to organisational discourse.

Internal considerations for the adoption of an 'African management' philosophy could be examined in terms of what Joanne Martin called the integration perspective. She proposed three approaches to study organisations and organisational cultures: the integration perspective, the differentiation perspective and the fragmentation perspective (Martin, J. 2002). These three theoretical perspectives could be used in combination, depending on what one is looking for. Martin disapproves of a single-perspective theory; the three perspectives are complementary. Each perspective will produce its own specific insights that together help to create a picture of the organisation as a whole.

In the case of Eskom, one could easily imagine that the concept of 'African Business

⁴²⁶ This case was described in *The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Leadership Regional Network* in Chapter 4 '*African management*' flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of 'African management' end-users*.

⁴²⁷ This is a citation of Marais (2001), in Chapter 7, section 7.3 *African Renaissance*.

Leadership' served to achieve organisation-wide consensus, consistent relations between cultural manifestations, and an absence of ambiguity. However, a cultural diagnosis based on the integration perspective to look for confirmation of the mentioned assumption was not the aim of this research. Furthermore, it did not aim to test the assumption and look for different forms of consensus on a subcultural level (differentiation). Nor did this research aim to identify a lack of consensus (fragmentation), inconsistent relations among cultural manifestation (differentiation) or a more diverse scattered pattern (fragmentation). Finally, the study did not look for a high level of ambiguity within the organisation (fragmentation) or for ambiguity that is channelled outside subcultures (Martin, J. 2002: 150-157). A future study could reveal whether the concept of 'African Business Leadership' has led to a high level of integration within *Eskom* or whether the picture is more differentiated, or even fragmented. The latter would be the case if top-management within *Eskom* for instance said they supported Reuel Khoza's ideological leadership stance, but acted otherwise (inconsistency in cultural manifestations) or when at other organisational levels this support was lacking. From research data as presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5 no clear conclusions can be drawn about the level of integration, or lack thereof, in terms of organisational culture within *Eskom*. The challenge of transforming *Eskom* from an inefficient apartheid-type parastatal institution to a more diversified, more efficiently operating 'public enterprise' has probably been high on the agenda of *Eskom*'s chief executives for many years. In addition, Khoza has his own beliefs, personal involvement, and passion in this matter. Thus, the (version of) 'African management' discourse as promoted by Reuel Khoza and his associates must have aimed at achieving a considerable level of internal consensus, consistency, and clarity in cultural orientations. This major challenge alone makes the want for a strong narrative quite plausible after all. If the discourse around 'African Business Leadership' in *Eskom* is contextualised in such a way, it makes sense that both management and employees find this appealing.

Protest and ethical function

'Decolonisation of the mind' in the domain of management and organisation is not necessarily related to the past. 'Colonisation' of the workplace could also be a metaphor for undemocratic corporate ways of management and organisation (e.g. Deetz 1992).

Dominant genres, discourses and styles are colonizing new domains – for instance managerial genres, discourses and styles are rapidly colonizing government and public sector domains [...] (Fairclough 2001: 128).

Hence, 'decolonisation' of the workplace could be a reaction to this. Where corporate management thinking has come to dominate public decision-making and the corporate world has come to 'colonise' the life world of citizens, as Stanley Deetz contends, a countervailing 'African management' in South Africa Page 284 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

development to reclaim democracy in the politics of everyday life, also in the context of organisation and management, is not surprising. If Deetz's views are at least to some extent also applicable to the South African situation in a process of business transformation, it is quite feasible for 'African management' discourse to identify and 'charm' new followers from this perspective. These new disciples will probably not all have a hang-up with 'coercive labour' experiences, (discriminatory) authoritarian management practices, or specific injustices inflicted upon them in the past. They find reasons in the present to identify with Afrocentric approaches. Among a younger generation of (black African) upward moving executives often the prospect of making a stunning career seems to be higher on their wish list than creating democratic organisational climates. Commentators, such as Karl von Holdt, suggested that many of these young executives had authoritarian tendencies similar to their predecessors in 'the old days', replicating comparable practices and attitudes, e.g. 'the habit of shouting at workers', as observed in section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid* of Chapter 6 (Von Holdt 2003: 31). Is this a case of mimicking your past oppressor, or rather a case of 'power corrupts'?

Throughout history, monarchs, religious and ideological leaders, as well as elected presidents go crazy (Bylund 2004: s.n.).

In this respect, a call to – what called John Sharp called – 'primordial solidarity' is likely to be invoked. Such a call to 'primordial solidarity' is an attempt to link black people across class divisions together by referring to 'traditional values' (Sharp 1998: 247-249). Such a reading argues against the critique, that *ubuntu* leads to new ways of oppression with dangerous exclusivist tendencies (Van Kessel 2001; Marx 2002). Rather, it could be interpreted as a counterweight to negative effects of the fragmentation of institutions on the lives of people who increasingly lack a steady frame for orientation (Sennett 2006). This need specifically applies to South Africa, so recently exposed in an intensified way to transnational capitalist competition and global cultural processes.

Labour relations analysts such as Dickinson, Masondo, Webster, and Von Holdt point a finger at 'continuities with the past'. Some prefer to speak of 'neo-apartheid' or 'postcolonial' workplace *regimes*, instead of 'post apartheid' workplaces. These realities could be taken up to transform and unify managers and employees under an idealising 'African management' philosophy. It is not always clear, however, whether the will to transform prevails, or the desire to pacify and control edgy 'transitional workplace' situations from a managerial point of view. An ideologically loaded project is usually in the managerial interest, with the purpose to facilitate integration. Over long stretches of time, South Africa has comprehensively generated all-pervading political, economic, and cultural conditions that have shaped people's minds. These conditions have moulded people's

perceptions and caused – what Linda Human termed as – ‘negative expectancy communications’. They did not disappear after 1994.

...such negative expectancy communications, even if extremely subtle, have a powerful dampening effect on both the motivation and the performance of many blacks (and, indeed, women) (Human 1996b: 57).

Thus, it is likely that ‘African management’ philosophy draws attention of various social categories. Firstly, managers, who seek stability for their firm to survive in a context of labour unrest and distrust, desperately want to ‘try something new’.

Secondly, employees and ordinary citizens, who happen to spend an average 40 hours per week in organisations to earn a living, are craving to offset – in Deetz’s words – ‘colonisation of the workplace’. If they are drawn into an Afrocentric management discourse for that reason, it is probably mainly for its humane and ‘authentic’ appearance.

Then, thirdly, there is the category of those who sympathise strongly with a ‘*decolonisation*’ of the managers’ mind-approach in an Afrocentric format, and those who want to oppose a tendency towards ‘new authoritarianism’ in the workplace. Activists or trade unionists are hard to find among this category. Rather, it comprises of sections of South Africa’s intelligentsia, black and white: philosophers, writers, academics, and publishers – with a zeal for leadership issues and entrepreneurship.

With regard to the assumed tendency towards ‘new authoritarianism’, some may *perceive* a particular type of managerial behaviour as ‘racist’. Although perceived as such, unsympathetic conduct vis-à-vis colleagues and subordinates may not be racist *per se*. It could also be a consequence of a highly unpleasant corporate culture, which neglects the well-being of organisation members, with a sole focus on profit maximisation, competitiveness, and harsh economic restructuring.⁴²⁸

Mini-TRC’s at organisational level

Now, two dimensions in relation to the strategic use of African identity, as analysed in Chapter 9 (*Towards analysing ‘Africanness’*) come into view when interpreting ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa: the *integrative dimension*, and the *ethical dimension*, arguing against immoral, authoritarian managerial behaviour. Supposedly, part of the integrative function concerns conflict resolution and reconciliation. In ‘African management’-style diversity and transformation workshops, the need for ‘nation-building’ at organisational level is repeatedly emphasised. Such workshops are often conducted in confrontational and dramatised ways.

⁴²⁸ Although it is dangerous to make generalising statements, this seems to be a quite common phenomenon of the ‘transitional workplace’ in South Africa, as analysed in Chapter 6, section 6.3 *Impact of colonialism and apartheid. ‘African management’ in South Africa* Page 286 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Integrative dimension	Unifying, homogenising, consensus seeking, reinforcing a sense of belonging and commitment (e.g. nation-building projects at organisational level; creating 'strong organisational cultures', facilitating 'teambuilding' or 'cultural diversity management' at institutional level)
Ethical dimension	Prescribing notions of moral behaviour, an ethical code of conduct, centring on humanity and human values, with prophesying tendencies

For instance, frequently questions are discussed about 'What do blacks dislike about whites?' There may be emotional outbursts, accusations, and ultimately, though not as a rule, confessions and forgiveness. An 'African management'-minded facilitator would try to get the issues out and mediate between employees (and trade unionists) and management in order to improve levels of trust. He encourages participants to express their anger and emotions. At one such occasion, allegedly the managing director was made to admit that the company's management was responsible for the killing of a trade union leader in the 1980s.⁴²⁹ That issue had remained concealed for a very long time. Khoza uses the term 'social arbitrage' for this, a never-ending process of adjustment and reconciliation, solving issues through brokerage and building trust (Khoza 2006: 21-23). 'African management'-type workshops of this kind could be seen as mini *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions* at corporate level. The concept of *ubuntu* has been more often associated with conflict resolution in the New South Africa:

...*ubuntu* is also undergoing progressive development and expansion under twentieth-century conditions of the free-market system and a new democratic dispensation in South Africa. The need to work together, respect and resolve conflict with the ultimate aim of reaching a win-win outcome as opposed to a zero-sum solution has informed – just to mention a few – the quest for reconciliation [...] and the drafting of the 1995 Labour Relations Act. [...] Under the new dispensation, *ubuntu* practices are extended outside the ethnic and even racial groups. But the extension is new only in form, not in spirit, for the win-win practices of reconciliation and harmonization are used to form a new society, overriding tribal and racial bounds and building a new humanity (*ubuntu*) (Masina 2000: 177).

Probably, the personal skills of the facilitator and the quality of 'social drama' performed may be more pertinent than the power of 'African management' ideas as such. Due to these 'mini-TRC' sessions, space is created for employees to expose hidden experiences and practices (or perceptions) of racial discrimination, humiliation, and other painful memories, so these issues can be addressed in one way or another. Phrased in an Afrocentric way, the 'effective cross-cultural manager' in South Africa is being taught not only to have 'an in-depth understanding of the African cultural value system' and also to be "both the architect and the builder of a new societal organisation, using the major tools of motivation, racial balance and cultural inclusiveness" (Shonhiwa 2006: 13-14). Nevertheless, one may wonder whether such an approach brings about a sustainable solution.

⁴²⁹ This was told by one of the trade union 'shop stewards' during the Diversity and Transformation Training in Springs, 19-21 June 2002 (field report June 2002).

Would *'African management'-style mini-TRC sessions* equip organisation members to deal with systematic, piecemeal pestering and discrimination that builds up over years? *If* it helps, which would of course be a positive contribution, is it then a logical outcome of 'African management' philosophy or merely a coincidental side effect? This alludes to the ethical dimension of using African identity as presented in *dimensions of 'Africanness'*, at the end of the previous chapter.

Although notions of authenticity and essentialism are seriously contested in this thesis, it might be interesting to reflect for a moment on Gluckman's insights into custom and conflict in southern Africa (Gluckman 1966). Max Gluckman argued that conflicts that are addressed 'in terms of [their] customary allegiances' lead to the re-establishment of wider social order:

...custom appears to exacerbate [these] conflicts: but in doing so custom also restrains the conflict from destroying the wider social order (Gluckman 1966: 2).

In this light, one could interpret theatrical and confrontational performances in 'African management'-style transformation and diversity workshops as a means to have a 'controlled conflict'. Sensitive issues are addressed, while it is attempted to prevent that the social cohesion crumbles, with the ultimate goal to strike a balance. This is done, for instance, by rituals, social bonding and the creation of some sort of 'customary allegiances', even if somewhat artificial or 'socially constructed'. The facilitator attempts to involve as many stakeholders as possible, create space for the ventilation of resentment in emotional outbursts and serious disputes, while at the same time maintaining a sense of unity and interdependence, under the pretext of 'Africanness'. Considered thus, *'African management'-style mini-TRC sessions* would fit in an older African tradition. Can the impact and effectiveness of the implementation of an 'African management' approach actually be tested? In many cases, management consultants come and go. What lessons will stick, what solution will sustain? Endless ebb and flow movements of management consultants all with their own 'unique formula' and 'quick fix solutions' supposedly invalidate the question: 'Does African management work?' Since, if it did, it would take time to do its job, time that is usually not given.

Achieving cultural justice

Moreover, there are reasons for interpreting 'African management' discourse in terms of achieving 'cultural justice' – as 'a pathway to reconciliation and social cohesion' (Kwenda 2003).

By cultural justice, we mean that the burden of constant self-consciousness must be shared or, at the very least, recognised, and where possible, rewarded. The sharing part is very important. For it is only in the mutual vulnerability that this entails that the meaning of intimacy and reciprocity in community can be discovered. It is in this sharing that, on the one hand, cultural difference is transcended and, on the other, cultural arrogance overcome. By cultural difference we mean the disposition that causes oppressed people either to be ashamed of their culture or to simply ignore it as irrelevant in the modern world (Kwenda 2003: 70-71).

The concept of ‘cultural justice’ and the search for cultural and intellectual recognition is strongly linked with the notion of alienation (in the workplace), which is discursively addressed through the humanistic claims in ‘African management’ philosophy, as discussed in 5.1 *Themes*.

Humanistic aspects
* <i>Ubuntu</i> , ‘humane-ness’, communalism, egalitarianism, social obligations (unconditional mutual solidarity); extended family as organising principle
* Emancipation, liberation; rid of ‘victimisation’ and ‘alienation’ (‘feel at home’); optimism, visionary management, prospect of prosperity
* Notion of ‘decolonising the mind’ (both employees and managers)
* Self-confidence, self-assertiveness (masculine aspects)

Addressing notions of ‘alienation’ through ‘decolonisation of the mind’, and by achieving ‘cultural justice’ would restore and reinforce self-esteem and self-confidence. The preparedness to consider possible consequences of apartheid and colonialism on the mental and cultural ‘state of being’ of organisation members seems to be quite underdeveloped in South Africa. These consequences may concern serious traumatic experiences. They may also be less dramatic, about the simple things in (a working) life, such as greetings and salutations. In this regard, a ‘praise therapy’ is an option to consider: ‘a mutual demonstration of respect and recognition’, wrapped in praise. A precondition is however that people know each other. Otherwise, they will simply not be able to pay respect to each other by words of praise:

But how can you sing my praises when you do not know me, when you have made no effort to know anything about me beyond that critical minimum required for control, be it in law or in the workplace? (Kwenda 2003: 74)

To evaluate ‘African management’ discourse, the material basis and cultural expressions can not be separated. An analogy with the rise of new ‘fee-for-service religions’ and ‘prosperity gospels’, which is rampant in southern Africa, is tempting. This is not just a case of resilient ‘religiousness’ in Africa; it has taken a form that apparently goes well with consumption, convenience, and flexibility. New religious movements in southern Africa have emerged in ‘neoliberal guise’, accompanying the rise of global capitalism (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004: 25). Consumption has become a crucial factor in the definition of value and the construction of identity, in particular when the workplace and labour do no longer sufficiently provide for these (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004: 27-28). In addition, this alludes to notion of the ‘commodification’ of the *ubuntu* concept in management.⁴³⁰ *Ubuntu* has been invaded as it were by the Spirit of Capitalism. This

⁴³⁰ “As a concept largely appropriated by Afrocentric management consultants, *ubuntu* is inherently part of South Africa’s post-apartheid capitalist economy. It has become a commodity in itself.” This is stated in Chapter 5 of this ‘*African management*’ in South Africa Page 289 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

'authentically African' philosophical concept with far-reaching religious connotations has become affected by global capitalism. However, as also noted before, it is not a one-way process of influencing.

The following section considers a key aspect in interpreting 'African management' discourse in South Africa: the question of identity formation after 1994, especially viewed in a context of management and organisation.

10.3 'Africanisation' and post-apartheid identity formation

After 1994, one question became very pertinent to all living in South Africa: What does it mean to be a South African; what does it specifically mean *to me*? Since the working population spend approximately 20 to 40 hours per week in some office, corporation, farm, shop, NGO, or governmental institution, the question became also relevant in the context of organisations.

I have come to realise that articulating and writing about 'African leadership and management' is ultimately about wrestling with questions of identity (Nkomo 2006: 20).

What does it mean to be *a South African* and to be a member of a South African organisation? Do people, who were born in South Africa and live and work there, also feel *African*, and if so, in what way, however fragmented this can be conceived in a postapartheid and postmodern context (as argued in the previous chapter, in section 9.3 *Multiple identities*)? 'African management' philosophy promised to provides answers to these pressing questions, although there never is a single answer. It means something different to everyone, although there are certain common traits one can choose from or identify with, or to use as a starting point for reflection and self-identification. As argued in the previous chapter (9.3 *Multiple identities*), to a certain extent, there is a voluntary element in identity formation and there is flexibility in belonging to various social categories at the same time, and therefore to experience multiple identities simultaneously. Furthermore, it is assumed that one can shift between (partial) identities or, at least, shift to other identities in the course of time, although that depends on recognition by others too.

However, the term discourse assumes something more compelling than a matter of merely 'free choice'. If 'African management' in South Africa is considered a *discourse*, as consisting of scattered discursive formations in various locations, rather than 'just' a philosophy that one could discuss at a bar or near a fireplace at night, it presupposes more compelling elements and less of an entirely 'free will' in people's identity make-up.

Would it help your career for instance, if you were vocal about your support for the idea of an

‘African Business Leadership’? Would it make your position as a manager stronger, if you refrained from comments on the tension between a no-nonsense ‘American’ management approach and an Afrocentric *ubuntu* management philosophy, when the allocation end-of-the-year bonuses was discussed? If both answers are affirmative, it has gone beyond the point of an interesting philosophical discussion only.⁴³¹

‘African management’ philosophy did not come from nowhere, nor did it evolve in complete isolation. It was linked to ongoing political debates, for instance, as discussed in Chapter 7 about African Renaissance and *Corporate Social Responsibility*, and to broader historical and contemporary debates, such as on Pan Africanism and Afrocentrism, as shown in Chapter 8.

Indigenising global management: ‘copying intelligently’

In section 10.1 *The historical dimension*, the remarkable role of ‘Sanusi’ Dr Credo Mutwa was discussed. In the last 40 years or more, he was one of South Africa’s best-known ‘bearers of indigenous authenticity’, striving for recognition of ‘traditional culture’ and Africa’s ancient wisdom. Lovemore Mbigi is one of the most prominent protagonists of ‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa. Like Credo Mutwa, he uses the notion of ‘indigenous authenticity’ and *ubuntu* – ‘fake or not fake’, to follow Chidester’s interrogation of Mutwa – conveyed in a religion-like fashion. Like Mutwa, Mbigi supposedly defies the ‘superhuman status of western human beings’, but then in the domain of management and organisation. This asks for a comment.

Although Mbigi seeks to redress a sense of ‘Africanness’ in South African management and organisation, ‘the west’ is challenged and at the same time applauded for its economic and scientific achievements. In seminars and workshops videos are shown about Afro-Americans who have made their ‘American dream’ come true. The message is threefold.

