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RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP, AFRICAN VALUE SYSTEM AND AFRICA'S QUEST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The paper explores whether the African value system provides responsible leadership and whether this leadership could face the challenge of Africa's quest for economic development. I define leadership and outline the cosmological, anthropological, and personal dimensions of the African value system and argue that this value system in itself provides a responsible leadership. Irresponsible leadership often observed in Africa is not inherent to the African value system. It results from the crisis characteristic of the shift from being to having that betrays African value system. The challenges of the responsible leadership natured and nurtured in this value system is to achieve an all-inclusive participatory economic development in which the state, the people, and the market work collaboratively so as to reflect what Africans are, believe and value. Drawing on Sen's capability approach which emphasizes "agency" and "the freedom of people to lead the life they value and have reason to value", I argue that this could be possible thanks to a public debate and reflection which would catalyse the inculturation and the democratisation of economic development.

Key words: Leadership, African value system, *ubuntu*, *umuntu-w'-ubuntu*, *umuntu-mu-bantu*, capability approach, agency, functioning, democratisation of development, inculturation of development

1. Introduction: The issue in its nutshell

This paper deals with responsible leadership in relation to the Africa's quest for economic development. The issue of leadership in Africa has always been haunting in my mind. I first wrestled with it in 1996. At that time I was motivated by two things. The first was that I had just reflected on the issue of the best form of government as part of the requirement of my BA degree in Philosophy. I had in mind the question of what could be the best form of government for Africa's socio-political stability. I wondered whether the best government in Africa would be part of the universal form of government which was the political dogma of the day, namely liberal democracy, or whether it would be particular based on Africa's value system. The second motivation was that, as my project was conceived in the framework of western philosophy, I wanted to make sense of it in the context of my own country, Burundi, which was undergoing a serious crisis of governance. Thus my paper was titled: *The Burundian leadership down the age of politics (Le leadership Burundais à travers les âges de la politique)*.

The present reflection will be different yet with the same concern. The primary foundation is not political but rather economic. I engage with the issue of responsible leadership within the framework of the link between what people's beliefs and values and economic development. This is a highly and contentiously debatable issue. Certain social scientists under the patronage of Durkheim and Weber argue that there is such a link. However the link is interpreted in a controversial way. For some, while for the developed countries the belief and value system is, indeed, a foundation of their economic development, for the developing countries, the belief and value system is a hamper to their economic development. This is the controversy of tradition-modernity.

The reflection along Weber's idea that certain cultures are better suited for economic development than others is still on. One could quickly mention Landes' idea that *Culture matters* inasmuch as this underlies *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1998). In his *Bad Samaritans*, Chang (2008) challenged this consideration in chapter 9 whose title I find fascinating and provocative: *Lazy Japanese and thieving Germans: Are some cultures incapable of economic development?* For other scholars like those who evolve along the lines of the (neo)classical economic philosophy of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, there

is no need to evoke the idea of cultural values in economic development since economic development results from the invisible hand of the market and the rational calculations of self-interested individuals. In between, there is a perspective I espoused in my ongoing research: my claim is that there is indeed a link between what people believe and value and their economic development. What people believe and value structures their ontological make-up upon which is premised production, consumption, and exchange of goods and services as part of human life.

An attempt of analysis has already been made on the need to validate what people believe and value in terms of policies of economic development by focusing on the Bantu people of Sub-Saharan Africa (see Ntibagiriwa 2009, 2010, 2012). The question here will be the following: who should make sure that these policies of economic development premised on African belief and value system are achieved? The answer under consideration is **leadership**. But the issue is whether the African value system provides the kind of leadership that would respond to Africa's quest for economic development.¹

To achieve the aim of this paper, I shall first consider the concept of leadership in order to understand what is at stake. Secondly, I will outline the structure of African value system and put across its triple dimensions, namely: the cosmological, anthropological and personal dimensions. Thirdly, I will consider the issue of how the responsible leadership issues in the African value system. Fourthly I shall consider the quest for economic development as a responsibility of a responsible leader in Africa. This section will also include how the leader should structure economic development in a way that fits with the African value system. Fifthly, I will draw on Sen's capability approach which emphasizes agency and the capability of people to lead the life they value in order to put across the ways by which the African leadership could affect economic development. The conclusion will summarise the macro-argument.