The first message is quite stereotypical: everything is possible in ‘the west’. You can make it there, even if you have a downtrodden background. The second message is psychological, almost Calvinistic, about the merit of dedication, selfdetermination, hard work, a strong will to achieve something and to have control over your life. The third message is subtle, but obvious: colour does not make a difference. Not just Americans and underprivileged people, but also *black* Americans make it to the top. Clearly, the message is to get rid of feelings of inferiority. However, is the insinuation not to actually ‘imitate’ what Afro-Americans are doing in the United States? At a conference in Johannesburg about African Renaissance in 2000, Professor Kwesi Kwa Prah stated:

⁴³¹ Reference is made to Chapter 2 of this thesis, section 2.4 *The research process*, in which ‘African management’ as discourse was explained. It was noted that “spoken and written words are not only respected, but also feared.”
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 291 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

...we will not be respected by other nations because we are seen to be imitating everything they do as we replace our lives and deeds by borrowing from the West (The Star, 10 February 2000).⁴³²

'Let us copy intelligently', is one of Mbigi's typical slogans: "Let us start with what we already have and upgrade that." Usually, he would talk about the African-style hut as an option for optimum low-cost housing. With some modern techniques and basic improvements, these huts would be much better than the wellknown 'matchbox' houses, which the government subsidises for poor people. These 'matchboxes' get extremely hot in summer and are not comfortable in winter. This slogan is a way to say: do not just blindly imitate what comes from abroad, but believe in your own capabilities. With some imagination, this aphorism can be projected on management and leadership issues.

The importation of (management) knowledge and concepts into (South) Africa that have proved successful elsewhere appears to be very important in 'African management' discourse. For this importation of foreign knowledge, various terms are used: contextualisation, indigenisation, or Africanisation. These terms do not only entail that knowledge from abroad should be used locally, but also that it should be made applicable to local contexts. Broadly defined, indigenisation is:

...a process by which organizations in their functioning are adapted to the social-cultural soil of the host country so that the end-product is appropriate as well as unique. [...] the patterns that emerge may display a kind of adaptation of the requirements of work and modern technology to specific elements of culture. They constitute a synergistic blend of traditional religious roots and modern techniques (Sinha; Kao & Wilpert 1999: 21).

In this perspective, indigenisation is an integrative process (Sinha; Kao *et al.* 1999: 22). As explicitly noted in Chapter 5 (section 5.1 *Themes*), integration is clearly an element in 'African management' discourse. The term contextualisation is a literal expression of this process. It is about localising, contextualising, and/or translating foreign knowledge. After all, as assumed, 'knowledge production is context bound', while 'all knowledge is first of all local knowledge' (Okere; Njoku & Devisch 2005: 1). Nevertheless, "local knowledges are constantly reacting and responding in interplay with other knowledges in a specific context" (Jørgensen 2002: 30). Pluralism is central in this regard. Besides, indigenisation may also have the connotation of taking control of a situation, 'doing things yourself', instead of others doing things on behalf of you and without regard for you.⁴³³

An 'Afro-centric Alliance' of authors stated, that knowledge from outside needs to be reworked making it fit a local context: "Sweeping Western management practice may prove to be exceedingly

⁴³² The title of the newspaper articles was *Optimism as African Renaissance moves from theory to practice* with a bold statement in the subtitle: "...the continent's intellectuals coming to grip with the central problems that stand in the way of a regeneration..."

⁴³³ For instance, in the case of African security matters in western and southern Africa, in which (indigenous) African actors have taken over responsibilities from multilateral actors, as analysed by Stephen Burgess (1998).

inappropriate in non-Western work settings” (Ali; Akuamoah-Boateng; Bowa; Carr; Ehiobuche; Griff; Lino; Mbene; Mpingajira; Munro; Opar; Pietersen; Pupilampu; Rugimbana & Zimba 2001: 59). They referred to organisational contexts in Tanzania and Malawi and found that ‘individualistic *performance management* systems’ were ‘socially inept and inappropriate’, causing social division and ‘workplace stress’ (Ali; Akuamoah-Boateng *et al.* 2001: 62).

Interestingly, this ‘Afrocentric’ proclamation proposed a range of techniques and ‘culturally contingent forms’ of organisational development to address the ‘motivational pluralism’ of African workers and managers. ‘Motivational pluralism’ meant that work motivation could be triggered by both individualistic and by collectivistic incentives. Eventually, the imported management knowledge thus becomes adopted and normalised to such an extent, that it is considered indigenous. Consequently, it is recognisable, no longer foreign, and supposedly (more) comprehensible. Chapter 1 of this thesis characterised ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa as a case of ‘glocalisation’ (see section 1.1), which is supported by the research data.⁴³⁴

Indigenisation in ‘African management’ discourse supposedly means the promotion of external management knowledge, ‘copy intelligently’, and ‘Africanise’ it. Africanisation entails at least two elements. It is about translating knowledge and making it accessible and (more) comprehensible to local users. Secondly, when external knowledge becomes ‘Africanised’, supposedly, it acquires the capacity of ‘making sense’ to local users, so they can easily identify with it. The role of language in interpreting meanings of *ubuntu* as a means of communication in the transmission of management knowledge, for example through open conversations, is very important in this process (Karsten 2006).⁴³⁵ The underlying idea in this regard is that language is not ‘just’ used to communicate, but in addition to change people’s minds, convince them, and make them do things. In South Africa, *ubuntu* can therefore be a helpful management concept, if not understood in a managerialist manner, but ‘to reshape social relations in society and in instrumental organisations’, based on communicative action (Karsten 2006: 72).

⁴³⁴ A simple, but illuminating example of this phenomenon is a television programme in South Africa for children, *Takalani Sesame*. This is a localised South African version of *Sesame Street*. *Takalani Sesame* is not only English spoken, but also Sotho and Zulu, and sometimes Afrikaans, with frequently more than one language spoken in a single conversation. The setting is often an African village or a township and the characters are obviously (South) Africans with their own ways, their own music, and their own stories. *Takalani Sesame* used to be sponsored by the Department of Education, the South African insurance company SANLAM, and by USAID. The involvement of the latter party is noteworthy. Why would an American agency for development cooperation support the production of a localised version of a children’s programme that was conceived in the United States? Is *Takalani Sesame* analogous to ‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa, especially in view of the involvement of an American sponsoring agency, the *W.K. Kellogg Foundation*, supporting the dissemination of ‘African management’ views throughout the southern African region (Chapter 4 ‘*African management*’ flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users* provides a case description of *The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Leadership Regional Network*).

⁴³⁵ The social effects of information transfer, for example in management training, are discursively held to be vital, particularly for strengthening unity and understanding, as argued by Karsten & Illa (2005), on page 608.

As a result, management principles ‘originating from’ the United States may become accepted as ‘African’. The element of ‘story-telling’ in organisations, both a feature in American management literature, appropriated in South Africa and Africanised by means of Afrocentric management discourse, is a lucid example.⁴³⁶ This throws also more light on the ‘marriage’ between ‘African management’ philosophy and a capitalist production mode in a setting of neoliberal macro-economic policies.⁴³⁷ At the heart of the matter, ‘African’ and ‘non-African’ perspectives have much in common, just as once it was found that American and Japanese management were so much alike and yet not the same (e.g. Sinha; Kao *et al.* 1999: 21).

While it is noted that ‘African management’ discourse is essentially about identity formation, it suggests simultaneously signs of a ‘split personality’ for its eagerness of importing, adopting, and adapting. Arguably, it signifies both contestation of dominant management discourse and seeks recognition from mainstream perspectives. Local management knowledge does apparently not fit well in the perspective of mainstream management theories. This makes one mindful of Foucault’s analysis of how ‘independent histories’ and ‘local knowledges’ are viewed by ‘totalitarian sciences’ (Jørgensen 2002: 31-31). The irony is, however, that there seems nothing more that ‘African management’ advocates would want than being recognised by the same ‘totalitarian’ academics and critics who look down on locally emerging management perspectives.⁴³⁸

Intersubjectivity

Now, how and when does a foreign management concept become ‘Africanised’? There are no criteria for this. As observed in this thesis, this is a mostly matter of situational interpretation and intersubjectivity. In addition, it helps if an authoritative spokesperson proclaims it. To a large extent, it seems that situational consensus constitutes ‘Africanness’ in the domain of management and organisation, as noted in Chapter 5 (5.2 *Deviations and critiques*), although some might say that this causes ‘conceptual vagueness’. A principal agreement in a group about the ‘African’ (or Afrocentric) nature of a given situation is decisive. A ‘groupleader’ or facilitator has a major role in such a process of identification. Often, it seems to be of secondary importance what ‘African style’ *precisely* means in the context of leadership and decision-making. Discursively, *being* is considered more relevant than *doing*. If a leader focuses on ‘African’ identity, supposedly the particularities of actual day-to-day Afrocentric management practices follow automatically.

⁴³⁶ Notably, Tom Peters has been awarded “patron of CIDA’s aptly-named Department of Miracles” of the ‘Ubuntu University’ in Johannesburg, as noted by Van der Merwe (2002).

⁴³⁷ This theme is discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in 5.2 *Deviations and critiques*.

⁴³⁸ This ‘looking down on’ is not just a matter of perception on the part of ‘African management’ advocates. As examined in this thesis, among recognised South African academics there is much of scepticism about an ‘African management’ approach, e.g. Human (1996b) and Thomas & Schonken (1998).

To what level a situation, a locality, or a way of dealing with issues is judged as a case of 'Africanness' is largely a matter of intersubjectivity among group members, a tacit understanding. 'African management' philosophy may help to construct a symbolic community around the theme of 'Africanness', while "symbolism does not so much carry meaning as allow people to impute meaning to it" (Cohen 1985: 71). As long as there is a principal agreement that the issue at hand is 'African' in some sort of way, mostly the requirement seems to be sufficiently satisfied. In a seminar on Afrocentric management approaches, Lovemore Mbigi suddenly proposed changing the setting of the conference room to 'make it look more African'.⁴³⁹ The issue initially caused some turbulence among the participants, but it was resolved quite simply. Tables were put aside and chairs were rearranged in a circle. Moreover, there was a spontaneous initiative to have a short plenary demonstration of African drumming, as proposed by the South African management consultant annex traditional healer Kobus Luthando Prinsloo. The fact that the organisers gave in to this unexpected development seemed to be critical; the Afrocentric participants demonstrated that they had successfully opposed ('Eurocentric') academic conventions. At the end of the day, the agenda was completed as planned within the given timeframe. The interpretations and motives of group members may still differ, despite (or behind) the façade of a consensual agreement. All may consent to the 'Africanness' of a given situation or managerial issue, but at a deeper level not everybody has an identical understanding.

Now back again to Chidester's phrasing regarding 'false prophets' making 'fake claims' about 'authentic African culture', 'traditional values' and 'indigenous knowledge', as in the case of Credo Mutwa, the 'bearer of Africa's authenticity'. After all, Lovemore Mbigi may be playing a crucial role in moving from a static primordial notion of 'Africanness' to a multidimensional, more open-ended version. To get there, it apparently takes an indeterminate 'Eurocentric'-'Afrocentric' dichotomy *as starting point*, but not as the end goal. In other words, even if fake, 'African management' philosophy has 'something authentic' to tell, something genuine.

'African management' discourse could serve as a medium of the message to look at the bigger picture, the foundations of business, and its responsibilities. The 'Ubuntu University' in Johannesburg, CIDA City Campus, in this thesis typified as a case of 'enlightened self-interest', is a noteworthy example in this regard.⁴⁴⁰

Although Chidester's appraisal of Mutwa is altogether a different story, one specific quote seems rather suitable in respect of 'African management' philosophy, i.e. to view the latter as "a

⁴³⁹ Seminar *Afrocentric management approaches in South Africa*, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 24-25 June 2004.

⁴⁴⁰ The case of the 'Ubuntu University' is described in Chapter 4 '*African management*' flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of 'African management' end-users*.

valuable commodity in local and global projects in the construction of alternative realities” (Chidester 2004: 79).

A new South African identity with an amalgamated inclusive outlook

One could anticipate that evolving Afrocentric management perspectives in South Africa will eventually smooth the emergence of a more dynamic process of identity formation, to *Africanness* in-the-making, in this case in organisational discourse. Eric Mafuna, director of research bureau *Africa Now*, illustrated this quite persuasively.⁴⁴¹ He stated that ‘a new South African identity’ had to be created to repair the dehumanising effects of apartheid that had ‘interfered with the people’s sense of identity’ so ‘people could redefine themselves’. In Mafuna’s view, the outcome would probably be ‘an inclusive leadership style’, an *amalgamation* of different styles and modules. Moreover, one could question what inclusion means with regard to ‘inclusive leadership’ (see also Chapter 5, section 5.2.2 *Inclusiveness & exclusiveness*).

Inclusion [...] means permission to enter – a permission which can always be rescinded. The space has already been carved out by the powerful participants – members of the dominant group. Rebels and resisters are marginalized or excluded (Azoulay 1997: 101).

Inclusion could be subject to certain restrictions. Supposedly, ‘inclusion’ is not under all circumstances the same as ‘multivocality’. This ‘warning’ should be taken in consideration with regard to Afrocentric management discourse.

Admittedly, to date there is hardly support for Mafuna’s vision of ‘a new South African identity’ in current academic literature on management and organisation, or African studies, except for McFarlin and Coster. They observe a move ‘toward an Africanized model’ in South African management development. In particular in the field of training and development, they see good prospects for Afrocentric approaches (McFarlin; Coster & Mogale-Pretorius 1999: 69-71). Although the previously mentioned authors do not manage entirely to break away from an essentialist perspective on ‘African values’, they develop a *historicised view* on Africanised management development, emphasising the importance of contextualisation. In other words, reinforcing management development in South Africa “requires a clear understanding of the South African context – including historical, legal, educational, and competitive factors influencing corporate operations” (McFarlin; Coster *et al.* 1999: 69).

As an important suggestion resulting from the *Black Athena* debate, supporters of Afrocentric perspectives on management should be invited to take part in an open academic dialogue. The

⁴⁴¹ In Chapter 4 ‘*African management*’ flows: utilisation, section 4.1 *Five cases of ‘African management’ end-users* in the case description of Eskom’s ‘*African business leadership*, the contribution of Eric Mafuna with regard to Eskom’s idea of ‘African Business Leadership’ was examined.

'methodology of listening' would be a helpful device to all engaged in such a dialogue: "In this matter, it is necessary to apply the methodology of listening, which I have recommend for intercultural philosophical dialogues in general" (e.g. Kimmerle 2006: 90). Kimmerle added that listening requires openness, concentration, discipline, and a methodical technique. He compared the 'methodology of listening' somewhat mysteriously with art: "just as understanding that comes much later."

Apocalyptic ubuntu?

In the context of transition and transformation in South Africa, essentialist perspectives on African identity are likely of a temporary nature, to fill an 'ideological vacuum'. The *African National Congress* had no clear plans about macro-economic policies in place in the early 1990s.⁴⁴² Apartheid was on its way out and it was believed that older orientations of 'African socialism' would not stand a chance of meeting global economic requirements. Acceptance of a straightforward neoliberal ideology (and corresponding dominant management discourse) did not really suit ANC's reputation. As expected, this resulted in unclear positions and tensions in political circles every now and then. A brilliant catchphrase illustrates Thabo Mbeki's ideological and political ambiguity: 'Talk left, walk right' (Bond, P. 2004). Most probably, the 'left talk' refers to 'radical rhetoric' as expressed at local and international political fora, while simultaneously the South African government has surrendered to 'global apartheid': "Instead of progress, all we are left with are radical discursive flourishes" (Bond, P. 2004: ix).

Identity formation in South African contexts, in Africanist terms, assumes acceptance of 'Africanist cultural hegemony'. In a provoking article by Christoph Marx, he drew a parallel between Afrikaner and Africanist cultural nationalism. Marx compared Lovemore Mbigi's 'African management' views with those of the extremist, rightist Afrikaner *Ossewabrandwag* in the 1950s (Marx 2002: 64). Furthermore, he depicted apocalyptic scenarios for South Africa. Africanist cultural nationalism, amongst other things conveyed through the misleading *ubuntu* concept would bring new ways of oppression, an attitude of conformity, dangerous exclusivist tendencies, and authoritarian forms of fascist corporatist management. The revitalisation of *ubuntu* in South Africa – also embedded in African Renaissance ideology – invokes a 'romanticised and largely ahistorical image of Africa'. 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',

⁴⁴² The issue of *Black Economic Empowerment* in relation to the macro-economic policies of the ANC government was discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis, in 7.1 *Does Black Economic Empowerment imply value changes?*

... 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 addition, Van Binsbergen 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).

The research findings as described and interpreted in this do not support Marx's views in relation to 'African management' discourse. While his reference to notions of 'a romanticised past' and to exclusive nationalist features may be correct, there is no substance for Marx's characterisations of a tendency towards 'fascist' management perspectives due to revitalisation of the *ubuntu* concept.

While Christoph Marx used extreme phraseology in his assessment of *ubuntu*, with gloomy prospects for South Africa's management and organisation, the assumed parallel between Afrikaner and Africanist cultural nationalism offers an interesting viewpoint. From an opposite angle, this parallel can be viewed as a source of reconciliation and compromise. Was the *Consultative Business Movement* (CBM) in the 1980s that preceded and influenced the '*ubuntu* movement in management', not the first demonstration of this? The secret meeting in Dakar in 1987 between the ANC and a group of liberal South Africans, mostly Afrikaners and including entrepreneur Albert Koopman (who at a later stage acquired a status as 'African management' icon) paved the way for a decisive approach between leaders of the (non-racial) African liberation movement and Afrikaner business people and academics.⁴⁴³ Back in 1988, Herbert Adam already alluded to "prospects of compromise between African and Afrikaner nationalists," when referring to the July 1987 Dakar meeting:

Against the exclusive Afrikaner nationalism, it stresses an inclusive new South Africanism with which all people from different historical heritages could identify equally (Adam 1988: 374).

From this point of view, it is easier to understand why relatively speaking also a significant number of Afrikaners and other 'white' South Africans were initially involved in or supportive to the emergence and evolution of 'African management' discourse. From the beginning, it is also conceivable, however, that many Afrikaners boast about Africanist ideologies, to eliminate a sense of guilt, or for opportunistic reasons.

Whiteness became an identity deficit especially for younger white males who now sought a new language of self-identification in times of diminishing opportunities (Schutte, Gerhard 2000: 216).

Consequently, it is plausible that some identify with Afrocentric management approaches to show that they have chosen for the 'New South Africa', in other words to say that they are 'okay'.

⁴⁴³ In this respect, reference is made to 6.2 *Transition and the role of business* in Chapter 6 of this thesis.
'African management' in South Africa Page 298 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Could we then see this specific manifestation of ethnicisation as a sort of ideological survival strategy? Gerard Schutte argues that in the reconstruction of self, which is about the question of being an African in South Africa, a new polarity between Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism has evolved. This expresses ‘a racial divide stronger as ever’ (Schutte, Gerhard 2000: 217).

On the contrary, it does not make ‘the racial divide’ stronger. It makes the struggle for ideological hegemony stronger, which transcends the level of ethnic (or ‘racial’) boundaries. As argued in Chapter 7 (7.1 *Does Black Economic Empowerment imply value changes?*), upward moving black executives generally abide by dominant management management discourse. This research shows that it is a misconception to identify ‘African management’ discourse entirely with black people in South Africa. Such a misreading would disregard the possibility for ‘whites’ to identify with it (and understanding their motives to do so). It would also assume that ‘black African’ managers and business people automatically identified with Afrocentric management perspectives. This is not the case.