2. The notion of leadership

In his reflection on the *leadership in a global society*, Willis (2008, see also Echtenkamp, 2004) asks the following questions: Are leaders born or made? Are there innate qualities that predetermine if one will be a leader or a follower? Is leadership a function of a series of traits or simply a state? These questions seem to be perennial and pertain to the foundations of leadership and are more easily asked than answered. Avolio (1999) and Ruvolo, et al (2004) argue that leaders are made. Traits or skills that make leaders can be acquired, developed and mastered (see Judge & Bono, 2000; Vroom, 2000). Covey (2004) argues that the making of the leader passes through the cultivation of what he refers to as seven virtues or habits that characterise effective people. These habits include: seeking first to understand and then be understood; synergising; thinking win/win; prioritising, being proactive, and beginning with the end in mind, sharpening the saw which consists of principles of self-renewal. In the same vein, Knight and Dyer (2005, see also Saal & Knight, 1988) argue that leaders are not born but made. They enumerate a series of qualities that leaders should have or that should be taught to people for them to be leaders: commitment to success, having proper priorities, setting and demanding high standard, to be tough yet fair in dealing with people, concentration of positives and possibilities, development and maintaining a strong sense of urgency, attention to detail, readiness to possible failure, personal involvement, and sense of fun.

Taken from an Aristotelian perspective, all these scholars who argue that leadership consists in the acquisition of traits are right since one becomes virtuous by practicing virtue. The advantage of the argument of the leaders being made is that it makes it possible to identify qualities, behaviours, traits of character that differentiate a leader and a follower so that they could be taught (Horner, 1997, pp. 270-271). However, one may wonder whether these qualities could be taught and be learnt as rules of arithmetic. Do people having such qualities necessarily become leaders? Even if they were leaders indeed, is not possible that the traits that make them leaders may be a result of inheritance (Johnson, et al., 1998; Galton 1869)? This leads to another aspect of leadership, namely the idea that leaders are rather born and not made. There are two aspects in this perspective.

The first aspect is that leaders are born and their state of leadership is a result of heritage. Conversely, leadership is genetically inherited (Johnson, et al., 1998). This aspect is a subset of the second larger aspect: leaders are not born. Leadership is explained by attributes or internal qualities with which leaders

¹ As I deal with responsible leadership in the African value system, one should take it for granted that the effective or competence and ethical aspects of leadership are covered although not explicitly.

are born. Certain people are born with gifts such as high energy, exceptional intelligence, self-confidence, and extraordinary capacity to influence others. This trend goes back to the theory of “the great man”. The advantage of this trend is that if the attributes that characterise leaders and differentiate them from followers could be identified, leaders could simply be put in position. However, the problem is that there is no room to take into consideration the situational and environmental factors that play a role in leaders’ effectiveness (Horner, 1997, p.270). Furthermore, in the current political context, the idea that a leader is born makes it difficult to account for democracy in the designation of leaders.

I will not buy any particular trends insofar as the inclusive nature of the African value system allows me to account for both possibilities in the process of achieving leadership. Thus, the question of whether a leader is born or made is not a matter of “either or” but a Scheffer’s logical equation. In African value system, **nurture builds on nature** in the making of a leader: a leader is both born and made.