The suggestion, however, of ‘an inclusive new South Africanism’ (Adam 1988) or a ‘South African model in management development’ (McFarlin; Coster *et al.* 1999) is doubtful as well; this thesis considers the notion of ‘bounded national cultures’ as problematic.

The thorny issue of ethnicity and ‘strategic essentialism’

Ethnicity is an important element in the identity make-up of many people, notwithstanding its problematic genealogy in southern Africa, and despite insistence on non-racialism in particular in ANC circles. Indispensably, Afrocentric management discourse is associated with notions around ethnicity. To some critics, this is a reason to reject the discourse instantly. Is this reaction justified?

Ethnicity can have different symbolic meanings to different people, and serve various functions. It would do injustice to people’s sense of identity and self-esteem to dismiss the notion of ethnicity for its ‘constructedness’, or even as outrightly backward. More interesting it is to find out *for what reasons* people engage ethnicisation, and *on what conditions*. The bad name ethnicity was given – largely by colonial administrators, anthropologists, and apartheid ideologues – is no reason in itself to consider this altogether as a contaminated element in identity formation in a South African context.⁴⁴⁴ Research on the role of traditional leadership in South Africa for instance, as discussed in section 9.1 of the previous chapter, illustrated this point (e.g. Oomen 2002). Contrary to common opinion, notions of ethnic identity are not necessarily fixed. Rather, they illustrate the strategic use of ethnicity, a form of ‘strategic essentialism’, making sure that “the other has a voice, which is not merely heard, but which is *taken into account*”:

⁴⁴⁴ The role of anthropology was discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.1 *A long history of coercive labour*.
‘African management’ in South Africa Page 299 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

...strategic essentialism does not preclude alliances between different social groups; nor does it presume that communities are bounded, fixed, or that 'race' is an essence shared by all members of any given group. Instead, these 'discursive invented space(s)' take the beingness of black as experiential sources which can be drawn on without apology (Azoulay 1997: 102).

In the concluding remarks to Chapter 8 of this thesis, which addresses the question 'Africanness' as Otherness? it was suggested that the term strategic essentialism might be symbolised by reference to 'authentic African elements' that may be deployed as 'weapons for a radical criticism' (Mudimbe 1988: 153). Under the influence of two-way global cultural processes, 'the local', 'home', or 'community' has become increasingly emphasised. Using this emphasis on 'home', extending it to ethnicity, invites social researchers to look for hidden messages, for the 'subaltern voice'. This thorny issue should neither be overstressed, nor precluded in an assessment of Afrocentric management discourse. It seems that anthropologists have been 'mischievously ambiguous' on the issue of ethnicity and primordialism (Sharp & McAllister 1993: 18).

Besides the stake of direct benefits and access to scarce resources, such as in the case of land reforms, ethnic identity stands for other concerns as well. These are sometimes associated with timidity or with shame even. 'African management' discourse can be used to facilitate conversations, e.g. on particular taboos in organisational contexts regarding ethnicity, 'traditional' religious values, and 'tribality', as Peter Franks pointed out convincingly (Franks 2006).⁴⁴⁵ Thus, with reference to Chapter 9, potentially 'African management' discourse fosters a process of non-essentialist identity formation, generating non-primordial notions of 'Africanness'. Perhaps the term 'moral conversation' is applicable in this context, to make multivocality as the norm:

...a model of moral conversation whose goal is the process of dialogue, conversation and mutual understanding, *not consensus* (Azoulay 1997: 101) [emphasis in original text].

This aspect again is related to a quest for cultural recognition, conveyed through the notion of *ubuntu* in the context of 'African management' discourse, which was discussed in section 10.1 of this chapter.⁴⁴⁶ There is quite a gap between 'moral conversation' and 'radical criticism', but supposedly, the key issue is that 'African management' discourse is capable of creating 'discursive invented space(s)'. These discursive spaces offer a stage to air opinions and feelings otherwise not being heard. Altogether, this case illustrates the spectrum of hybridisation, ranging from integration

⁴⁴⁵ Mzamo Mangaliso made similar statements in one of the workgroup discussions on 25 June 2004 during the the 2-day seminar *Afrocentric management approaches in South Africa*, organised by SAVUSA and the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, June 2004. Prof. Mangaliso gave an illustration of some of the difficulties of management in South Africa in dealing with notions concerning ethnicity and traditional values. For example, when an employee reports that 'his father passed away', management gets the impression that the concerned employee is 'cheating' if the same was claimed 2 or 3 times before. In such cases, management is apparently not aware that a person's uncles are often also referred to as 'father'. There is no cheating, but unclarity on the concept of 'father' as understood in traditional ways. These issues are hardly ever openly discussed in organisational settings.

⁴⁴⁶ In addition, this issue was raised in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in 5.2 *Deviations and critiques*.

and assimilation (the so-called ‘marriage’ of *ubuntu* and capitalist economy) to contesting dominant discourse and providing space for the subaltern voice (e.g. Nederveen Pieterse 2004: 73-74).

In the final section, the phenomenon of Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa is viewed in terms of management guru theory.

10.4 Management guru theory

In another perspective, *ubuntu* is viewed specifically in terms of a *management fad*. Management fads are largely synonymous with management fashions: “transitory collective beliefs that certain management techniques are at the forefront of management progress” (Abrahamson 1996: 254). Some of the better-known examples are lean management, strategic management, the learning organisation, and Total Quality Management.

A fad can gain the status of buzzword in management thinking and management literature that suddenly becomes popular in a particular timeframe. If neatly and brightly packaged, the chances of gaining popularity are considerably increased. The level of uncertainty is a factor as well; the more uncertainty about an organisation’s mission and goals, the more an organisation may be inclined to imitate other organisations (and other organisations’ fads). In addition, opinion leaders and trendsetting organisations facilitate the popularity of management fads, “such as consulting firms or business mass media, whose missions involve the creation or dissemination” (Abrahamson 1991: 595).⁴⁴⁷ Usually, the popularity of fads is temporary. After some time they tend to lose their attraction or are taken over by new buzzwords, which is naturally inherent to fashion.

Management gurus often proclaim management fads: authors and speakers who have a reputation of being authorities on management issues, whose names are associated with a specific fad, and additionally with best-selling management books. Supposedly, management fads perform a function in the ‘diffusion of innovation’ (Abrahamson 1991). Hence, books and articles published in South Africa on ‘African management’ philosophy can be considered ‘innovation-diffusion literature’: media that diffuse innovative ideas on management and organisation, with the risk however that also inefficient innovations are diffused and adopted, while efficient innovations might be rejected. In this case, management fads could harm organisational functioning. In other words, the adoption of management fads is not necessarily the result of a rational choice. Moreover, management fads entail conceptual difficulties due to ‘paradox resolutions’: inherently paradoxical remedies are proposed. Despite all this, management fads have taken a major place in contemporary management thinking. Management guru theory was primarily developed in the United States of

⁴⁴⁷ Eric Abrahamson refers to the article *Processing fads and fashions: An organizational set analysis of cultural industry systems* by P.M. Hirsch (1972).

America in response to the disproportional (and irrational?) growth of the management consultancy sector since the 1970s.

The non-exoticising dimension of management guru theory helps to look at 'African management' discourse from an entirely different angle than from its sweeping culturalist claims, its ideological affiliations, and its identity-relatedness. As stated previously, the *ubuntu* concept and 'African management' philosophy have become commodified. They have become products that are packaged neatly and marketed cleverly.⁴⁴⁸ Does this mean that 'African management really works?' Supposedly, this is a wrong way of approaching the evolvement of this South African managerial commodity. It has turned out that there is indeed a demand for the *ubuntu* concept and 'African management' philosophy as commodities in the South African management consultancy market. Again, this is not necessarily the result of rational choices. Corporations, governmental institutions, and not-for-profit organisations are apparently prepared to pay high fees for 'African management' consultants. Why?

Brad Jackson presented four emerging accounts explaining the phenomenon of management guru and management fashion: the Rational Approach; the Structural Approach; the Institutional/Distancing Approach, and the Charismatic Approach (Jackson, B. 2003: 22-36). Although Jackson looked at this phenomenon predominantly having the North American and British context in mind, it is argued here that his insights are useful in interpreting the evolvement of *ubuntu* as a management concept and 'African management' philosophy in South Africa as well.

The Rational Approach refers to the assumption management fashions really work. Managers may perceive that 'African management' gurus, such as Lovemore Mbigi or Mike Boon, closely match their Afrocentric ideas with the needs of individual managers. Thus, they may help making sense of their business environment. This may involve fear and uncertainty. Lovemore Mbigi frequently uses phrases like 'survival strategies for white managers in a politically hostile environment' invoking a strong sense of anxiety and an urge to act quickly.

In a Structural Approach, "the importance of the socio-economic, political and cultural contexts, within which management theories and ideas emerge and become widely adopted" is emphasised (Jackson, B. 2003: 24). In this respect, 'normative rhetoric' becomes increasingly prominent, demonstrating a gradual move from coercive, to rational, and eventually to normative means of managerial control. Furthermore, the anti-bureaucratic and anti-rational features that

⁴⁴⁸ Lovemore Mbigi repeatedly claimed during the entire fieldwork period to do nothing much about marketing. He just waited "for a call." This could nevertheless be seen part of a marketing strategy: establishing a public image that there is a great want for his services. In addition, his regular brief articles, for instance in *People Dynamics*, on 'African management', *ubuntu*, and the African business renaissance, can also be seen as marketing efforts, as well as his advertisement as a 'Speaker of Note'.

characterise 'African management' discourse reinforce the applicability of Jackson's Structural Approach to this research subject. These features hint at a 'corrosive discourse' (Ten Bos 2000: 69). A 'corrosive discourse' is particularly appealing to those who want to challenge or even disgrace leadership in power. The 'Africanness' then becomes merely a vehicle to defy an established authority in leadership.

This thesis is a clear illustration of Jackson's Structural Approach in terms of the emergence of 'African management' philosophy, with its emphasis on the changing political context in South Africa and its strong normative features and commitment to (culturalist) values in relation to management and organisation.

Institutional/Distancing Approach highlights 'institutional pressures' which "occur because non-adopters fear appearing different from many adopters" and 'competitive pressures' which "occur because non-adopters fear below-average performance if any competitors profit from adopting" (Jackson, B. 2003: 27). The Institutional/Distancing perspective is only partially substantiated by this research: it was found that that several South African companies that hired 'African management' consultants seemed considerably desperate for various reasons and therefore wanted to 'try out something completely different'. Almost as a last resort, companies may decide to buy into the *ubuntu* management concept. Several South African companies are desperately looking for a magical formula, a solution to problems relating to everlasting tensions in internal labour relations and issues around cultural diversity. Then, the 'African way' may raise expectations about a possible breakthrough for its unusual, somewhat exotic, approach. In addition, they might fear that competitors who have tried out *ubuntu* as a management concept moved ahead faster. For competitive reasons, it could be decided to keep up with a fashionable management trend, giving it the 'benefit of the doubt' and experiment with a similar approach, possibly because of growing internal pressures from the Board of Directors or shareholders. In this case, 'institutional pressures' and 'competitive pressures' may play a role in a decision to involve 'African management' consultants.

Fourthly, the Charismatic Approach "places the figure of the guru squarely at the center of the analysis" (Jackson, B. 2003: 31). In other words, rationality, contextual and institutional factors play a lesser role than the personality, rhetorical abilities, and reputation of the management guru. This approach leads to the temptation to label prominent 'African management' protagonists, such as Lovemore Mbigi, Mike Boon and Reuel Khoza, as management gurus or even as 'African management' *vendors*:

By conveniently and appealingly packaging their ideas, vendors provide managers with much-needed relief from the need to search extensively for new solutions (Jackson, B. 2003: 31).

Ironically, in his discussion of the Charismatic Approach, Brad Jackson refers to commentators who compared management gurus to ‘witch doctors in tribal societies’, apparently possessing ‘magical knowledge’:

Witch doctors and gurus serve to assist their clients with pressing problems, anxieties and stresses but they do this from marginal positions being both in and out of their respective societies (Jackson, B. 2003: 31).

How suitable does this describe a prominent Afrocentric ‘traditional (business) healer’, Lovemore Mbigi. He was the central character in fieldwork observations for this research, a man who describes himself as a tribesman, grandson to the Shona Rain Queen. Mbigi stated that being a management consultant is his role of a *sangoma* in contemporary southern African society. As a cosmopolitan, living in both South Africa and in the United States, he moves in and out. As a speaker, Mbigi strongly resembles the prototype of a charismatic management guru as typified by Brad Jackson.

In addition, to Jackson’s four ‘emerging explanatory accounts’, the imaginative aspect can make management fads appealing to organisational leaders and managers. Without being pretentious about it, Maggie Davey of *Jacana Media* referred to this as ‘insightful non-corporate views’. As a publishing director, who took the decision of publishing De Liefde’s *Lekgotla. The art of leadership through dialogue* she appreciated in particular a holistic approach to management and organisation, looking at a bigger picture beyond tight boundaries and horizons, and because ‘it’s imaginative’.⁴⁴⁹ This alludes to the powerful appeal of *fantasies* and *utopia*, which may energise the imaginative and creative capabilities of managers (Ten Bos 2000: 8-12). A management fashion, such as the *ubuntu* concept in South Africa, potentially offers opportunities to satisfy a hunger for *fantasies* and *utopia* in management and organisation, even if the concept is supposedly ‘not empirical’, and even if proclaimed by ‘false prophets’. ‘African management’ philosophy carries plenty of features to nurture management utopia thinking: the nation-building mission, the responsibility of facilitating truth and reconciliation at organisational levels, the boldness and heroism of ‘truly’ African leadership, the goal of making (South) Africa and (South) Africans successful and well respected in the global business community.

Management concepts, such as *ubuntu*, leave space for different interpretations and interaction with other organisational discourses. Its utilisers (managers) have the liberty of socially reconstructing and adapting the concept to suit their own organisational goals. It is inherent to management concepts that they prescribe some general guidelines or principles, while the details in

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Maggie Davey, publishing director of *Jacana Media* on 20 May 2004 (also see section 3.2 of Chapter 3 ‘African management’ flows: emergence and distribution).

implementation are left to the imagination and flexibility of the implementers in the real world. 'African management' gurus – e.g. Lovemore Mbigi, Mike Boon, and Albert Koopman – are capable of encouraging managers to cut through separate domains in thinking, crossing borders between compartments of rationality, religion, creativity, and morality. Perhaps, entertainment is also an issue to be mentioned here. Both Ronnie Lessem and Lovemore Mbigi referred to their 'road shows', through which they tried to popularise 'African management' philosophy in the early 1990s, primarily as big fun, whereas they assumed that the entertainment factor was also a motivation for managers attending the road shows.⁴⁵⁰ Mainly for the imaginative power and utopian elements that management fads may invoke, René ten Bos discards a generally felt disdain for management fashion, as "fashion may offer more plausible insights into the world of managers that scientific or utopian idealizations do" (Ten Bos 2000: xvii). Apparently, this implies that the thinking on management and organisation is no longer the exclusive domain of management theorists with their rational, scientific ideas, now the 'witch doctors' have entered the scene. 'African management' gurus cut across all compartments of (organisational) life, including the ones that used to be the privilege of management theorists. Altogether, this sheds a completely different light on the critique that 'African management' would be 'not empirical'. The claim to rationality turns out to be a very poor argument to criticise 'African management' philosophy or *ubuntu* as a management concept.

What the theoretical perspectives on management fashion and management gurus of scholars such as Eric Abrahamson, Brad Jackson and René ten Bos reveal in terms of interpreting 'African management' discourse in South Africa, is the non-culturalist factors and pressures that play a role in the emergence and dissemination of management concepts in contemporary, postcolonial and postmodern business contexts. In retrospect, one could re-examine much of the anthropological critique on the use of 'African management' philosophy and *ubuntu* through the theoretical lens of management guru theory. Anthropologists are advised to accept that Afrocentric 'traditional healers' have found a place in the fascinating world of business management.

Concluding remarks

Four interpretative perspectives were discussed in this chapter: (1) the historical dimension, (2) the process of business transformation, (3) processes of post-apartheid identity formation, and (4) a 'management guru' perspective. These interpretative perspectives are complementary. Again, particularly important to note is the vast range of cultural differentiation in interpreting 'African

⁴⁵⁰ 'Business and road shows' are discussed in section 3.2 of Chapter 3 '*African management*' flows: emergence and distribution.

management' discourse in South Africa. Supposedly, this feature has an effect on developing an interpretative framework that could similarly end up in endless differential viewpoints and nuances. Nonetheless, it was attempted to cover many of the relevant issues that were particularly noticeable in the research findings. This framework makes therefore clear, that instant judgements – either in appreciative or in negative terms – mostly tend to be one-sided and incomplete to say the least. As stated before, this chapter does not provide a definite interpretation. Other perspectives are always possible. Moreover, 'African management' discourse in South Africa is a rapidly moving field of study. In the next number of years, other viewpoints may be more appropriate.

Afrocentric management perspectives in South Africa are a specific contemporary version of a much broader debate on Afrocentrism. Moreover, it illustrates elaborately a case of glocalisation in highly differentiated terms. It is important to note, though perhaps a bit obvious, that interpretations of 'what African management *really* is' and 'whether African management *really* works' depend largely on where one stands. Therefore, principally, this is a matter of identification and sense making in a post-apartheid society. Moreover, the type of organisation, organisational goals and interests, the organisation's external fields, all have a considerable influence on how 'African management' philosophy tends to be interpreted and utilised. By and large, the spectrum is divided between 'believers' and 'sceptics'. Although both will recognise some of the viewpoints described in this chapter and in the thesis as a whole, it is unlikely that this thesis will bring the two groups together. Perhaps, management is a religious matter after all: you either believe in it, or not.

The following and final chapter brings a concise version in response to the central research question.

Chapter 11: Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore and interpret Afrocentric management discourse in South Africa, referred to as 'African management', called after the landmark publication *African management. Philosophies, Concepts and Applications* (Christie; Lessem *et al.* 1994). Furthermore, it aims to position and understand 'African management' in a context of globalisation and in terms of political and cultural developments in South Africa. For this purpose, it is essential to identify and consider key concepts, themes, and narratives that are associated with 'African management' philosophy. Concept come to life through meanings attributed by actors involved in the discourse. Clearly, the notion of *ubuntu* is crucial in this regard, but *ubuntu* alone is not self-explanatory. It has a core meaning, about which there seems to be a consensus in general terms. It takes thorough examination and reflection to identify and interpret meanings of 'African management' philosophy and *ubuntu* in relation to management and organisation in South African contexts. Chapters 3 and 4 present my findings extensively in this regard, while Chapter 4 is an attempt to bring order in the abundance of research data.

A detailed research like this one produces myriads of findings and a range of interpretations. Sometimes, these are clearly articulated, and sometimes it takes associative, analytical thinking and careful reading of subtexts to identify and deconstruct relevant concepts relating to 'African management' discourse. At any rate, this research shows that it takes more than 'instant judgment' to get to grips with these rather broad notions, with manifold connotations.