In the traditional Burundian culture the midwives of the royal palace had “a way” to determine whether a new baby boy would be a leader or not. They used to say that if “the baby boy is born with seeds” (*kuvukana imbuto*), then he was going to be a leader (king, chief). This could be understood from two view-points. First, to be born with seeds could mean that the baby has the potentiality to rule, that is, he was “predetermined” to rule. Secondly, since agricultural and pastoral activities were an important aspect in the life of Burundians, as can be seen in the rite of “*umuganuro*”(annual ceremony of sowing and harvesting), to be born with seeds meant that the leader must be the source of prosperity and abundance; that is, during his reign, no one should go hungry or lack anything. At the same time, if he was born with the potentiality to rule and be the source of prosperity, this means that he was to be educated and trained in such a way that he fulfils his “nature” in future governance. The leader was born with certain natural qualities which a leader should have. At the same time, these qualities had to be developed in him through education and training. There is a certain sense of bias in Burundian as in most cultures: men were taught to be tough, active, risk-taking, unemotional, etc. Beside these aspects expected of any male, the future leader was expected to cultivate a sense of the nation, sense of political leadership, attentiveness to advice, the art of war, and certain virtues such justice, integrity, truthfulness needed for a wise leader. Thus in the Burundian culture, the leader is trained both an effective and ethical leader even though, at times, this was not successful.

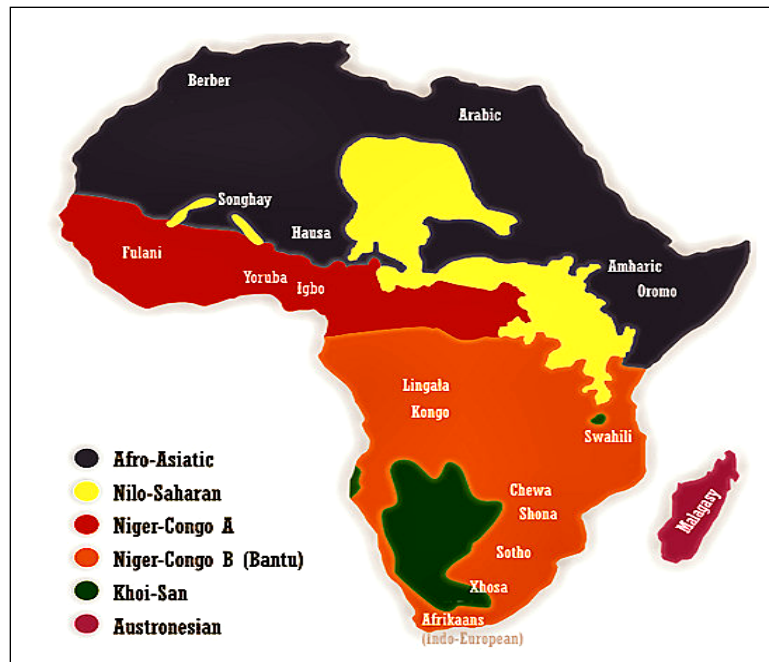
The suggestion being made is that, in the African world view, it matters that people with particular talents in specific areas of leadership be identified early enough so that they can be formed and trained for them to be relevant to both local and global context in their field of excellence. More fundamentally the suggestion of the African value system is that it would be unfair to conceive of leadership in terms of nurture as if nature does not matter. The leadership that relies on nurture only is but the celebration of “having” which I consider to be the major reason why African economic, political, and social governance is in a perpetual crisis. The quest for “having” led Africans to shift from their own value system to the value systems that are informed by other metaphysical foundations (Ntibagiriwa, 2003).

The leadership that would respond to Africa’s quest of economic development have first to take seriously its roots in African value system and conceive economic development as a validation of what Africans are, believe and value. Conversely, the starting point of economic development lies in the following self-questioning: Who I am? How should I live given who I am? The question “who am I?” requires that people retrieve the beliefs and values that structure their ontological make-up. The second question “how should I live given who I am” has to do with how people’s ontological status should give rise to a particular social, political and economic ordering. Since particular leaders have the ontological status of the people from which they emerge and carry out the concern of these people, it matters to retrieve the African value system to understand the nature of leadership in Africa. I will now outline the structure of the African value system from which the African leadership issues and on which the Africa’s economic development should be grounded.

2. The structure of African value system.

I will limit myself to the Bantu people of Sub-saharan Africa (see Map 1).

Map. 1: *The distribution of Bantu vs Niger-Kongo on African continent*
(Source: New World Encyclopedia)



Most African thinkers often refer to Bantu philosophical principles to explain what unifies Africans (Jahn 1961, Ebousi-Boulaga 1972). In Bantu philosophy, the notion of being is *-ntu*, while the concept of human being is *muntu*. I will henceforth talk of *muntu* to designate human being and *ntu* to talk of being. The *muntu* is part of the universal community of *ntu* (being) in general and part of the human community in particular. Thus one can talk of the cosmological and anthropological dimensions of African community. Cosmologically, the *muntu* is part of the universe of *ntu*, while anthropologically the *muntu* belongs to the universe of other Bantu. Beside these two dimensions, I shall refer to an aspect which is often neglected among African thinkers, namely: the personal dimension of the community, so that there is a balance between the ontological density of the individual and that of the community.

3.1. The Cosmological dimension of African community: *muntu* in the universe of *ntu*

According to Kagame (1956), the structure and grammatical rules of a people's language are modelled in agreement with the cosmological ordering of the universe. Against this background, Kagame analysed his own language, Kinyarwanda, and concluded that the philosophical elements in the linguistic structure of kinyarwanda reveal the way in which the Bantu of Rwanda conceive of the categories of being. Since the linguistic structure of Kinyarwanda is the same as that of all Bantu, one can talk of an ontology that is common to all the Bantu people (1976)². Kagame (1956, pp. 107-109) outlined four categories that constitute reality and the Bantu universe (see Table 1):

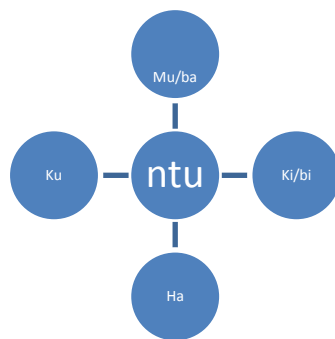
Table. 1: Table of Bantu categories			
singular	plural	Analytically	Meaning
Muntu	Bantu	Mu/ba-ntu	<i>Being with intelligence:</i> Human being actually living,

² Kagame collected data on 180 languages for the Bantu zone, read more than 300 books on all the various languages, and interviewed 60 informants (see Kagabo, 2006, p.232).

			those who are dead, and those who are not-yet born.
Kintu	Bintu	Ki/bi-ntu	<i>Being without intelligence:</i> minerals, plants, animals
Hantu	Hantu	Ha-ntu	<i>Being of space and time</i>
Kuntu	Kuntu	Ku-ntu	<i>Modal being</i>

All these four categories (mu, ki, ha, ku) are built on the same root, *ntu* (being or something) (see fig. 1).

Figure 1. The bantu categories of being



There has been a question of whether God is part of *ntu*. For Kagame (1956, p.110), although God is an existent, God exists in a mode different from that of *ntu*. God is not in the categories of *ntu*. The argument of Kagame (1956, p.315) is that, the essential characteristic of *ntu* is to act and be acted. This constitutes their mode of being. God does not have this characteristic. God transcends everything as the absolute and is the habitual source of all activity in *ntu* (see Masolo, 1994, p.92).

Kagame shares this idea with Mulago (1965) who argues that being is fundamentally one and all beings are ontologically attached together. Above the hierarchy, is the transcendent being, God: Nyamuzinda, the beginning and end of all life; Imana, the spiritual being that is source of all life. Between God and humans are intermediaries, all ascendants, the ancestors, the dead, the disincarnated souls, ect. Below human beings are other beings which, basically, are only means placed at the disposition of human beings to develop their being and life (Mulago, 1965, p. 155). Like Kagame, the point Mulago makes is that God is not part of *ntu*. Yet his point contains a worry about whether the four categories are comprehensive. It is a worry which consists in making sure that, in the universal community, nothing is excluded or forgotten, especially the necessary being (God) which gives meaning to the contingent ones. According to Mujyinya (1972), God is the origin and meaning of *ntu*, but is beyond *ntu*. God is not a *ntu* but a causal and eternal being. Thus the Bantu people call God, Iyakare (initial one), Iyambere (pre-existing one), Rugira (Efficient one), Rurema (the creator).