In brief, belonging and identification have a central place in this thesis. To be able to understand these notions appropriately, it was necessary to look at history. History understood as developments in the past, which have shaped South Africa's society, political systems, labour relations, organisational cultures, and cultural repertoires. This is considered in chapter 6 and 7. Together, these two chapters constitute the necessary contextualisation of 'African management' discourse in South Africa, in historical, political, and economic terms.

In addition, history was viewed in terms of histories of ideas, in particular with regard to notions of 'Africanness'. Chapter 8 discusses Afrocentric interpretations of African identity, articulated in rather essentialist, static ways, while Chapter 9 discusses more fluid, processual and multidimensional interpretations.

The previous chapter presents a comprehensive interpretative framework, focusing on four interrelated perspectives: the historical dimension; management strategies for business

transformation; ‘Africanisation’ and post-apartheid identity formation, and management guru theory. Next, my interpretative reflections will be recaptured in a concise manner to answer the central research question that formed the basis of this research.

11.1 Research question

The central question underlying this research is:

How and in what political and cultural context can the emergence and the evolution of ‘African management’ in South Africa be interpreted, and how is this concept constructed and strategically used, in a context of transition and transformation and in terms of globalisation and identity formation?

In answering this central question, I will not repeat and summarise what was already described in the previous chapters. Instead, I will highlight the major elements, with references to relevant sections in this thesis that provide more detailed consideration. In the following, I will address the central research question in three parts: (a) political and cultural context, considering both the ‘pre-emergence’ phase and processes of transition and business transformation; (b) the construction of the concept of ‘African management’ in South Africa (and related key notions), and (c) its strategic use.

11.2 Answers and interpretation

Political and cultural context

This thesis can be seen as a contribution towards contextualising and historicising ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa. The political and cultural context is relevant in two ways.

Firstly, a consideration of the historical dimension from a long-term perspective, as analysed in Chapter 6 (section 6.1) and Chapter 10 (section 10.1), suggest that ‘African management’ discourse can be understood in terms of a ‘continuity from the past’. To a large extent, it is a continuation of liberation thinking, in response to oppression, discrimination, and marginalisation of the majority of the population of South Africa. As such, ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa can be seen as a subcategory of Pan Africanism and Afrocentrism, in a contemporary local version.

Secondly, the emergence and evolution of ‘African management’ discourse was largely the result of political and economic developments in South Africa at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. This is referred to as the immediate ‘pre-emergence’ phase, preceding the ‘launch’ of ‘African management’ philosophy in 1992.

As described in Chapter 6 of this thesis, South Africa was in a state of emergency that foreshadowed a radical shift. In this period, there were the first signs of an optimistic mood, which affected business and management. Most sources confirm that white dominated business has

profiteered for a long time from colonialism and apartheid. Nevertheless, it was a small but significant group of businesspersons together with the leaders of the liberation movement that opened opportunities for a definite breakthrough, politically and economically. In this regard, the role of the *Consultative Business Movement* was very important, and the illustrious ‘Broederstroom meeting’ is worth mentioning here as well (for a full account, see section 6.2 in Chapter 6).

A by-product of CBM’s activities was a flow of ‘new management visions’ strongly characterised by optimism about the future, while valuing cultural diversity in South Africa and acknowledging a need for ‘industrial democracy’. Albert Koopman, an influential representative of the Afrikaans business community in CBM, was among the business visionaries who speculated about a post-apartheid model of business and management in South Africa. Later, his concept of ‘transcultural management’ became appropriated by ‘African management’ discourse.

This thesis considers SAMP’s *Theory of the African Firm* workshop in 1992 as the starting point of ‘African management’ philosophy in South Africa (for a thorough description, see section 3.1 in Chapter 3). Afrocentric management visions were externalised and distributed, thanks to *Wits Business School* and the South African companies that gave it a platform. Peter Christie, the key actor in the *South African Management Project* (SAMP), commented in retrospect, that the central idea was to use the *Theory of the African Firm* workshop to develop a contextual approach to management and organisation that ‘made sense’ to South Africans. It was not intended to produce culturalist perspectives. However, in the process, the initial ideas as a result of CBM’s activities became ‘Africanised’. In other words, CBM’s non-culturalist claims to democratise the domain of management and organisation in South Africa were appropriated by Afrocentric discourse and transformed into an ‘African management’ philosophy.

After the first national democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, the business community was urged to transform. The government intended to broaden the ownership base of the economy by promoting *Black Economic Empowerment* (BEE). The change from apartheid to democratisation threw up numerous complex issues to be resolved. Companies had to become more culturally diverse and were urged to be more competitive internationally. In addition, the ‘imbalances of the past’ had to be redressed, which legitimised a policy of ‘affirmative action’. BEE and ‘affirmative action’ caused a lot of problems and challenges, also culturally. Would BEE open spaces to discuss issues relating to identity and ethnicity for instance? Would the process of business transformation rather reconfirm dominant management discourse? Parallel to the process of transition and business transformation, a debate on African Renaissance emerged. In this debate, the concept of *ubuntu* was given a central place as well. In addition, business was increasingly confronted with civil society claims with regard to ethical enterprising and CSR. The background of transition and

transformation created opportunities for ‘African management’ discourse to expand, as described and analysed in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Sweeping claims with regard to transformation, cultural diversity management, and global competitiveness were used to advertise ‘African management’ philosophy. Immediately after the *Theory of the African Firm* workshop, a number of the leading representatives of an ‘Afrocentric approach’ engaged in consultancy work. Professor Lovemore Mbigi’s *Rainmaker Management Consultants* alias *African Intellectual Resources* in Johannesburg is a case in point. Mbigi, who originates from Zimbabwe, was already involved in the emergence of ‘African management’ discourse in 1992, and in other ‘dimensions of culture’ as well, as chapters 3 and 4 show. He has played a central role in the dissemination of the discourse (writing books, talks, interviews, lectures) and in terms of utilisation as well, in his capacity as management consultant and workshop facilitator (section 4.2 in Chapter 4 elaborates on Mbigi’s role).

The research findings and a thorough literature study give reason to assume that more than a decade after the demise of apartheid, organisations in South Africa are still struggling with issues concerning business transformation. To illustrate this, section 6.3 gives an impression of the impact of colonialism and apartheid on organisation and management before and after 1994. For instance, some commentators questioned the term ‘post-apartheid workplace’. This refers also to the debate on postcolonialism and postmodernism, as discussed in section 9.4 of Chapter 9. In the latter, it was stated among other things that ‘postcolonial’ should not be read as ‘after colonialism’. Similarly, ‘post-apartheid’ workplace does not mean that all problems relating to oppression, marginalisation and apartheid as experienced under apartheid suddenly disappeared.

Supposedly, the impact of colonialism and apartheid on organisations in South Africa and the challenges of business transformation strengthened the ‘commodification’ of ‘African management’ philosophy and *ubuntu* in relation to management. Apparently, it has become ‘a product’ that sells well. This trend of commodification is an aspect of the cultural dimension of globalisation and, as such an illustration of ‘African management’ discourse as a case of ‘glocalisation’, as argued in section 1.1 of the introductory chapter. This does not necessarily mean that ‘African management’ ‘really works’ or would ‘be better’ than ‘western management’. The phenomenon of ‘management gurus’ and ‘management fads’ can only to some degree be explained as a rational choice. Section 10.3 in Chapter 10 provides insights into the growth of the number of ‘management gurus’ in the world. There are a number of people, notably not exclusively ‘black African’ consultants, who have managed to market ‘African management’ philosophy quite smartly, making good money in the process. Apparently, this has caused some annoyance. Mbigi even stated that he received a lot of

'hate mail' when he established RMC.⁴⁵¹

The emergence and evolution of 'African management' discourse in South Africa should be positioned in a cultural context of globalisation and global cultural processes. In this thesis, identity is a key issue in interpreting and deconstructing the discourse.

Construction

It is neither appropriate nor viable to frame the concept of 'African management' in a unilateral and unambiguous way. This thesis demonstrates that one should avoid making generalisations or to reify this rather diverse discourse, despite the use of similar concepts and a number of common themes. There are many actors involved, with notable differences in interpretation. Moreover, in terms of discursive utilisation, there are considerable variations, as Chapter 4 shows. Generalising statements in this regard would not do justice to the diversity in interpretations. Chapter 5 analyses the common features and themes (in section 5.1) and deviations (in section 5.2). In conclusion, Chapter 5 presents a scheme with the key themes in 'African management' discourse.

Essentialism is a prime feature in the way 'African management' is conceived and represented in South Africa. Homogenisation and purification play a role in this: Africa is mostly imagined as 'different' (as compared to 'Europe' and/or 'the west') and treated as a monolithic entity. The unique character of Africa is being discursively associated with the idea of the 'Cradle of Humankind', as explained in section 5.1 in Chapter 5.

Similarly, there is a tendency of portraying 'Europe' or 'the west' in equally homogenising ways and specifically in negative terms, although not consistently, but rather in a sort of 'love-hate' relationship. Simultaneously, there is for instance a lot of appreciation for the economic, technical and scientific achievements in 'the west'. As explained in Chapter 8 of this thesis, the negative terms in which Africa is portrayed in colonial discourse are being discursively reversed by Afrocentrism. As a result, Africa and 'anything African' tends to be represented in unilaterally positive ways. Thus, a 'universally perceived Afro-pessimism' is turned into 'a case for Afro-optimism', as phrased by the South African Afrocentric scholar Tsehloane Keto (see section 8.1).

⁴⁵¹ In my research, I have observed quite some criticism about the commodification of the discourse. For example, it tends to be assessed as 'not empirical' and some criticise the 'constructedness' of the *ubuntu* concept or argue that the discourse leads to 'mystification'. Others find that, for instance, traditional notions and ethnicity are 'not an issue' in South African management. In addition, sometimes there even seems to be faintly a racist undertone in the criticism, as if there is a problem that management consultants make money by commodifying the concept of *ubuntu*, when they are black and Afrocentric. In my view, this suggests a distinction between 'serious management consultants' – using 'management fads' that are framed in mainstream management discourse – and 'insincere consultants' – using concepts, such as *ubuntu*. Clearly, one could disagree about the use of *ubuntu* as a management concept, perhaps even for valid reasons, but all consultants using fashionable 'management fads' are subject to critical assessment with similar criteria. The 'rhetorical critique' on 'management gurus' and 'management fads', developed by Brad Jackson (2003) could be a helpful tool in this regard.

This has also been characterised by the statement that Africans have ‘to re-invent themselves’. Martin Chanock’s analysis of ‘culture talk’, orientalisering, and occidentalising about this phenomenon of culturally reversing negative connotations in relation to Africa, is insightful in this regard (Chanock 2000).

Indigenisation is a notable characteristic in the construction of the concept ‘African management’. This is mostly understood in terms of localisation, as contextualising global management discourse, in the sense of ‘making it look African’. This was analysed comprehensively in *Indigenising global management: ‘copying intelligently’*, in section 10.3 ‘Africanisation’ and post-apartheid identity formation (Chapter 10).

How is ‘Africanness’ defined in ‘African management’ discourse? In the diversity of the discourse, two different archetypal approaches can be distinguished. One way is defining ‘Africanness’ or ‘Afrocentricity’ through denial, as being ‘non-Eurocentric’. Another way is defining ‘Africanness’ as open-ended, multidimensional, and ‘as performed’.

Defining ‘Africanness’ or ‘Afrocentricity’ through denial as being ‘non-Eurocentric’ would stand for liberation and seeking (cultural and academic) recognition. As assumed, the essence of ‘Africanness’ could be rediscovered by ‘stripping off’ the foreign elements. The assumption is that it is possible to distinguish between authentic elements of ‘African culture’ and foreign elements, thus rediscovering indigenous knowledge that needs to be revitalised and refurbished. This feature was characterised in Chapter 8 (section 8.2) as an ‘illusory quest for origins’, as illustrated by the *Black Athena* debate. The search for authenticity is problematised in contemporary anthropological perspectives on ‘culture’, as explained in the introduction to Chapter 1 and in Chapter 9. From a theoretical perspective, the search for authenticity is a tendency related to global cultural processes, in which notions of ‘home’, ‘community’ and ‘locality’ are emphasised (section 1.1 in Chapter 1). In addition, the search for authenticity could be seen as a post-nostalgic response brought about by cosmopolitan intellectuals and cultural intermediaries, who are skilled at packaging and representing the exotica of ‘other cultures’ and ‘amazing places’ and different traditions to audiences eager for experiences with ‘cultural play’. In this context, the search for the real and authentic has been given up and the focus is more on “the reproduction of the effect of the real” (Featherstone 1995: 98). This is linked to the notion of ‘refugees from modernisation’ that was mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis (section 1.1 *A case of ‘glocalisation’*).

Moreover, as postcolonial organisational theory exemplifies, the idea of ‘stripping off’ foreign elements and a ‘quest for origins’ are elements that point at the principle of ‘purification’. As Anshuman Prasad convincingly argues, the feature of ‘purification’ represents a denial of the ‘colonial encounter’ (Prasad 2003a). Although conceived and modelled in terms of as a dichotomy,

‘western’ and ‘non-western’ perspectives on management and organisation have a lot in common and are far more interrelated and mutually influenced than generally assumed, on either side. Prasad’s theoretical perspective, as discussed in Chapter 10 (section 10.1) therefore proves useful in deconstructing Afrocentric management discourse.

The rather dogmatic and one-dimensional Afrocentric features in interpretations of ‘African management’, does not imply that ‘African management’ advocates propagate a culturalist ‘take-over’ in the domain of management and organisation. In broader terms, Afrocentric discourse reflects a similar notion: “Africa-centered scholarship [...] does not seek to substitute itself in the place of a hegemonic perspective of Europe-centered knowledge nor does it seek to claim African ‘superiority’” (Keto 2001: xiv). Rather, it would seek recognition and integration. Such a philosophy would be able to deal with ‘aspirations of blacks and fears of whites’ in a context of transition and business transformation. In a non-culturalist reading, the questioning of conventional managerial practices and ‘organisational orthodoxy’ could be highlighted as an important message in this discursive argument. This is part of the ‘eccentric’ organisational principles in the construction of ‘African management’, as discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.1). In addition, informality and even a sense of humour are discursively appreciated and promoted in organisational and business contexts. This has been referred to as the ‘de-bureaucratisation’ element, responding to the issue of ‘alienation’. In other words, from an Afrocentric point of view, organisations should fit people. Organisation members should feel comfortable in organisations, accepted, respected, not marginalised.

In the ‘Four World Model’ as developed by Ronny Lessem, South African ‘businesspheres’ are characterised by cultural influences from ‘the North’, ‘the West’, ‘the East’, and ‘the South’ (Lessem & Nussbaum 1996). However, ‘the southern perspective’ (‘warmth’) is perceived as being underrepresented, as described in Chapter 3 (section 3.1 *Emergence and externalisation*). By inducing and reinforcing ‘African values’ and an Afrocentric paradigm in organisational contexts, a better integration would be achieved. Possibly, ‘better integration’ means in this context as well a place where people in South Africa do not feel ‘alienated’ but comfortable and ‘at home’.

The aforementioned features that characterise the construction of ‘African management’ discourse in South Africa – especially essentialism and purification – have another side as well. This could be phrased as ‘strategic essentialism’. For example, the practical use of ‘African management’ philosophy could prompt cases of what I would call ‘essentialism with a message’. This could be linked to the ethical dimension, the integrative dimension, or the protest dimension of

‘Africanness’.⁴⁵² Moreover, ‘essentialism with a message’ can be associated with ethnicity and ethnicisation, in terms of ‘weapons for a radical criticism’ to articulate cultural resistance (Mudimbe 1988: 153). Sometimes, this is related to raise ‘negated identities’ or to call for a ‘diversity of perspectives’ (Azoulay 1997).

Further to the notion of ‘strategic essentialism’ and analogous to the *Black Athena* debate (see section 8.2 of Chapter 8), it is argued that ‘African management’ discourse could be seen as a ‘critique of ideology’ with respect to management knowledge, defying dominant management discourse in essentialising, culturalist, and dramatising ways.⁴⁵³ This again is linked to the notion of ‘cultural decolonisation’ and ‘de-bureaucratisation’. The term ‘decolonising the mind’ can be observed in various externalisations and articulations of Afrocentric management discourse. This refers to the disposing of the (psychological) impact of colonialism and apartheid on the minds of both employees and management in South Africa (see section 6.3 in Chapter 6). Moreover, it might apply as well to a metaphorical ‘cultural decolonisation’, which is not necessarily related to the past, but to the present: a metaphor for resisting undemocratic corporate ways of management and organisation (e.g. Deetz 1992). This alludes to the use of ‘Africanness’ in ‘African management’ discourse in terms of a protest function (also see: Chapter 10, section 10.2 *Management strategies for business transformation*).

Another way of defining ‘Africanness’ in ‘African management’ discourse links to the notion of ‘Africanness’ as open-ended. This was described in Chapter 9. To the feature of essentialism should be added that a noteworthy nuance has entered the discourse, related to a more open-ended interpretation by way of the term ‘Contemporary African Leadership’, an eclectic approach that distinguishes between ‘useful’ and futile traditional notions. In this perspective, it is believed that an African leadership ethos should be ‘time-competent’, fitting the past, the present, and the future.

The concept of ‘African management’ as conceived, externalised, and used in South Africa, comprises a range of noble humanistic aspects, discursively associated and articulated through *ubuntu*. In this regard, the notion of communalism is emphasised, referring to the image of the precolonial African village life. Interestingly, there is not really a consensus whether *ubuntu* is an exclusively ‘African thing’ that only (black) Africans can have, or a universal value. This thesis presents evidence pointing at interpretations of *ubuntu* as a universal principle, expressed through an allegedly indigenous concept, in a way that ‘resonates’ with people in Africa. In other words, *ubuntu* is seen as a local version of a universalistic principle, assumingly signifying an inclusive

⁴⁵² The final section of Chapter 9 identifies and explains 7 dimensions in the use of ‘Africanness’.

⁴⁵³ The notion of ‘strategic essentialism’ in relation to ‘African management’ discourse is discussed in more depth in section 10.3 ‘Africanisation’ and post-apartheid identity formation in the previous chapter.

approach of leadership, for instance according to Eric Mafuna, as stated in section 4.1 of Chapter 4. The argument of ‘social exclusion’ is often referred to in academic comments regarding African Renaissance and the discursive use of *ubuntu* (e.g. Van Kessel 2001; Marx 2002). Overall, the research findings do not support the assumption that social exclusion would be promoted through ‘African management’ discourse, neither at a rhetorical level nor at implementation level. Rather, inclusiveness seems to be encouraged, although ‘inclusion’ is not necessarily synonymous to ‘multivocality’, as noted in Chapter 10 (section 10.3 ‘*Africanisation*’ and *post-apartheid identity formation*): “Inclusion [...] means permission to enter – a permission which can always be rescinded (Azoulay 1997: 101). No evidence was found regarding explicit or implicit restrictions to Afrikaners, South Africans of Indian origin, or of any other ‘origin’ to be identified with the ‘African management’ *movement* in South Africa. However, there are indications of the construction of ‘cultural difference’ with regard to English ‘South Africans’. Allegedly, they would be less capable to join, as noted by Ronnie Lessem (see section 3.1 in Chapter 3):

There is no English South African, who has a real feel for Africa. [...] They [i.e. ‘English’ South Africans] are constitutionally incapable [to have a real feel for Africa], I find (interview with Ronnie Lessem on 23 June 2004).