Contrary to Kagame, Mulago and Mujyinya, Tshiamalenga (1973) argued that God is a *ntu* and even a *muntu*. Tshiamalenga's point is interesting since, in certain Bantu languages, God is conceived as a *mu-ntu*. In the Zulu language, for instance, God is Nkurunkuru which refers to elder, lord, authority. In most languages in Central-eastern Africa, *umukuru* means, leader, elder or authority.

It is not easy to take a clear position in this debate about God. The issue of God is one of the philosophical problems without a final answer. That God is a *ntu*, it has hard to deny. It is a *ntu* par excellence since other beings cannot have their being or any activity without it. If God is not included in the four Bantu categories, it is because the Bantu people seem to be aware that God is the being which

transcends and causes the four other categories of being. From this point of view I concur with Kagame and Mulago who argue that God is above the hierarchy of *ntu* and transcends everything. They both express differently Mujjinya's claim that God is the origin and meaning of *ntu*. Yet God communicates to *ntu* what God has, namely being. As the disciples of Aristotle and Aquinas would argue, all other beings, apart from God, are beings by participation, that is, caused to be. Tshiamalenga's view that God is a *muntu* seems to be borrowed from the biblical idea that God created human beings in God's image and likeness. In turn, human beings in their quest for the foundation of their being tend to conceive God in their own image and likeness so that God has a place in their universe. Tshiamalenga's idea of God could be understood against this background. Thus, although God is not included in the four Bantu categories, God has a place in the Bantu universe as the origin, the foundation, and the ultimate explanation of everything that exists.

With the idea of God included, one can now talk of the universal community or cosmic unity as Mkhize calls it: A holistic conception of life, cosmic unity entails a connection between God, ancestors, animals, plants and inanimate objects, and everything that is created (Mkhize, 2008, p.38). Masolo (2006, pp. 489-90) reflects Senghor's view of the universal unity in the following words:

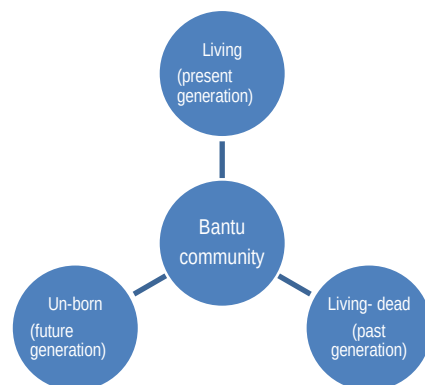
It is the way he feels and thinks in union not only with other people around him but 'indeed with all other beings in the universe: God, animal, tree, pebble'. ...negritude is the naturalness with which Africans embrace and participates in nature rather than relating it cognitively from distance. In Africa, the communitarian habits are not acquired but they are part of the African way of experiencing being.

One could conclude that things exist together and manifest aspects of relationship beyond their individuality. Murove (1999, 2009) uses the Shona concept of *ukama* (relatedness) to highlight this relationship in the cosmic community. Thus, in the African value system, the world is a communion of individual essences (Masolo, 1994, p.59) and everything is inclusively integrated.

3.2. The anthropological dimension of the community: *muntu* in the universe of *Bantu*

Apart from being a member of the universal community of beings, the *muntu* is also a member of the human community. In Africa, the *muntu* is conceived of as part of the social body which incorporates other *Bantu*. These *Bantu* include human beings actually living, human beings who are dead, and human beings who are not yet born (see figure 2).

Figure 2. The Bantu community



This sense of community which is not limited to the living is peculiar to African way of life. For Kwesi (1977), this all-inclusive human community is the very characteristic African-ness. Tempels (1959) affirmed that the Bantu psychology cannot conceive of a human being as an entity existing by itself apart from its ontological relationship with other living beings. Mbiti (1968) argues that whatever happens to the

individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. Hence the principle: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”. Tshamalenga (1985; see also Bidima, 1995, p. 59; Menkiti, 1984) argues that the “we” (*biso* in lingala) is not a mere inter-subjectivity of the “I”; the community in Africa is not a result of a contract between people, but is ontologically derived.

This academic language of scholars builds also upon what is already expressed in the popular language as can be seen in Zulu saying: “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (a person depends on other people to be a person). In the Burundian culture, it is often said that the child does not belong to one (nuclear) family, emphasizing that a child belongs to the village or the extended family (*umwana si uwumwe* = a child does not belong to one family). This meant a lot in terms of the care and the education of children. Or again, that people depend on one another (*abantu ni magiriranire* = people depend on one another for life to be meaningful).

There is a certain fear that the ontological primacy of the community in the African culture leaves little or no freedom and responsibility to individuals. Gyekye (1997) felt uncomfortable with the seeming radicality of the African sense of community and developed a moderate perspective of the African community. His book, *Tradition and Modernity* is an effort to substantiate such a moderate position leading to the claim that political and economic liberalism can feel at home in Africa. The African value system naturally accommodates both the individual as well as the community as ontologically interdependent without reducing the ontological density of the community. To make clear this point I distinguish between the human being as a being-with/in-self (*umuntu-w'-ubuntu*) and being- with/in-others (*umuntu-mu-bantu*).

3.3. The personal dimension of the community: muntu as being-with/in-self and being-with/in-others

By the personal dimension of the community, I mean that one's humanity comprises the humanity of others. This makes it possible to talk of the community-in-the person: you are a person if you carry within yourself your humanity (*umuntu-w'-ubuntu*) and the humanity of others (*umuntu-mu-bantu*).

3.3.1. African conception of the human being as *umuntu-w'ubuntu*

The characteristic feature of human being is intelligence (*mu-ntu*). Ramose rightly defines *umuntu* as the specific entity which continues to conduct an inquiry into being³, experience, knowledge and truth (Ramose, 2002, p.41). Intelligence is the faculty by which the *muntu* acts and interacts with the other *ntu* (cf. Kagame, 1956, p.315). It is the faculty by which the *muntu* judges, appreciates, relates and harmonises with other beings in the universe. The failure to act intelligently, or rather in a way that safeguards harmony disqualifies the ontological identity of the *muntu*. The Burundians say of the *bantu* who have lost their ontological identity: *Barabaye ibikoko ntibakiri abantu* (these people have become animals and are no more human beings).

Umntu-w'ubuntu cannot be satisfied solely with the practical matters of the present through tricks and calculations. The intelligence characteristic of the *muntu* is what can be referred to as a comprehensive rationality. The primary role of intelligence is to connect people to their true selves as human beings to such an extent that they can now feel obligated to be in harmonious relations in the community of the visible world as well as the invisible one. The *umuntu-w'ubuntu* calls for one's (ontological) identity and (moral) constancy. For those who are not acquainted with the Bantu thought, I could compare this with Ricoeur' concepts of *idem* (the same) and *ipse* (the self, of the self, or by the self) which are unified in that of self-constancy:

Self-constancy is for each person that manner of conducting himself or herself so that others can count on that person. Because someone is counting on me, I am accountable for my actions before another. The term responsibility unites both meaning; counting on and being accountable for. It unites them, adding to them the idea of a response to the question ‘Where are you?’ asked by another [...]. ‘Here I am!’ (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 165).

The concept of *umuntu-w'-ubuntu* has moral implications. This baggage revolves around the value of human-ty or human-ness (*ubuntu*), hence *umuntu-w'-ubuntu*. Literarily, *Umntu-w'-ubuntu* refers to a

³ Ramose's spelling

person of humanity, a person of harmony, integrity, equity and respectful of the world of the humans and of things. It is a human person as one realizes oneself as an individual person in one's universe which includes one's guiding principles, cherished values, innovating and constructive choices, self-realization in harmony with others. Senghor says it differently:

The member of the community society... claims his autonomy to affirm himself as a *being*. But he feels, he thinks that he can develop his potential, his originality, only in and by the society, in union with all other men – indeed, with all other beings in the universe: God, animal, tree, or pebble (Senghor, 1964, p.94).