Supposedly, everybody can join in, although implicitly acceptance of an ‘African cultural hegemony’ seems required, analogous to Filatova’s assessment with regard to an ANC policy document (Filatova 1997). However, to conclude that ‘African management’ discourse implies the suppression of ‘individual rights’, would in my view not be justified, at any rate not on the basis of this research. The notions that are discursively associated with *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ (e.g. humaneness, caring for each other, social obligations, and communalism) are subject to situational interpretation and intersubjectivity, as argued in the previous chapter (section 10.3 ‘*Africanisation*’ and *post-apartheid identity formation*). Despite the critique of ‘conceptual vagueness’ as discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.2), one could argue that discursive space is created for ‘communities of meaning’ in developing their own versions that would ‘make sense’ to them in specific contexts. Naturally, such ‘discursive spaces’ could also evolve into situations, in which ‘African management’ principles are used in ‘unethical ways’. No evidence was found for this in this research. Interpretations at a practical level are largely situationalist. This is inherent to discourse: the ‘producers’ of a discourse can not be held accountable for its eventual utilisation. As noted in Chapter 2 (section 2.4), no one ‘controls’ a discourse, nobody is able to oversee it as a whole, or to predict to where it leads. Again, this alludes to the title of this thesis: *Between Optimism and Opportunism*.

Others assert that *ubuntu* can ‘be learned’. For instance, Mike Boon claimed that persons could

not be automatically attributed *ubuntu*. They need to learn it and to prove it. An essential characteristic of how these Afrocentric humanistic aspects are discursively interpreted, is exemplified in the notion of ‘social obligations’ to the community, instead of ‘individual rights’. This principle applies to management and organisation as well, as illustrated by Mpho Letlape’s statement: “*Ubuntu* means everybody knows his role and knows what is expected. You have an obligation to *Eskom* as a community” (see section 4.1 in Chapter 4).

Generally, mutual respect and valuing diversity are considered important aspects of humanistic aspects, again framed in a communalistic way. Taddy Blecher of *CIDA City Campus* in Johannesburg rephrased Desmond Tutu’s famous citation, as follows: “If you harm somebody else, you are really harming yourself” (interview with Taddy Blecher on 4 May 2004).⁴⁵⁴ Allegedly, also Christian notions are deployed in the construction of *ubuntu* concept. The philosopher Augustine Shutte is not the only one who has been criticised of incorporating Christian notions in his interpretation of *ubuntu* philosophy. Supposedly, Desmond Tutu’s readings of *ubuntu* in the context of the TRC are a clear illustration of this. In addition, the Christian faith has influenced the lives of several prominent ‘African management’ advocates mentioned in this thesis. As Mbigi acknowledged spontaneously in an interview, the Jesuits in Zimbabwe had a great influence on his education. This was an important factor in his personal development and professional career. Mpho Letlape (*Eskom*) is for example an active member of the Lutheran Church in her community. Monhla Hlahla (ACSA) is a Christian too and simultaneously adheres to the notion of *ubuntu*.

Focussing more specifically on the domain of management and organisation, participatory decision-making is often discursively associated with *ubuntu* and ‘African management’ philosophy. On the role of leadership, notable differences of interpretation were found in this research. One variety concerned the idea that the group will decide, even if it is not a rational choice, as illustrated by Mzamo Mangaliso in Chapter 5: “Unity is more valued than the utility of the decision reached” (Mangaliso 2001: 27). In another version, the leader would have to take ‘bold decisions’. Actually, the leader would be rather ‘lonely’ in this position, as Mike Boon asserted. Decision-making as framed in ‘African management’ discourse puts much emphasis on consultation, asking for people’s opinion (e.g. Joe Matsau of *Eskom* and Monhla Hlahla of ACSA). It seems that lately the emphasis on ‘bold leadership’ has become more pronounced, probably due to underlying neoliberal policy frameworks.

⁴⁵⁴ “We believe that...my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours. When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise 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 belonging” is the original citation of Desmond Tutu (1999) in *No Future Without Forgiveness*.

Strategic use

A third component of the research question concerns the question how ‘African management’ discourse is being discursively used in South Africa. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide relevant data to answer this sub-question. Three dimensions can be distinguished in the strategic use: organisational integration, business transformation, and developmental resources (human capital development).

Firstly, organisational integration is a common goal of organisations. Apparently, ‘African management’ end-users believe that a ‘strong culture’ can be articulated and promoted through ‘African management’ philosophy. Chapter 4 describes the concept of ‘African Business Leadership’ of *Eskom Holdings Ltd*. At a rhetorical level, this electricity utility supports an Afrocentric approach to management. Simultaneously, it makes use of the expertise of a multinational of American origin, IBM, to make its organisational culture ‘strong’. In addition, the feature of consensus-building is highlighted in Afrocentric discourse. In the case of *Eskom*, this would not necessarily mean ‘participatory decision-making’ or ‘industrial democracy’ – as claimed in some versions of Afrocentric management discourse –rather consultation: asking people’s opinion, creating opportunities for people to receive relevant information, discuss, and ask questions. Basically, the idea is to create a solid support base for decisions that are taken. However, this form does not exclude ‘bold leadership’ and ‘hard-nosed decisions’. As a result, in this case one could argue that *ubuntu* is strategically used as a management tool for ‘soft domination’ in organisations (e.g. Clegg; Kornberger & Pitsis 2005: 168-169). The notion of ‘soft power’ is often associated with the strategic use of cultural elements, such as values, ethics, and leadership styles:

If you believe my objectives are legitimate, I may be able to persuade you to do something for me without using threats or inducements (Nye 2004: 2).

After all, “the successful use of power is a matter of tactical skill rather than merely of possession” (Pettigrew 1973: 230).

Furthermore, identity is an important aspect with regard to organisational culture and integration. The concept of ‘African Business Leadership’, including the notion of ‘inclusive leadership’ and the African Renaissance, potentially represent and reinforce positive images that help creating a common sense of destiny and (nationalist) pride, a ‘common goal to fight for’, a feeling of belonging and togetherness. ‘African management’ philosophy, articulated and promoted within *Eskom* through ‘the Lovemore Mbigis and the Phinda Madis of the world’ might provide useful ideological tools for this purpose (see section 4.1 in Chapter 4). Additionally, powerful Afrocentric corporate symbolism – e.g. ‘light up Africa’ and ‘unleashing Africa’s energy’ – is an important strategic element in this strategy as well.

Moreover, terms like *ubuntu* suggest the exploitation of exotic features that may be quite

captivating to *Eskom* employees and outsiders, a fascination with South Africa's own otherness and past cultural forms of its own indigenous 'local cultures'. This refers to what was mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis in section 1.1 about 'glocalisation' and an increasing interest in 'postmodern spaces', such as theme parks, contemporary museums, and the heritage industry. These spaces would 'help people to regain a lost sense of place' (Featherstone 1995: 96).

Interestingly, *Eskom* seems to distance itself – particularly through *Eskom*'s leading spokesperson Reuel Khoza – from the notion of 'the neurosis of victimisation' that is often associated with Africanist discourse. Apparently, Khoza puts emphasis on *hard work*, on delivery. After all, in his view, Africans should 'stop moaning' and 'stop blaming others'. Therefore, one could argue that *Eskom* is a case in point with regard to the notion of 'Africanness' as open-ended and 'Africanness' as performed, even with its rather essentialist interpretations of *ubuntu*. Moreover, *Eskom* is an example of 'glocalisation', illustrating a hybrid bond between the global and the local, a marriage between global management discourse and local 'indigenous knowledge'.

Above all, the message to work hard, stand together ('unity in diversity'), and be loyal to *Eskom* as an *ubuntu*-like community, is a primary interest from a managerial point of view.

Secondly, the strategic use of 'African management' discourse in view of management strategies for business transformation needs to be highlighted, as analysed in section 10.2 of the previous chapter. The major issues in this regard concern an urge for the business sector to reposition itself after 1994 and engage new challenges, such as increased international competitiveness, the African Renaissance, and growing global and local pressures from civil society organisations to invest in Corporate Social Responsibility. These 'challenges of business transformation' are described in Chapter 8 of this thesis. Identification with Afrocentric discourse is one of the options in this repositioning. Of course, this was not to all actors in the business community a logical choice. As argued in section 10.2 of the previous chapter, life histories of prominent 'African management' advocates suggest that past political engagement may have given a push in that direction.

'African management' advocates have made far-reaching claims in addressing these aforementioned issues appropriately from an Afrocentric perspective, thus acquiring a specific niche in the local market of management consultancy. Issues around CSR, ethical enterprising, and ethics in leadership and management have been discursively appropriated by 'African management' discourse. Too much greed, abuse of power positions, and self-enrichment can be a destructive force for business (e.g. *Enron* in the United States). 'African management' philosophy advises to keep a balance and oppose to greed and selfishness, articulated through Africa's 'ancient wisdom'. Evidently, this can have significant functional implications: an inspiring normative narrative as a

tool to counter corruption and abuse of power in organisations. Potentially, the promotion of humanistic principles by means of Afrocentric discourse has certain managerial advantages: it may give employees the impression that they are being taken seriously and respected.

Cultural diversity management within organisations is another crucial issue in this regard. One of Mbigi's prime services concerns 'transformation and diversity workshops' (see section 4.2 in Chapter 4). Moreover, Mike Boon worked on a grand transformation project with *First National Bank*. In addition, cultural diversity concerns paying due attention to external fields, to the environment, in which an organisation operates. With its famous 'township immersions' FNB engaged in this field as well, using Boon's Afrocentric concept of 'interactive leadership', discussed in section 3.1 in Chapter 3. The external fields of a company directly touch on primary business interests. Besides FNB, *CIDA City Campus*, the so-called *Ubuntu University*, is a case in point in this regard. South African corporations, such as *Investec* invest huge amounts of money, partly because of CSR, but even more so because of 'enlightened self-interest'. One could even argue that SAMP's *Theory of the African Firm workshop* in 1992 was made possible for similar reasons. So to speak, corporate sponsors were the godfathers of 'African management' philosophy in South Africa. Probably, this was not just a matter of curiosity and philanthropy.

The transition from apartheid to democracy with majority rule, had far-reaching implications for business and management in South Africa. Clearly, there was a great deal of 'unfinished business' of the past. In this regard, again Afrocentric management discourse became manifest, with claims, such as healing traumas and enhancing 'nation-building' at organisational level. In the previous chapter, I referred to this as 'mini TRC sessions' (in section 10.2). I typified this as an underrated, potentially positive contribution of 'African management' discourse to the process of business transformation in South Africa. However, a few remarks should be made in this regard. These sessions, for example Mbigi's 'transformation workshops', are characterised by a high level of dramatisation and extreme forms of 'othering', by overemphasising cultural difference. Possibly, this can be linked to a strategy of 'decolonising the mind'. Participant observations and interviews made clear that this style was often perceived as 'offensive' and 'unnecessarily rude and insensitive'. In other words, in a number of cases it was putting people off.

My research findings neither confirm nor reject the assertion that an 'African management' approach provides an appropriate model of dealing with traumas in organisations, reconciliation, and cultural diversity. Because there is often a great deal of emotionality involved during 'mini-TRC sessions' at company level, they are not without risk. If badly managed, the antagonisms, perceived cultural differences, and prejudice may even be strengthened more instead of reduced. A lot depends on the personal skills of the facilitator: 'African values', such as *ubuntu*, are therefore

not the ultimate cure for conflict resolution and healing old wounds. Nevertheless, there could still be a merit in (strategic) essentialism, dramatisation and polarisation, in terms of getting the issues out on the table, enforcing a dialogue in organisations, initiating a process of reconciliation, and breaking through taboos in formal organisational contexts (e.g. dealing with notions pertaining to ethnicity and traditional values).

Thirdly, the strategic use of 'African management' discourse in South African could be interpreted in terms of its imaginative, non-corporate views. This aspect basically concerns the potentially spiritual and imaginative power of 'African management' discourse that can be valuable only to those who are receptive to it. Illustrative in this regard, was Maggie Davey's statement that she decided to publish De Liefde's *Lekgotla. The art of leadership through dialogue* because of its imaginative character (see section 3.2 in Chapter 3). This aspect is of course related to the commodification of *ubuntu* and *lekgotla* in relation to management. Apparently, there is a market for this kind of culturalist products. This aspect is further explored in section 10.4 of the previous chapter. It is noted that 'African management' *flows* are apparently interacting and diffusing with dominant management discourse: the popularity of the *ubuntu* concept has increased considerably since the beginning of the 1990s. One can observe a growing acceptance of Afrocentric notions in mainstream corporate talk in South Africa. The advertisement of WBS referring to the 'Cradle of Humankind' that is mentioned in the concluding remarks to Chapter 6, is just one example of this.

Thirdly, Afrocentric management discourse is strategically used for developmental and educational purposes. Striking examples in this regard are WKKF's *Leadership Regional Network*, *Vukani Ubuntu Community Projects*, and *CIDA City Campus*. All three cases are briefly discussed in section 4.1 of Chapter 4. The latter two cases illustrate that concerned actors apparently made a conscious personal choice in this regard. In both cases, the idea of 'doing something in return' for the country played an important role.

LeaRN is a special case for several reasons. Firstly, LeaRN's sponsor – *Kellogg's* – has a remarkable position in South Africa. It was the first (foreign) company that recognised a 'black trade union' in South Africa. Moreover, WKKF receives its funding from the United States. This brings David Chidester's comments to mind with regard to Credo Mutwa, allegedly the bearer of 'indigenous authenticity' but characterised by the author as a 'false prophet' (Chidester 2004). In Chidester's view, Mutwa was able to acquire this reputation because of generous sponsors from abroad. Otherwise, Credo Mutwa would have probably remained a rather anonymous culturalist author.

As described in detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis, WKKF is an important client of Mbigi's AIR.

Likewise, Lovemore Mbigi is considered a crucial resource person for LeaRN's activities to drive the 'Afrocentric paradigm' in southern Africa and produce the Afrocentric 'star troopers' of the future (interview with Lovemore Mbigi on 14 August 2003). Whether WKKF will create new 'Credo Mutwas' or numerous qualified and self-confident community leaders, educated in a contemporary Afrocentric tradition, to drive relevant community-based development in southern Africa, remains to be seen.

11.3 Final remarks

If the findings of this research were to be summarised in one phrase, I would say that 'African management' discourse is essentially about *identification*. Perhaps, it is even more about identity than matters concerning management and organisation as such. 'African management' discourse is part of a broader debate on Afrocentrism that concerns other domains as well. Assumingly, the essentialist and culturalist representations that largely (but not exclusively) characterise the discourse, do not only stand for 'liberation' of Africans, but for 'westerners' too. Postcoloniality concerns not only the sense of identity of people in former colonies, but of Europeans as well. Therefore, I can tell that this research has affected my sense of identity and awareness with regard to the problematic but intriguing relationship between Africa and Europe, both in the past and in the present. The insights as presented in this research are stimulating to the extent that they provoke a reflection on one's own identifications. At least, this effect it had on me personally as researcher.

A rather important message that comes out of this research is the call for dialogue. As the *Black Athena* debate illustrates, Afrocentric discourse is an invitation to a 'critique of ideology'. As a case of 'glocalisation', I believe that potentially this is a contribution of 'African management' discourse in South Africa. In this regard, I would like to call to mind Professor Kimmerle's notion of the 'methodology of listening', as referred to in section 10.3 in the previous chapter.

In Chapter 2, I reflected on 'suspended judgement' and the question of 'believers' versus 'non-believers' with regard to 'African management' discourse in South Africa. This research presents the manifold faces of the discourse, a rather diversified overall picture. Supposedly, this would make it problematic to choose either side, if one really wanted. In conclusion, it suffices to state that at least I do not sympathise with the notion of an 'apocalyptic *ubuntu*' that was discussed in section 10.3 of the previous chapter. I can make this statement confidently on the basis of my research findings.

Annexure I: Abbreviations

AIR	African Intellectual Resources
AMWU	African Mine Workers Union
ANC	African National Congress
AsgiSA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
AU	African Union
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BMF	Black Management Forum
CBM	Consultative Business Movement
CDE	Centre for Development and Enterprise
CERES	Research School for Resource Studies for Development
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CLD	Centre for Leadership Development
CMC	Co-ordinating Management Consulting
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders in South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
FNB	First National Bank
GSALT	Graduate School of African Leadership and Transformation
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDASA	Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IODSA	Institute of Directors SA
IPG	International Publishers Group
IPM	Institute of Personnel Management
ITISA	Interdependence and Transformation in South Africa
JODAC	Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee
LeaRN	Leadership Regional Network
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NBI	National Business Initiative
NEC	Native Economic Commission
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NRF	National Research Foundation
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NURCHA	National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RMC	Rainmaker Management Consultants
SAMP	South African Management Project
SANAC	South African Native Affairs Commission
SAPO	South African Post Office
SAVUSA	South Africa Vrije Universiteit Strategic Alliances
SBL	UNISA's School of Business Leadership
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNISA	University of South Africa
UP	University of Pretoria
WBS	Wits Business School
WISER	Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research
WKKF	W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Annexure II: Summary in Dutch (samenvatting)

Annexure III:

References

- (Anonymous) (1991) 'Ethnicity and Pseudo-Ethnicity in the Ciskei' In: Vail, L. (ed.) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press **43** pp. 395-413
- Abbink, J. (2002) 'Afro-pessimisme op hoog niveau' *Facta* 10 (**8**) pp. 2-5
- Abrahamson, E. (1991) 'Managerial fads and fashions: the diffusion and rejection of innovations' *Academy of Management Review* 16 (**3**) pp. 586-612
- Abrahamson, E. (1996) 'Management fashion' *Academy of Management Review* 21 (**1**) pp. 254-285
- Adam, H. (1988) 'Prospects of compromise between African and Afrikaner nationalists: reflections on ANC perceptions' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11 (**3**) pp. 374-377
- Adam, H. (1994) 'Ethnic versus Civic Nationalism: South Africa's Non-racialism in Comparative Perspective' *South African Sociological Review* 7 (**1**) pp. 15-31
- Africa_Now (2003) 'The African Leadership Experience. A Foundational Report of Findings and Observations from an Exploratory Assessment of the History and Evolution of the Concept of Leadership with Reference to the Development of an African Leadership Approach' (July 9) Johannesburg: *Eskom [unpublished document]*
- Alberts, R.; Coetsee, B.; Coleman, C.; Eloff, T.; Marsden, D. & Payne, R. (eds.) (1993) *Managing change. A guide to the role of business in transition*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press
- Alexander, P. (2002) *Labour, Globalization and a Region in Crisis: The Case of Southern Africa*. Seventh International Conference on Alternative Futures and Popular Protest Manchester: Colin Barker & Mike Tyldesley (eds.) pp. 1-31
- Ali, S.; Akuamoah-Boateng, R.; Bowa, M.; Carr, S.C.; Ehiobuche, I.; Griff, P.; Lino, P.J.; Mbene, J.; Mpingajira, M.; Munro, D.; Opar, R.; Pietersen, H.; Puplampu, B.; Rugimbana, R. & Zimba, C. (2001) 'Indigenising organisational change: localisation in Tanzania and Malawi' *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 16 (**1**) pp. 59-78
- Alvesson, M. (2002) *Understanding Organizational Culture*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2000) *Reflexive Methodology. New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- ANC (1987) 'The Dakar Declaration 12th June 1987' *African National Congress* www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/1980s/pr870612.html [accessed 8 April 2005]
- Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso
- Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press