The worry that the African conception of the community could be an impediment to the individual's rights and responsibility, and that individuals could shift their responsibility to the community finds its response at this level. The aim of the community is to foster humanity in the individual and, on the other hand, the permanent concern of individuals is how humanity can be fostered in the community as it is in their person. Ramose (2002, p.42) rightly interprets *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* thus: to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others. *Umuntu-w'-ubuntu* affirms her/his own humanity by recognising the humanity of others.

3.3.2. The African conception of the human being as *umuntu-mu-bantu*

While *umuntu-w'ubuntu* refers to the human being as one conceives of oneself as an individual, *umuntu-mu-bantu* (being-with/in-community) refers to human being as a community being, the human being as onto-socially constituted. In the African value system, the plenitude of humanness cannot be fully achieved outside the community (Gyekye, 1997). This belief has a deeper root in the whole of the communal conception of the human being. An individual is born into an existing human society and culture. The fact that the individual is born into an existing community suggests that a human being is a social being by nature. The human being does not choose voluntarily to enter a human community. The individual cannot make optional the community without, at the same time, doing injustice to the *ubuntu* characteristic of one's individuality. Hence the concept of *umuntu-mu-bantu*.

Umuntu-mu-bantu, is a human person who recognizes her/his situation among others as a moral necessity. In Burundian culture, people say of a person who has no moral engagement towards the community: "*Yarafuye agenda*" (=That person is dead alive). Conversely, people with no moral engagement are dead although they are apparently alive; they have lost what makes the kind of creature they are. They have lost their ontological density and its moral implications. People's disconnection from the (cosmological or human or personal) community deprives them from their humanness (*ubuntu*), and in return, could deprive the community of its humanness (Ntibagiriwa, 2011)⁴. The Bavenda from Southern Africa express it differently: *muthu u bebelwa munwe*, which means "To be is to belong and to participate, or to be born for the other" (Mkhize, 2008, p.40, see also Karenga, 2004, p. 254).

Thus *umuntu-mu-bantu* refers to people as they realize themselves in the universe of other people. According to Bujo:

Without a communitarian relationship there is no identity for the African person. Only together with others can one become a human person and achieve individual freedom, which again should be exercised in a communitarian manner (Bujo, 1998, p.148).

Thus it is only in relation with the community that the identity of the individual is substantiated. This interaction between the individual and the community is best seen in the whole processes of initiation observed in most of the African cultures. The objective of initiation is to teach those who are being initiated how to interact with natural environment and the human community. The initiation is geared to help those being initiated to learn self-organisation and mutual challenge which involves locating the talents and the potentialities of each one outside the authorities of the village and of parents. It is on the basis of these talents and potentialities that each individual is given a role or responsibility in the group, and later on in the society as a whole (Dandala, 2009, p.269). Ampim (2008) points out that the rite of passage to adulthood is to ensure the shaping of productive, community oriented and responsible adults.

⁴ The issue of climate change and ecological malfunctioning comes from the fact that the human being has lost the community as aspect of the world of humans and of things. This idea is expressed in my paper, *Africa's quest for development and the challenge of the environmental care: A response from Sen's capability approach*, presented at UNISA, October 12, 2011.

This observation was also made by Mutisya (1996) who argues that in the initiation to adulthood, one learns the rules of the society, the responsibility of obeying these rules, of self-respect, and the respect of others.