- Appadurai, A. (2002) 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' In: Inda, J.X. & Rosaldo, R. (eds.) *The Anthropology of Globalization. A Reader*. Oxford, Malden, Melbourne, Berlin: Blackwell Publishing 1 pp. 46-64
- Appiah, K.A. (1992) *In my father's house. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Archie, M.M. (date unknown) *An Afrocentric critique of Mudimbe's book 'The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge'*. On: <http://panafricanwisdom.com/journals.html>
- Asante, M.K. (2003) *Afrocentricity. The theory of social change (revised and expanded)*. Chicago, Illinois: African American Images
- Asante-Darko, K. (1999) 'Globalization and African Renaissance: the challenge of continental strategies' *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 8 (1) pp. 40-56
- Ashcroft, B.; Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (1989) *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. London: Routledge
- Ashforth, A. (1990) *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press / Clarendon Press
- Azoulay, K.G. (1997) 'Experience, empathy and strategic essentialism' *Cultural Studies* 11 (1) pp. 89-110
- Babbie, E. (2007) *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth
- Banhegyi, S. & Banhegyi, E. (2003) *The Spirit of African Leadership*. Johannesburg: CIDA Global School of African Leadership
- Barth, F. (1994) 'Enduring and emerging issues in the analysis of ethnicity' In: Vermeulen, H. & Govers, C. (eds.) *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis pp. 11-32
- Bate, S.P. (1997) 'Whatever Happened to Organizational Anthropology? A review of the Field of Organizational Ethnography and Anthropological Studies' *Human Relations* 50 (9) pp. 1147-1175
- Battle, M. (1997) *Reconciliation. The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press
- Batts, V.A. (1997) 'Modern Racism: New Melody For The Same Old Tunes' In: Koopman, A.D. (ed.) *Shifting Paradigms*. Cape Town: ELRU pp. 18-29
- Beatty, D.T. & Harari, O. (1987) 'South Africa: white managers, black voices' *Harvard Business Review* pp. 98-105
- Berends, H. (1993) *De Derde Wereld beweging. Geschiedenis en toekomst*. Den Haag, Utrecht: Jan van Arkel/Novib
- Bekeh, U.U. (2003) *Afridentity: Essays on Africa*. New York: Lulu Press
- Bekker, S. & Leildé, A. (2003) 'Residents' perceptions of developmental local government: exit, voice and loyalty in South African towns' *Politea* 22 (1) pp. 144-165
- Bekker, S.; Leildé, A. & Puttergill, C. (2003) 'Etudier les identités urbaines en Afrique du Sud: le cas du Cap de l'Ouest' In: Gervais-Lambony, P.; Landy, F. & Oldfield, S. (eds.) *Espaces arcs-en-ciel. Territoires et identités en Afrique du Sud et en Inde*. Paris: Karthala pp. 127-134

- Bendixen, M. & Thomas, A. (1997) *Ethnic Culture in South Africa: An International Perspective Of Competitiveness*. Sixth Symposium on cross-Cultural consumer and business studies Honolulu pp. 30-43
- Bennis, W.G. & Nanus, B. (1985) *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*. New York: Harper & Row
- Bennun, N. (2005) *The broken string. The last words of an extinct people*. London: Penguin Books
- Berman, B.; Eyoh, D. & Kymlicka, W. (eds.) (2004) *Ethnicity & Democracy in Africa*. Oxford: James Currey Ltd
- Bernal, M. (1987) *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Volume I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*. London: Free Association books
- Bernal, M. (1991) *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Volume II: The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*. London: Free Association books
- Bernal, M. (2001) *Black Athena writes back. Martin Bernal responds to his critics (Edited by David Chioni Moore)*. Durham, London: Duke University Press
- Bernal, M. (2006) *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Volume III: The Linguistic Evidence*. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press
- Bernstein, A. (2002) 'Globalization, Culture and Development. Can South Africa be more than an offshoot of the West?' In: Berger, P.L. & Huntington, S.P. (eds.) *Many Globalizations. Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press pp. 185-249
- Bernstein, R.J. (1976) *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd
- Bezuidenhout, A. (2005) 'Post-colonial Workplace Regimes in the Engineering Industry in South Africa' In: Webster, E. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.) *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace. Studies in Transition*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press pp. 73-96
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994) *The location of culture*. London, New York: Routledge
- Bhengu, M.J. (1996) *Ubuntu - The Essence of Democracy*. Cape Town: Novalis Press
- Biko, S. (2004) *I write what I like' Steve Biko: A selection of his writings (edited by Aelred C.R. Stubbs)*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa
- Binedell, N. (1994) 'Vision and Reality. Business in the New South African Environment' In: Christie, P.; Lessem, R. & Mbigi, L. (eds.) *African management. Philosophies, Concepts and Applications*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources pp. 3-11
- Blok, A. (1977) *Antropologische perspectieven*. Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho
- Blommaert, J. (2001) 'Context is/as Critique' *Critique of Anthropology* 21 (1) pp. 13-32
- Blumer, H. (1954) 'What is wrong with social theory?' *American Sociological Review* 19 (1) pp. 3-10
- Blyden, E.W. (1908) *African Life and Customs*. Baltimore: Black Classic Press
- Boele van Hensbroek, P. (2000) 'Zwarte verleiding: identiteitsvertoog, culturalisme en Afrika' *Krisis: tijdschrift voor filosofie* 1 (4) pp. 77-86
- Boessenkool, J.H. & Van Rinsum, H.J. (2006) 'Eurocentric versus Afrocentric Approaches: Management Thinking Beyond Dichotomies?' In: Van den Heuvel, H.; Mangaliso, M.P. & Van de Bunt, L. (eds.) *'African management' in South Africa* Page 328 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

Prophecies and Protests. Ubuntu in Glocal Management. Amsterdam, Pretoria: Rosenberg Publishers & UNISA Press pp. 197-212

Bond, M.H. (1986) 'Mutual stereotypes and the facilitation of interaction across cultural lines' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (3) pp. 259-277

Bond, P. (2004) *Talk Left, Walk Right. South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms.* Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press

Bondi, E. (1996) 'The Great *Indaba*: consultation, consensus and democracy at Cashbuild' In: Lessem, R. & Nussbaum, B. (eds.) *Sawubona Africa. Embracing four worlds in South African management.* Sandton: Zebra Press pp. 180-184

Bongmba, E.K. (2004) 'Reflections on Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (2) pp. 291-316

Boon, M. (1996) *The African Way. The power of interactive leadership.* Sandton: Zebra Press

Boon, M. (2003) 'Ubuntu and Interactive Leadership' In: AfrikaViva (ed.) *Building Peace Ubuntu.* Geneva: AfrikaViva pp. 26-28

Boonzaier, E. (1989) 'Race' and the race paradigm' In: Boonzaier, E. & Sharp, J. (eds.) *South African Keywords. The Uses & Abuses of Political Concepts.* Cape Town, Johannesburg: David Philip pp. 58-67

Booyesen, L. (1999) 'A review of challenges facing black and white women managers in South Africa' *Southern African Business Review* 3 (2) pp. 15-26

Booyesen, L. (2001) 'The duality in South African leadership: Afrocentric or Eurocentric?' *South African Journal of Labour Relations* pp. 36-64

Broodryk, J. (1996) 'Is Ubuntuism unique?' In: Malherbe, J.G. (ed.) *Decolonizing the mind. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on African Philosophy (October 1995).* Pretoria: Research Unit for African Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of South Africa pp. 31-37

Broodryk, J. (2004) *Ubuntu. Life lessons from Africa.* Pretoria (Tshwane): Ubuntu School of Philosophy

Broodryk, J. (2005) *Ubuntu Management Philosophy. Exporting ancient African Wisdom into the Global World.* Randburg: Knowres Publishing

Broodryk, J. (2006) *Ubuntu. Life-coping Skills from Africa.* Randburg: Knowres Publishing

Burgess, S.F. (1998) 'African Security in the Twenty-First Century: The Challenges of Indigenization and Multilateralism' *African Studies Review* 41 (2) pp. 37-61

Buruma, I. & Margalit, A. (2004) *Occidentalism. The west in the eyes of its enemies.* New York: The Penguin Press

Bylund, P. (2004) *Power Corrupts.* On: <http://www.strike-the-root.com/4/bylund/bylund3.html> [accessed 12 April 2007]

Carmody, P. (2002) 'Between Globalisation and (Post) Apartheid: the Political Economy of Restructuring in South Africa' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28 (2) pp. 255-275

Chabal, P. (1996) 'The African crisis: context and interpretation' In: Werbner, R. & Ranger, T. (eds.) *Postcolonial Identities in Africa.* London: Zed Books pp. 29-54

- Chabal, P. & Daloz, J.-P. (1999) *Africa works. Disorder as political instrument*. Oxford, Bloomington: The International African Institute & James Curry & Indiana University Press
- Chanock, M. (2000) 'Culture' and human rights: orientalisering, occidentalising and authenticity' In: Mamdani, M. (ed.) *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers pp. 15-36
- CHE (2004) 'Annual Report 2003 – 2004' (August) Pretoria: *Council on Higher Education*
http://download.che.ac.za/documents/d000076/CHE_Annual_Report_2003-2004.pdf
- Chidester, D. (2004) 'Credo Mutwa, Zulu Shaman: The Invention and Appropriation of Indigenous Authenticity in African Folk Religion' In: Chidester, D.; Tayob, A.I. & Weisse, W. (eds.) *Religion, Politics, and Identity in a Changing South Africa*. Münster, New York, München, Berlin: Waxmann 6 pp. 69-87
- Christie, P. (1996) *Stories from an Afman(ager)*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Christie, P.; Lessem, R. & Mbigi, L. (eds.) (1994) *African management. Philosophies, Concepts and Applications*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Chung, K.H.; Lee, H.C. & Jung, K.H. (1997) *Korean management: global strategy and cultural transformation*. Berlin: De Gruyter
- Clegg, S.; Kornberger, M. & Pitsis, T. (eds.) (2005) *Managing and Organizations. An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Coertze, R.D. (2001) 'Ubuntu and nation building in South Africa' *South African Journal of Ethnology* 24 (4) pp. 113-118
- Coetzee, P.H. & Roux, A.P.J. (1998) *Philosophy from Africa. A text with readings*. Halfway House: International Thomsom Publishing
- Cohen, A.P. (1985) *The symbolic construction of community*. Chichester, London, Horwood: Tavistock
- Comaroff, J. & Comaroff, J.L. (2004) 'Privatizing the Millenium. New Protestant Ethics and Spirits of Capitalism in Africa, and Elsewhere' In: Chidester, D.; Tayob, A.I. & Weisse, W. (eds.) *Religion, Politics, and Identity in a Changing South Africa*. Münster, New York, München, Berlin: Waxmann 6 pp. 23-43
- Cox Jr., T. (1994) *Cultural Diversity in Organizations. Theory, research & practice*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers
- Davidson, B. (1994) *The search for Africa. A history in the making*. London: James Currey
- De Liefde, W.H.J. (2002) *African tribal leadership voor managers. Van dialoog tot besluit*. Deventer: Kluwer
- De Liefde, W.H.J. (2003) *Lekgotla. The art of leadership through dialogue*. Houghton, Johannesburg: Jacana Media
- De Villiers, M. (1987) *White Tribe Dreaming. Apartheid's Bitter Roots as Witnessed by Eight Generations of an Afrikaner Family*. New York: Viking
- Deetz, S.A. (1992) *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonialization. Developments on Communication and the Politics of Everyday Life*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) (2005) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications

- Diagne, S.B. (2001) 'Africanity as an Open Question' In: Diagne, S.B.; Mama, A.; Melber, H. & Nyamnjoh, F.B. (eds.) *Identity and Beyond: Rethinking Africanity*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute pp. 19-24
- Dickinson, D. (2002) 'Confronting Reality: Change and Transformation in the New South Africa' *Political Quarterly* 73 (1) pp. 10-20
- Dickinson, D. (2005) 'Beyond Marshmallow Mountain. Workplace Change in the New South Africa' In: Webster, E. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.) *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace. Studies in Transition*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press pp. 187-211
- Diop, C.A. (1991) *Civilization or Barbarism. An authentic anthropology*. New York: Lawrence Hill Books
- Drucker, P.F. (1955) *The Practice of Management*. London: Heinemann
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (2002 [1915]) *The Negro (with an introduction by Kenneth W. Goings)*. Amherst, New York: Humanity Books
- Eagleton, T. (1990) *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Ellis, J.H.P. (1999) 'Anthropology in South Africa and the Resurgence of Ethnicity' In: Prah, K.K. (ed.) *Knowledge in Black and White. The Impact of Apartheid on the Production and Reproduction of Knowledge*. Cape Town: Center for Advanced Studies of African Societies 2 pp. 69-93
- English, J. (2002) 'Managing cultural differences to improve industrial efficiency' *Building research & information* 30 (3) pp. 196-204
- Eriksen, T.H. (2001) 'Ethnic identity, national identity and intergroup conflict: The significance of personal experiences' In: Ashmore, R.D.; Jussim, L. & Wilder, D. (eds.) *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 3 pp. 42-70
- Fairclough, N. (2001) 'Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research' In: Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 121-138
- Fanon, F. (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press
- Fanon, F. (1967) *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press
- Featherstone, M. (1995) *Undoing Culture. Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Ferdman, B.M. (1995) 'Cultural Identity and Diversity in Organisations. Bridging the Gap between Group Differences and Individual Uniqueness' In: Chemers, M.M.; Oskamp, S. & Constanzo, M.A. (eds.) *Diversity in Organizations. New perspectives for a changing workplace*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Filatova, I. (1997) 'The rainbow against the African sky or African hegemony in a multi-cultural context?' *Transformation* (34) pp. 47-56
- Foucault, M. (2006 [1969]) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London, New York: Routledge
- Franchi, V. (2003) 'The racialization of affirmative action in organizational discourses: a case study of symbolic racism in post-apartheid South Africa' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (27) pp. 157-187

- Franks, P.E. (2006) 'Managing in a Rural Context: Notes from the Frontier' In: Van den Heuvel, H.; Mangaliso, M. & Van de Bunt, L. (eds.) *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Glocal Management*. Amsterdam, Pretoria: Rozenberg Publishers & Unisa Press 2 pp. 145-182
- Frenkel, M. & Shenhav, Y. (2006) 'From Binarism Back to Hybridity: A Postcolonial Reading of Management and Organization Studies' *Organization Studies* 27 (6) pp. 855-876
- Freund, B. (2004) 'South Africa: a new nation-state in a globalising era' *Transformation. Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* (56) pp. 41-51
- Friedman, J. (1994) 'Globalization and localization' In: Friedman, J. (ed.) *Cultural identity and global process*. London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage publications pp. 102-116
- Fukuyama, F. (1999) *Het einde van de geschiedenis en de laatste mens [The end of history and the last man]*. Amsterdam: Olympus
- Furlong, P. (1989) 'Book review of "White Tribe Dreaming: Apartheid's Bitter Roots as Witnessed by Eight Generations of an Afrikaner Family"' *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22 (3) pp. 531-532
- Gaylard, G. (2005) *After Colonialism. African Postmodernism and Magical Realism*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press
- Geertz, C. (1995) *After the fact. Two countries, Four decades, One antropologist*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press
- Geertz, C. (2000 [1973]) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books
- Ghorashi, H. (2002) *Ways to survive, battles to win. Iranian women exiles in the Netherlands and the USA*. New York: Nova Science publishers
- Giliomee, H. (2003) 'The Making of the Apartheid Plan, 1929-1948' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29 (2) pp. 373-392
- Gilroy, P. (2003) 'The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity' In: Evans Braziel, J. & Mannur, A. (eds.) *Theorizing Diaspora. A Reader*. Malden, Oxford, Melbourne, Berlin: Blackwell Publishing 6 pp. 49-80
- Ginsberg, A. (1998) *South Africa's Future. From crisis to prosperity*. London: Pan Macmillan
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine de Gruyter
- Glastra, F. (1999) 'Naar een contextuele benadering van intercultureel management' In: Glastra, F. (ed.) *Organisaties en diversiteit. Naar een contextuele benadering van intercultureel management*. Utrecht: Uitgeverij LEMMA pp. 75-102
- Gluckman, M. (1966) *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell
- Goffman, E. (1959) *The presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday
- Gqubule, T. (2004) 'Cultural mix gets a stir. A debate has begun on whether corporate values in SA are being affected by new realities.' *Financial Mail* (April 16) pp. 36-37
- Grant, D.; Hardy, C.; Oswick, C. & Putnam, L. (eds.) (2004) *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Discourse*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications

- Grant, D.; Keenoy, T. & Oswick, C. (eds.) (1998a) *Discourse and Organization*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Grant, D.; Keenoy, T. & Oswick, C. (1998b) 'Organizational Discourse: Of Diversity, Dichotomy and Multi-disciplinarity' In: Grant, D.; Keenoy, T. & Oswick, C. (eds.) *Discourse and Organization*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 1-13
- Gumede, W.M. (2002) 'Down to business, but nothing to show' In: Jacobs, S. & Calland, R. (eds.) *Thabo Mbeki's world. The politics and ideology of the South African president*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press pp. 201-219
- Guy, J. (2004) 'Somewhere over the rainbow: the nation-state, democracy and race in a globalising South Africa' *Transformation. Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* (56) pp. 68-89
- Habermas, J. (1973) 'A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*' *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3 (2) pp. 157-189
- Haenen, H. (2006) *Afrikaans denken: ontmoeting, dialoog en frictie. Een filosofisch onderzoek*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit
- Hamilton, C. (1998) *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1997) *Ethnography: principles in practice*. London: Routledge
- Hammond-Tooke, W.D. (1997) *Imperfect Interpreters. South Africa's Anthropologists 1920-1990*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press
- Hanlon, J. (1987) *Beggar Your Neighbours. Apartheid Power in Southern Africa*. London; Bloomington, Indiana: Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) in collaboration with James Currey, Indiana University Press
- Hannerz, U. (1992) *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Hannerz, U. (1996) *Transnational connections. Culture, people, places*. London: Routledge
- Hardy, C.; Lawrence, T.B. & Phillips, N. (1998) 'Talk and Action: Conversations and Narrative in Interorganizational Collaboration' In: Grant, D.; Keenoy, T. & Oswick, C. (eds.) *Discourse and Organization*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 64-83
- Hart, G. (2002) *Disabling globalisation. Places of power in post-apartheid South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press
- Hayashi, S. (1988) *Culture and management in Japan*. Tokyo: Tokyo University Press
- Hirsch, P.M. (1972) 'Processing fads and fashions: An organizational set analysis of cultural industry systems' *American Journal of Sociology* (77) pp. 639-659
- Hobsbawm, E.J. & Ranger, T.O. (eds.) (1983) *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge, London, New York, New Rouchelle, Melbourne, Sidney: Cambridge University Press
- Hofmeyr, K. & Human, L. (1985) *Black managers in South African organisations*. Cape Town: Juta
- Hofmeyr, K.B.; Rall, P.J. & Templer, A.J. (1995) 'The future challenges facing South African human resource management' *South African Journal of Business Management* 26 (3) pp. 108-114
- 'African management' in *South Africa* Page 333 of 347 Created on 10/12/2007 01:15:17

- Hofstede, G.H. (1980) *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverley Hills CA: Sage Publications
- Hofstede, G.H. (1991) *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill
- Holstein, J.A. & Grubium, J.F. (2005) 'Interpretive practice and Social Action' In: Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 483-505
- Horwitz, F.M.; Bowmaker-Falconer, A. & Searll, P. (1996) 'Human resource development and managing diversity in South Africa' *International Journal of Manpower* 17 (4) pp. 134-151
- Horwitz, F.M.; Browning, V.; Jain, H. & Steenkamp, A.J. (2002) 'Human resource practices and discrimination in South Africa: overcoming the apartheid legacy' *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 12 (7) pp. 1105-1118
- Howarth, D. (2000) *Discourse*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Howe, S. (1998) *Afrocentrism: mythical pasts and imagined homes*. London, New York: Verso
- HSRC (1999) 'Business and Human Rights in South Africa' Pretoria: *Human Sciences Research Council*
- Huczynski, A. & Buchanan, D. (2001) *Organizational Behaviour. An introductory text*. Essex: Pearson Education
- Human, L. (1996a) 'Future Competencies for Managing Diversity: What South African Managers Need' In: Steyn, M.E. & Motshabi, K.B. (eds.) *Cultural synergy in South Africa. Weaving strands of Africa and Europe*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources pp. 171-183
- Human, L. (1996b) 'Managing workforce diversity: a critique and example from South Africa' *International Journal of Manpower* 17 (4) pp. 46-64
- Human, L. & Van Zyl, M.E. (1982) *Profiles of managers in South Africa: preliminary readings*. Pretoria: Centre for Management Studies, School of Business Leadership, University of Pretoria
- Hunt, J. & Lascaris, R. (1998) *The South African dream*. Halfway House: Zebra Press
- Hunter-Gault, C. (2006) *New News Out of Africa. Uncovering Africa's Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Huntington, S.P. (1997) *The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of World Order*. London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd Africa House
- Iheduru, O.C. (2004) 'Black economic empowerment and nation-building in South Africa' *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42 (1) pp. 1-30
- IJsseling, S. (1979) 'Michel Foucault en de strategie van de macht' In: Berns, E.; IJsseling, S. & Moyaert, P. (eds.) *Denken in Parijs. Taal en Lacan, Foucault, Althusser, Derrida*. Alphen a/d Rijn, Brussel: Samsom pp. 69-93
- IODSA (1994) 'The King Report on Corporate Governance' (November 29) Parktown, Johannesburg: *The Institute of Directors in Southern Africa*
- IODSA (2002) 'King Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa - 2002' (March) Parktown, Johannesburg: *The Institute of Directors in Southern Africa*

- Jackson, B. (2003) *Management Gurus and Management Fashions. A Dramatistic Inquiry*. London, New York: Routledge
- Jackson, T. (2004) *Management and change in Africa. A cross-cultural perspective*. London, New York: Routledge
- Jones, J.D.F. (2001) *Storyteller. The many lives of Laurens van der Post*. London: John Murray
- Jørgensen, K.M. (2002) 'The meaning of local knowledges. Genealogy and organizational analysis' *Scandinavian Journal of Management* (18) pp. 29-46
- Kalb, D. (2004) 'Time and contention in 'the great globalization debate' In: Kalb, D.; Pantser, W. & Siebers, H. (eds.) *Globalization & Development. Themes and Concepts in Current Research*. Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers pp. 9-47
- Kamsteeg, F. & Wels, H. (2004) 'Anthropology, organizations and interventions: New territory or quicksand?' *Intervention Research. International Journal on Culture, Organization and Management* 1 (1) pp. 7-25
- Kaplan, D. (1997) 'Universities and the Business Sector: Strengthening the links' *Social Dynamics* 23 (1) pp. 68-76
- Karsten, L. (2006) 'Manufacturing Management Concepts: The *Ubuntu* Case' In: Van den Heuvel, H.; Mangaliso, M. & Van de Bunt, L. (eds.) *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Glocal Management*. Amsterdam, Pretoria: Rozenberg Publishers & Unisa Press 2 pp. 53-78
- Karsten, L. & Illa, H. (2005) '*Ubuntu* as a key African management concept: contextual background and practical insights for knowledge application' *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 20 (7) pp. 607-620
- Keto, C.T. (2001) *Vision and Time. Historical perspective of an Africa-Centered Paradigm*. Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America
- Kets de Vries, M.F.R. (2004) *De geest van despotisme. Shaka Zoeloe en de psychologie van tirannieke macht*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Nieuwezijds
- Khoza, R.J. (1986) 'Moving towards a truly integrated South African Management' (The Contact Group National Client Group) (25 August) www.reuelkhoza.co.za [accessed 22 July 2005]
- Khoza, R.J. (1994) 'The need for an Afrocentric approach to management and within it a South Africa-based Management Approach' In: Christie, P.; Lessem, R. & Mbigi, L. (eds.) *African Management. Philosophies, concepts and applications*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources pp. 117-124
- Khoza, R.J. (1999) 'The Institutional Structures that Should Underpin the African Renaissance' In: Makgoba, M.W. (ed.) *African Renaissance. The New Struggle*. Sandton, Cape Town: Mafube Publishing Limited & Tafelberg Publishers Limited pp. 279-288
- Khoza, R.J. (2003a) 'Leadership: History, Africa, Trends and the Titans' (12 February) www.reuelkhoza.co.za [accessed 22 July 2005]
- Khoza, R.J. (2003b) 'The Role of African Leaders and Professionals in this current phase of transformation' (16 September) *Eskom* www.reuelkhoza.co.za [accessed 22 July 2005]
- Khoza, R.J. (2006) *Let Africa Lead. African Transformational Leadership for 21st Century Business*. Johannesburg: Vezubuntu Publishing

- Kimmerle, H. (1995) *Muzungumzo. Dialogen tussen Afrikaanse en Westerse filosofieën*.
- Kimmerle, H. (2006) 'Ubuntu and Communalism in African Philosophy and Art' In: Van den Heuvel, H.; Mangaliso, M. & Van de Bunt, L. (eds.) *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Global Management*. Amsterdam, Pretoria: Rozenberg Publishers & Unisa Press 2 pp. 79-92
- Koopman, A.D. (1991) *Transcultural management. How to unlock global resources*. London: Blackwell Publishers
- Koopman, A.D.; Nasser, M.E. & Nel, J. (1987) *The Corporate Crusaders*. Johannesburg: Lexicon Publishers
- Koot, W.C.J. (1988) 'Bedrijfscultuur: de lessen van de antropologie' *Intermediair* 24 (8)
- Koot, W.C.J. & Rath, J. (1987) 'Ethnicity and Emancipation' *International Migration* XXV (4) pp. 427-440
- Kotzé, J.C. (1993) *In their shoes. Understanding black South Africans through their experiences of life*. Kenwyn: Juta & Co. Ltd
- Kunda, G. (1992) *Engineering Culture. Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Kuper, A. (2002) 'Today we have naming of parts: the work of the Anthropologists in Southern Africa' *Anthropology Southern Africa* 25 (1/2) pp. 7-17
- Kuper, A. (2003) 'The Return of the Native' *Current Anthropology* 44 (3) pp. 389-402
- Kuper, A. (2005) *The Reinvention of Primitive Society. Transformations of a myth*. Oxon, New York: Routledge
- Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews. An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Kwenda, C.V. (2003) 'Cultural justice: the pathway to reconciliation and social cohesion' In: Chidester, D.; Dexter, P. & James, W. (eds.) *Whatholdustogether. Social cohesion in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press pp. 67-80
- la Hausse de Lalouvière, P. (2000) *Restless Identities. Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History in the Lives of Petros Lamula (c.1881-1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-c.1936)*. Scottsville: University of Natal Press
- Laclau, E. (1988) 'Metaphor and Social Antagonisms' In: Nelson, C. & Grossberg, L. (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; London: MacMillan Education pp. 249-257
- Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso
- L'Ange, G. (2005) *The White Africans: From Colonisation To Liberation*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers
- Lascaris, R. & Lipkin, M. (1993) *Revelling in the wild: business lessons out of Africa*. Cape Town: Human and Rousseau
- Lee, R. (1980) 'The Urban Foundation' In: Van der Merwe, H.W.; Nell, M.; Wiechel, K. & Reid, J. (eds.) *Towards an open society in South Africa: the role of voluntary organisations*. Cape Town: David Philip pp. 103-107

- Lefkowitz, M.R. (1997) *Not out of Africa. How Afrocentrism became an excuse to teach myth as history.* New York: Basic Books
- Lere, J.C. & Portz, K. (2005) 'Management Control Systems in a Global Economy' *The CPA Journal*
- Lessem, R. (1996) *From Hunter to Rainmaker. The Southern African Businessphere.* Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Lessem, R. & Nussbaum, B. (eds.) (1996) *Sawubona Africa. Embracing four worlds in South African management.* Sandton: Zebra Press
- Lodge, T. (2002a) 'The African Renaissance' In: Lodge, T. (ed.) *Politics in South Africa. From Mandela to Mbeki.* Kenilworth, Cape Town: David Philip pp. 227-240
- Lodge, T. (2002b) *Politics in South Africa. From Mandela to Mbeki.* Cape Town: David Philip
- Louw, D.J. (2001) 'Ubuntu and the Challenges of Multiculturalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa' *Quest - African Journal of Philosophy, special issue on African Renaissance and Ubuntu philosophy XV (1-2)* pp. 15-36
- Louw, D.J. (2002) *Ubuntu and the challenges of multiculturalism in post-apartheid South Africa.* Utrecht: Expertisecentrum Zuidelijk Afrika (EZA)/Centre for Southern Africa, University of Utrecht
- Luhabe, W. (2002) *Defining moments. Experiences of black executives in South Africa's workplace.* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press
- MacKinnon, A.S. (2004) *The making of South Africa. Culture and politics.* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall
- Madi, P.M. (2000) *Leadership lessons from emperor Shaka Zulu the Great.* Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Magubane, Z. (2002) 'Globalization and the South African transformation: the impact in social policy' *Africa Today* 49 (4) pp. 89-110
- Maier, C. (2002) *Leading diversity - a conceptual framework.* St. Gallen: University of St. Gallen Institute for Leadership and HR Management
- Makgoba, M.W. (ed.) (1999) *African Renaissance. The New Struggle.* Sandton, Cape Town: Mafube Publishing Limited & Tafelberg Publishers Limited
- Malherbe, J.G. (ed.) (1996) *Decolonizing the mind. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on African Philosophy (October 1995).* Pretoria: Research Unit for African Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of South Africa
- Maloka, E. (1997) 'African renaissance: reactionary?' *The African Communist (Third Quarter)* pp. 37-43
- Mamdani, M. (1996) *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism.* Kampala: Kampala Fountain Publishers
- Mamdani, M. (1999) 'There Can Be No African Renaissance without an Africa-focussed Intelligentsia' In: Makgoba, M.W. (ed.) *African Renaissance. The New Struggle.* Sandton, Cape Town: Mafube Publishing Limited & Tafelberg Publishers Limited pp. 125-134
- Mamdani, M. (ed.) (2000) *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk. Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture.* Cape Town: David Philip Publishers

- Mandela, D. & Goldstein, W. (2003) *African Soul Talk. When Politics is not Enough*. Houghton, Johannesburg: Jacana Media
- Mangaliso, M.P. (2001) 'Building competitive advantage from *ubuntu*: Management lessons from South Africa' *Academy of Management Executive* 15 (3) pp. 23-33
- Mangcu, X. (2001) 'Liberating race from Apartheid' *Transformation* (47) pp. 18-27
- Marais, H. (2001) *South Africa. Limits to change. The political economy of transition*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press
- Martin, D.-C. (2006) 'A creolising South Africa? Mixing, hybridity, and creolisation: (re)imagining the South African experience' *International Social Science Journal* 58 (187) pp. 165-176
- Martin, J. (2002) *Organizational Culture. Mapping the Terrain*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Marx, C. (2002) 'Ubu and Ubuntu: on the dialectics of apartheid and nation building' *Politikon* 29 (1) pp. 49-69
- Masina, N. (2000) 'Xhosa Practices of *Ubuntu* for South Africa' In: Zartman, W.I. (ed.) *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts. African Conflict 'Medicine'*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers pp. 169-181
- Masolo, D.A. (1994) *African philosophy in search of identity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Edinburgh University Press Ltd
- Mason, J. (1996) *Qualitative Researching*. London, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Masondo, D. (2005) 'Trade Liberalisation and Work Restructuring in Post-apartheid South Africa. A Case Study of BMW' In: Webster, E. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.) *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace. Studies in Transition*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press pp. 149-172
- Matheba, G. (1999) 'The political economy of the African Renaissance' *Journal of Public Administration* 34 (2) pp. 156-162
- Matshikiza, J. (2003) 'South Africa: A state of permanent transition' *Mail&Guardian* (3 February)
- Mazrui, A.A. (2000) 'Black Orientalism? Further reflections on "Wonders of the African World"' *West African Review* 1 (2) pp. 5
- Mbembe, A. (2001) *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press
- Mbembe, A. (2002) 'African modes of Self-Writing' *Public Culture* 14 (1) pp. 239-273
- Mbigi, L. (1994) 'The Spirit of African Management' In: Christie, P.; Lessem, R. & Mbigi, L. (eds.) *African management. Philosophies, Concepts and Applications*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources pp. 77-91
- Mbigi, L. (1997) *Ubuntu. The African dream in management*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Mbigi, L. (2000) *In Search of the African Business Renaissance: an African cultural perspective*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Mbigi, L. (2005) *The Spirit of African Leadership*. Randburg: Knowres Publishing

- Mbigi, L. & Maree, J. (1995) *Ubuntu. The spirit of African transformation management*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Mbigi, L. & Maree, J. (2005 [1995]) *Ubuntu. The spirit of African transformation management*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- McAllister, P.A. (1996) 'Traditional settlement, cultural identity and rural development in the Transkei' In: Blunt, P. & Warren, D.M. (eds.) *Indigenous Organizations and Development*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications pp. 7-20
- McAllister, P.A. (1997) 'Ethnicity and Identity: Southern Africa' In: Middleton, J.M. (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Africa south of Sahara*. New York: Scribners **2** pp. 99-102
- McFarlin, D.B.; Coster, E.A. & Mogale-Pretorius, C. (1999) 'South African management development in the twenty-first century. Moving toward an Africanized model' *Journal of Management Development* **18** (1) pp. 63-78
- McLaren, P. (1994) 'White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism' In: Goldberg, D. (ed.) *Multiculturalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing pp. 45-69
- Melber, H. (2001) 'Beyond Africanity? An introduction' In: Bachir Diagne, S.; Mama, A.; Melber, H. & Nyamnjoh, F.B. (eds.) *Identity and Beyond: Rethinking Africanity*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute pp. 5-8
- Miller, J. (1988) *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade (1730-1830)*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press
- Minter, W. (1994) *Apartheid's Contras. An inquiry into the roots of war in Angola and Mozambique*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press
- Morgan, G. (1992) *Beelden van organisatie. Images of Organization*. Schiedam, London: Scriptum Books & Sage Publications
- Mphahlele, E. (2002) 'African humanism and the corporate sector - 1994' In: Mphahlele, E. (ed.) *Es'Kia. Education, African Humanism & Culture, Social Consciousness, Literacy Appreciation*. Johannesburg: Kwela Books in association with Stainbank & Associates pp. 126-133
- Mphahlele, E. (2006 [1959]) *Down 2nd Avenue*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa
- Msomi, S.T. (2003) 'Black empowerment's lone heretic. Businessman Moeletsi Mbeki thinks the government's formula is a recipe for elitism and economic stagnation' *Sunday Times* (6 April)
- Mthembu, D. (1996) 'African values: discovering the indigenous roots of management' In: Lessem, R. & Nussbaum, B. (eds.) *Sawubona Africa. Embracing four worlds in South African management*. Sandton: Zebra Press pp. 215-226
- Mudimbe, V.Y. (1988) *The invention of Africa. Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Muskens, R. (2002) 'Managementgoeroe Lovemore Mbigi: "Ik voorspel de Afrikaanse renaissance"' *Internationale Samenwerking* (**11**) pp. 22-25
- Nandy, A. (1983) *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. Delhi, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Nasser, M.E. & Vivier, F.J. (1995) *Mindset for the new generation organisation. How leading South African companies create counter-trend performance in turbulence. Report of Project New Generation Economy.* Cape Town: Juta & Co

Nederveen Pieterse, J. (2004) *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange.* Lanham, MD; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Nel, C. (1988) 'Group Therapy' *Leadership SA* 7 (4) pp. 35-38

NiZA (2005) *Peace and Reconciliation: Bridging the Gaps and Uniting Different Communities. Second Mandela lecture, Speech by Farid Esack (Amsterdam 20 May 2005, De Nieuwe Kerk.* Amsterdam: Netherlands institute for Southern Africa (NiZA)

Nkomo, S.M. (2006) *Images of 'African Leadership and Management' in Organisation Studies: Tensions, Contradictions and Re-visions.* Inaugural Lecture at the Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL, UNISA) Pretoria: University of South Africa pp. 1-28

Nkomo, S.M. & Cox Jr, T. (1996) 'Diverse Identities in Organizations' In: Clegg, S.R.; Hardy, C. & Nord, W.R. (eds.) *Handbook of Organization Studies.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 338-357

Nkomo, S.M. & Cox Jr., T. (1996) 'Diverse Identities in Organizations' In: Clegg, S.R.; Hardy, C. & Nord, W.R. (eds.) *Handbook of Organization Studies.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 338-357

Ntsebeza, L. (2005) *Democracy Compromised. Chiefs and the politics of the land in South Africa.* Boston, Leiden: Brill

Nugent, P. (2004) *Africa since independence. A Comparative History.* Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Nussbaum, B. (2003a) 'African Culture and Ubuntu' *Perspectives. World Business Academy* 17 (1) pp. 1-12

Nussbaum, B. (2003b) 'Ubuntu' *Resurgence* (221) pp. 2

Nussbaum, B. (2003c) 'Ubuntu and Business...Reflections and Questions' *Perspectives. World Business Academy* 17 (3) pp. 1-16

Nussbaum, B. (2003d) 'Ubuntu: Reflections of A South African on Our Common Humanity' *Reflections* 4 (4) pp. 21-26

Nuttall, S. & Michael, C.-A. (2000) 'Introduction: imagining the present' In: Nuttall, S. & Michael, C.-A. (eds.) *Senses of Culture. South African culture studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press pp. 1-23

Nyamnjoh, F.B. (2001) 'Concluding Reflections on Beyond Identities: Rethinking Power in Africa' In: Bachir Diagne, S.; Mama, A.; Melber, H. & Nyamnjoh, F.B. (eds.) *Identity and Beyond: Rethinking Africanity.* Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute pp. 25-33

Nyamnjoh, F.B. (2003) 'Globalisation, Boundaries and Livelihoods: Perspectives on Africa' *Philosophia Africana* 6 (2) pp. 1-18

Nyamnjoh, F.B. (2005) *Africa's Media, Democracy and the Politics of Belonging.* London, Pretoria: Zed Books & UNISA Press

Nye, J.S. (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.* New York: PublicAffairs

- Nyerere, J. (1998) 'Leaders must not be Masters' In: Eze, E.C. (ed.) *African Philosophy. An Anthology*. Malden, Massachusetts; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 5 pp. 77-80
- Ohmae, K. (1992) *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Global Marketplace*. London: HarperCollins
- Okere, T.; Njoku, C.A. & Devisch, R. (2005) 'All Knowledge Is first of all Local Knowledge: An Introduction' *Africa Development* XXX (3) pp. 1-19
- Okumu, W.A.J. (2002) *The African Renaissance. History, Significance and Strategy*. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Onwudiwe, E. (2003) 'Introduction: a context for post-colonial African discourse' In: Onwudiwe, E. & Ibelema, M. (eds.) *Afro-optimism. Perspectives on Africa's Advances*. pp. 3-17
- Oomen, B. (2002) *Chiefs! Law, power and culture in contemporary South Africa*. Leiden: PhD dissertation Leiden University
- Oosthuizen, T.H. (1995) 'South African paradigm shifts and the communications revolution' *Communicatio - South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research* 21 (1) pp. 1-8
- Oppenheimer, S. (2003) *Out of Africa's Eden. The Peopling of the World*. Johannesburg, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers
- O'Reilly, K. (2005) *Ethnographic Methods*. London, New York: Routledge
- Oyebade, B. (1990) 'African Studies and the Afrocentric paradigm. A Critique' *Journal of Black Studies* pp. 233-238
- Palmié, S. (2006) 'Creolization and Its Discontents' *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 pp. 433-456
- Parker, I. (1992) *Discourse dynamics. Critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London, New York: Routledge
- Peters Talbott, S. (1995) *Analysis of Corporate Culture in the Global Marketplace: Case Study of McDonald's in Moscow*. Trieste (Italy): International Institute of Sociology Conference
- Pettigrew, A.M. (1973) *The Politics of Organizational Decision-making*. London, Assen: Tavistock, Van Gorcum
- Pijnenburg, B. (2004) *Keeping it vague. Discourses and Practices of Participation in Rural Mozambique*. Wageningen: PhD Thesis Wageningen University
- Posel, D. (1997) *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961. Conflict and Compromise*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Posel, D.; Hyslop, J. & Nieftagodien, N. (2001) 'Debating 'race' in South African scholarship' *Transformation* (47) pp. i-xviii
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. London: Sage Publications
- Prasad, A. (2003a) 'The Gaze of the Other: Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis' In: Prasad, A. (ed.) *Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis. A Critical Engagement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan pp. 3-43

- Prasad, A. (ed.) (2003b) *Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis. A Critical Engagement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Prinsloo, E.D. (1996) 'The *Ubuntu* style of participatory management' In: Malherbe, J.G. (ed.) *Decolonizing the mind. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on African Philosophy (October 1995)*. Pretoria: Research Unit for African Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of South Africa pp. 112-122
- Prinsloo, E.D. (1998) '*Ubuntu* culture and participatory management' In: Coetzee, P.H. & Roux, A.J. (eds.) *Philosophy from Africa. A text with readings*. Halfway House: International Thomson Publishing pp. 41-51
- Prinsloo, E.D. (2000) 'The African View of Participatory Business Management' *Journal of Business Ethics* 25 (4) pp. 275-286
- Pronk, J. (2005) *Willens en wetens. Gedachten over globalisering en politiek*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker
- Ramose, M.B. (2003) 'The ethics of *ubuntu*' In: Coetzee, P.H. & Roux, A.P.J. (eds.) *The African Philosophy Reader. Second Edition*. London, New York: Routledge pp. 324-330
- Ranger, T. (1996) 'Colonial and postcolonial identities' In: Werbner, R. & Ranger, T. (eds.) *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*. London: Zed Books pp. 271-281
- Ranger, T. (2004) 'Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (2) pp. 215-234
- Redding, S.G. (1993) *The spirit of Chinese capitalism*. New York: Walter de Gruyter
- Reese, K. (1981) 'Black managers in white businesses - why are there so few of them?' *Business South Africa* pp. 22-24
- Ricoeur, P. (1973) 'Creativity in Language: Word, Polysemy, Metaphor' *Philosophy Today* 17 (2) pp. 97-111
- Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2003) 'Generalising from Qualitative Research' In: Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 263-286
- Robertson, R. (1995) 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity' In: Featherstone, M.; Lash, S. & Robertson, R. (eds.) *Global Modernities*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage publications pp. 25-44
- Robins, S. (2004) 'The (Third) World is a Ghetto'? Looking for a Third Space between 'Postmodern' Cosmopolitanism and Cultural Nationalism' *CODESRIA Bulletin* (1 & 2) pp. 18-26
- Rorty, R. (1989) *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ross, R. (2001) *Zuid-Afrika: een geschiedenis*. Amsterdam, Antwerpen: De Arbeiderspers
- Rossouw, D. (2002) *Business Ethics in Africa*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press
- Russell, K. (2003) 'Black Executive Development in South Africa. Experiences of Top Organisations. Abridged version' (July) Johannesburg: *Integrated Consulting* www.integrated.au.com
- Sachs, A. (1996) 'Changing the law, changing the mind' In: Lessem, R. & Nussbaum, B. (eds.) *Sawubona Africa. Embracing four worlds in South African management*. Sandton: Zebra Press pp. 148-158
- SACP (1997) 'Harvesting Apartheid. The complicity of business in racial oppression' *The African Communist* (4th Quarter) pp. 40-63

- Schiele, J.H. (1990) 'Organizational theory from an Afrocentric perspective' *Journal of Black Studies* 21 (2) pp. 145-161
- Schiele, J.H. (2003) 'Afrocentricity: An Emerging Paradigm in Social Work Practice' In: Mazama, A. (ed.) *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. Trenton, NJ; Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press
- Schipper, M. (1995) *De boomstam en de krokodil. Kwesties van ras, cultuur en wetenschap*. Amsterdam: Van Gennep
- Schlemmer, L. (1990) 'Business and politics in South Africa: wishful thinking and reality' *South Africa International Quarterly* 21 (1) pp. 8-19
- Schlemmer, L. (2005) 'Lost in transformation? South Africa's emerging African middle class' (September) Johannesburg: *The Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE)* CDE Focus occasional paper 8 <http://www.cde.org.za>
- Schutte, G. (2000) 'Being African in South Africa: the Dynamics of Exclusion and Inclusion' *Social Identities* 6 (2) pp. 207-222
- Schutte, G. (2005) *De Vrije Universiteit en Zuid-Afrika 1880-2005*. Amsterdam: Meinema
- Schwartz-Shea, P. (2006) 'Judging Quality: Evaluative Criteria and Epistemic Communities' In: Yanow, D. & Schwartz-Shea, P. (eds.) *Interpretation and Method. Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, New York; London: M.E. Sharpe pp. 89-113
- Seidman Makgetla, N. (2004) 'The Post-apartheid Economy' *Review of African Political Economy* 100 pp. 263-281
- Sen, A. (2006) *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company
- Sennett, R. (2006) *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press
- Sharp, J. (1998) 'Non-racialism' and its discontents: a post-apartheid paradox' *UNESCO International Social Science Journal* pp. 243-252
- Sharp, J. & McAllister, P. (1993) 'Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism: International Insights and the South African Debate' *Anthropology Today* 9 (5) pp. 18-20
- Shivji, I.G. (2003) *The Rise, The Fall, and The Insurrection of Nationalism in Africa*. CODESRIA East African Regional Conference Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Shonhiwa, S. (2006) *The Effective Cross-Cultural Manager. A Guide for Business Leaders in Africa*. Cape Town: Zebra Press
- Shutte, A. (2001) *Ubuntu. An Ethic for a New South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications
- Sinha, D.; Kao, H.S.R. & Wilpert, B. (1999) 'Introduction: The Emergence of Indigenization' In: Kao, H.S.R.; Sinha, D. & Wilpert, B. (eds.) *Management and Cultural Values. The Indigenization of Organizations in Asia*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications pp. 19-26
- Sitas, A. (1997) 'The waning of sociology in South Africa' *Society in transition* 28 (1-4) pp. 12-19
- Slater, J.D. (2000) *The Zulu Principle. Making extraordinary profits from ordinary shares*. London, New York: TEXERE Publishing Ltd

- Soros, G. (2002) *Globalisering*. Amsterdam: Contact
- Sparks, A. (1990) *The mind of South Africa. The story of the rise and fall of Apartheid*. London: Mandarin
- Sparks, A. (2004) *De kust van de goede hoop. De geschiedenis van Zuid Afrika*. Amsterdam: Anthos
- Spivak, G.C. (1999) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. Toward A History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press
- Spradley, J.P. (1980) *Participant Observation*. New York, London: Wadsworth Publishing
- Steyn, J. (1990) *Managing change in South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, Human & Rousseau
- Steyn, M.E. & Motshabi, K.B. (eds.) (1996) *Cultural synergy in South Africa. Weaving strands of Africa and Europe*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources
- Stimie, J. (2000) *Changing or Shifting the Racial Centre - Organisational Effectiveness or Moral Obligation?* Employment relations challenges for South Africa in the journey to world-class status
Johannesburg: Industrial Relations Associations of South Africa (IRasa)
- Stringer, C. (2003) 'Out of Ethiopia' *Nature* 6941 (423) pp. 692-695
- Strous, M. (2003) *Racial sensitivity and multicultural training*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers
- Teffo, L.J. (1995) *Resume of Ubuntu/Botho*. Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy
- Tempels, P. (1946) *Bantoe-filosofie*. Antwerp: De Sikkel
- Ten Bos, R. (2000) *Fashion and Utopia in Management Thinking*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins
- Tennekes, J. (1995) *Organisatiecultuur. Een antropologische visie*. Leuven, Apeldoorn: Garant
- Terreblanche, S. (2002) *A history of inequality in South Africa 1652-2002*. Pietermaritzburg/Sandton: University of Natal Press & KMM Review Publishing Company Pty
- Thiong'o, N.w. (1997) *Decolonising the Mind. The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Oxford; Nairobi; Portsmouth, New Hampshire: James Currey Ltd/EAEPHeinemann
- Thomas, A. & Bendixen, M. (2000) 'The Management Implications of Ethnicity in South Africa' *Journal of International Business Studies* 31 (3) pp. 507-519
- Thomas, A. & Schonken, J.S. (1998) 'Culture-specific management and the African management movement - a critical review of the literature' *South African Journal of Business Management* 29 (2) pp. 53-66
- Thompson, L.M. (2001) *A History of South Africa*. New Haven, London: Yale Nota Bene/Yale University Press
- Tomlinson, J. (1999) *Globalization and Culture*. Chicago, Cambridge: The University of Chicago Press & Polity Press
- Turner, T. (1994) 'Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology That Multiculturalists Should be Mindful of It?' In: Goldberg, D.T. (ed.) *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing pp. 406-425

- Tutu, D. (1999) *Geen toekomst zonder verzoening [No future without forgiveness]*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij
- Tutu, D. (2004) *God heeft een droom. Hoopvolle gedachten voor onze tijd [God has a dream, a Vision of Hope for our Time]*. Haarlem: Uitgeverij J.H. Gottmer / H.J.W. Brecht BV
- Vail, L. (ed.) (1991) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Vale, P. & Maseko, S. (2002) 'Thabo Mbeki, South Africa and the idea of an African Renaissance' In: Jacobs, S. & Calland, R. (eds.) *Thabo Mbeki's world. The politics and ideology of the South African president*. Pietermaritzburg/London & New York: University of Natal Press & Zed Books Ltd pp. 121-142
- Van Beurden, J. & Huinder, C. (1996) *De vinger op de zere plek. Solidariteit met Zuidelijk Afrika 1961-1996*. Amsterdam: Babylon-De Geus
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. (ed.) (1997a) *Black Athena: ten years after*. Hoofddorp: Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. (1997b) 'Ideology of ethnicity in Central Africa' In: Middleton, J.M. (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Africa south of Sahara*. New York: Scribners **2** pp. 91-99
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. (1999) *Cultures do not exist*. Rotterdam: Erasmus University
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. (2000) *Is there a future for Afrocentrism – despite Stephen Howe's dismissive 1998 study*. Colloque sur l'Afrocentrisme, Centre de Recherches Africaines, Université Paris-I Sorbonne, Paris
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. (2001) 'Ubuntu and the globalisation of Southern African thought and society' *Quest - African Journal of Philosophy, special issue on African Renaissance and Ubuntu philosophy XV (1-2)* pp. 53-89
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. (2002) 'Aristotle in Africa. Towards a Comparative Africanist reading of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission' *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy XVI (1-2)* pp. 238-271
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. (2003) *African Spirituality. An Approach from Intercultural Philosophy*. On: <http://them.polylog.org/4/fbw-en.htm> [accessed 6 July 2006]
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J.; Van Dijk, R. & Gewald, J.-B. (2004) 'Situating globality. African agency in the appropriation of global culture' In: Van Binsbergen, W. & Van Dijk, R. (eds.) *Situating Globality: African Agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture*. Leiden, Boston: Brill **3** pp. 3-54
- Van den Heuvel, H. (2007) 'Hoe doe je ubuntu?' *ZAM* 11 (**3/4**) pp. 20-23
- Van den Heuvel, H.; Mangaliso, M. & Van de Bunt, L. (eds.) (2006) *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Glocal Management*. Amsterdam, Pretoria: Rozenberg Publishers & Unisa Press
- Van den Heuvel, H. & Wels, H. (2003) 'Leiderschap in de Afrikaanse stammencultuur - boekbespreking' *Tijdschrift voor Management en Organisatie* 57 (**2**) pp. 67-71
- Van den Heuvel, H. & Wels, H. (2004) 'Book review 'Lekgotla. The art of Leadership through Dialogue - Willem H.J. de Liefde' *Journal of Public Administration* 39 (**1**) pp. 247-251
- Van den Hoonaard, W.C. (1997) *Working with sensitizing concepts Analytical field research*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Van der Merwe, P. (2002) 'CIDA: seed capital for the nation' *Convergence* 3 (**4**) pp. 69-83

- Van der Pol, E. (2006) *African Leadership: An Employee Perspective. An Empirical Study into the Ways Employees Give Meaning to the Concept of African Leadership: The Case of First National Bank*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit (Faculty of Social Sciences, Dep. Culture, Organisation & Management)
- Van der Veen, R.J. (2002) *Afrika. Van de Koude Oorlog naar de 21e eeuw*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers
- Van der Veen, R.J. (2004) *What went wrong with Africa. A contemporary history*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers
- Van der Waal, C.S. (2002) 'Diverse approaches in a South African debate on language and diversity in higher education' *Anthropology Southern Africa* 25 (3&4) pp. 24-33
- Van Kessel, I. (2001) 'In search of the African Renaissance. An agenda for modernisation, neo-traditionalism or Africanisation?' *Quest - African Journal of Philosophy, special issue on African Renaissance and Ubuntu philosophy* XV (1-2) pp. 43-52
- Van Maanen, J. (1988) *Tales of the field. On writing ethnography*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press
- Van Marrewijk, A. (1999) *Internationalisation, cooperation and ethnicity in the telecom sector*. Delft: Eburon
- Van Rensburg, M. (2001) *Executive coaching: a natural extension of the principle of ubuntu and African humanism*. Johannesburg: Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), University of Pretoria
- Van Rinsum, H.J. (2002) "'Wipe the Blackboard Clean" Academization and Christianization - Sibblings in Africa?' *African Studies Review* 45 (2) pp. 27-48
- Van Walraven, K. (1999) *Dreams of power: the role of the Organization of African Unity in the politics of Africa 1963-1993*. Aldershot: Ashgate
- Van Wolferen, K.G. (1989) *The enigma of Japanese power*. London: MacMillan
- Versi, A. (1998) 'The Ubuntu system of management' *African Business* (238) pp. 7
- Vintges, K. (2003) *De terugkeer van het engagement*. Amsterdam: Boom
- Von Holdt, K. (2003) *Transition from below. Forging trade unionism and workplace change in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press
- Von Holdt, K. (2005) 'Saving Government from Itself' Trade Union Engagement with the Restructuring of SpoorNet' In: Webster, E. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.) *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace. Studies in Transition*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press
- VSNU (2005) 'Gedragcode voor gebruik van persoonsgegevens in wetenschappelijk onderzoek' Den Haag: Vereniging van Universiteiten (Association of Universities in the Netherlands)
- Waddy, N.L. (2003) 'Affirmative Action versus Nonracialism in the New South Africa' *African Issues* 31 (1-2) pp. 1-8
- Wadula, P. (2003) 'Black empowerment 'a tool for fulfilling political agenda' *Business Day* (11 August)
- Weir, D. (2006) 'The Scope for Arab and Islamic Influences on an Emerging 'Afrocentric Management' In: Van den Heuvel, H.; Mangaliso, M.P. & Van de Bunt, L. (eds.) *Prophecies and Protests. Ubuntu in Glocal Management*. Amsterdam, Pretoria: Rosenberg Publishers & UNISA Press pp. 93-120

- Wels, H. (2000) *Fighting over fences. Organisational co-operation and reciprocal exchange between Savé Conservancy and its neighbouring communities*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Werbner, R. (1996) 'Multiple identities, plural arenas' In: Werbner, R. & Ranger, T. (eds.) *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*. London: Zed Books pp. 1-25
- Wetherell, M.; Taylor, S. & Yates, S.J. (eds.) (2001) *Discourse as Data. A Guide for Analysis*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
- White, T.D.; Asfaw, B.; DeGusta, D.; Gilbert, H.; Richards, G.D.; Suwa, G. & Howell, F.C. (2003) 'Pleistocene *Homo sapiens* from Middle Awash, Ethiopia' *Nature* 423 (6941) pp. 742-747
- Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Wilson, R.A. (2000) 'Reconciliation and Revenge in Post-Apartheid South Africa' *Current Anthropology* 41 (1) pp. 75-98
- Wilson, R.A. (2001) *The politics of truth and reconciliation in South Africa. Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Wilson, R.A. (2003) 'Justice and Retribution in Postconflict Settings' *Public Culture* 15 (1) pp. 187-190
- Wodak, R. (2001) 'What CDA is about - a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments' In: Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications pp. 1-13
- Wolpe, H. (1988) *Race, Class & the Apartheid State*. London, Addis Ababa, Paris: James Currey, OAU, Unesco Press
- Wright, S. (ed.) (1994) *Anthropology of organizations*. London, New York: Routledge
- Yanow, D. & Schwartz-Shea, P. (eds.) (2006) *Interpretation and Method. Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, New York; London: M.E. Sharpe
- Zegeye, A.; Liebenberg, I. & Houston, G. (2000) 'Resisting Ethnicity from Above: Social identities and Democracy in South Africa' In: Muthien, Y.G.; Khosa, M.M. & Magubane, B.M. (eds.) *Democracy and governance review: Mandela's legacy 1994-1999*. Pretoria: Human Science Research Council pp. 151-195
- Zeleza, P.T. (2003) *Rethinking Africa's globalization*. Trenton, New Jersey; Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Zuckerman, A.; Kulesa, P. & Meyer, S. (2002) 'It pays to be ethical' *People Dynamics* pp. 16-19