I now turn to the issue of whether the above value system provides a leadership that could serve as a catalyst of Africa's economic development. Before dwelling on this subject matter, I want to precise that the nature of this paper does not allow me to discuss the leadership styles found in the African tradition. Suffice it to note the fact that the African leadership tended to be directive with a strong participative and consensual coloration. My suggestion is that, to be a catalyst of development, future African leadership must to be transformational⁵ while retaining its participative and consensual flavour (cf. Adadevoh, 2007, Mbigi, 2005). Indeed this leadership model fits with the Bantu conceptual framework of *ubuntu*, *umuntu-w'ubuntu/umuntu-mu-bantu*. In fact, Ncube (2010) argues that *ubuntu* is a transformational leadership philosophy.

4. Responsible leadership in the African value system.

Do the cosmological, anthropological and the personal dimensions of the African community provide in themselves a context of a responsible leadership? Does the African value system thus articulated nature and nurture responsible leadership? Given today's social, political and economic experience, it would be very difficult to answer this question affirmatively. The African value system is a context of responsible leadership, and in fact, unless this context is retrieved and taken seriously in nurturing African leadership, Africa may succeed neither politically nor economically. The key of African value system for a responsible leadership lies in three aspects:

1. The very emphasis on the community and the dynamics within it

In the African value system, a leader is conceived of as one who safeguards and fosters cohesion in the community. This was seen in the way the traditional African leader was referred to. The father of... (se as in sebarundi: the father of all Burundian). It means that nobody should be excluded; all are members of the same family whose head is the leader striving to care for their welfare. The authority of the leader itself was not exercised individually but in communal and consensual way. The leader exercises power and authority in the council of elders (Bujo, 2009, 292ff); he is answerable to the people through this council (Wiredu, 1996, p.185).

Another aspect in which the African value system is a context that provides a responsible leadership is in the values it encapsulates.

2. The value is the community itself :

The community is not only a reality referring to a group of people who share certain beliefs and values (community-as-reality), but also the community is a value (community-as-value)⁶. In the African value system, the community is a value because it refers to the social nature of human being. As Aristotle argues, the human being is a social animal. Derivatively, thanks to the value of the community, it is possible to talk of other values such: solidarity with others for the good of the individual and the good of the community, cooperation for mutual advantage in common projects, responsibility for one another, etc.

3. The value of ubuntu (humanity or humanness)

Fundamentally, *ubuntu* is not a moral concept as it is often believed, but a metaphysical category which is linked with the ontological status of the human being. *Ubuntu* as a metaphysical category has moral implications. *Ubuntu* is a moral character or the value of human beings if they live, acts, and behave in a

⁵ I find that the transformational leadership has ingredients needed for a catalyst of development in Africa: influencing followers by establishing a vision for a better future; inspiring followers as opposed to controlling them; leading by example through role modelling; contributing to subordinates' intellectual stimulation; enhancing meaningfulness of goals and behaviours, fulfilling followers' self-actualisation needs; empowering followers through intrinsic motivation; exhibiting confidence in subordinates ability to attain higher levels of achievement; and enhancing collective identity (Conger, 1999 cited by Aronson, 2001, p.246).

⁶The idea of the community-as-reality and the community-as-value has been elaborated in a paper, *The Bantu Identity and the Quest for Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, presented to the Africa Working Group of the Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame. I am grateful to the Kellogg Institute for providing me with this opportunity and the Joint Japan/World Bank Fund for its financial support of this research. The questions asked and comments made by the participants are greatly appreciated

way that fulfils their nature as intelligent beings. This means that people are living in a way that fosters harmony in the community of beings in general, in the human community of Bantu, as well as in the personal community (Ntibagirirwa, 2009, p.26). Thus, the importance of the value of *ubuntu* lies in the fact that it has its roots deep in the ontological make-up of the African.

Presumed that there is no corruption by certain forces (as has been the case with colonisation) or individual deviations, people have an ontological status with as values those provided by their belief and value system. People are the product of their socio-cultural environment. If such is the case, the African responsible leadership must be the product of the African value system with the characteristic values just outlined. Outside there can only be betrayal of the ontological status of the African and its value foundation either as a result of corruption by external forces or individual deviations which in no way can be endorsed by the African value system.

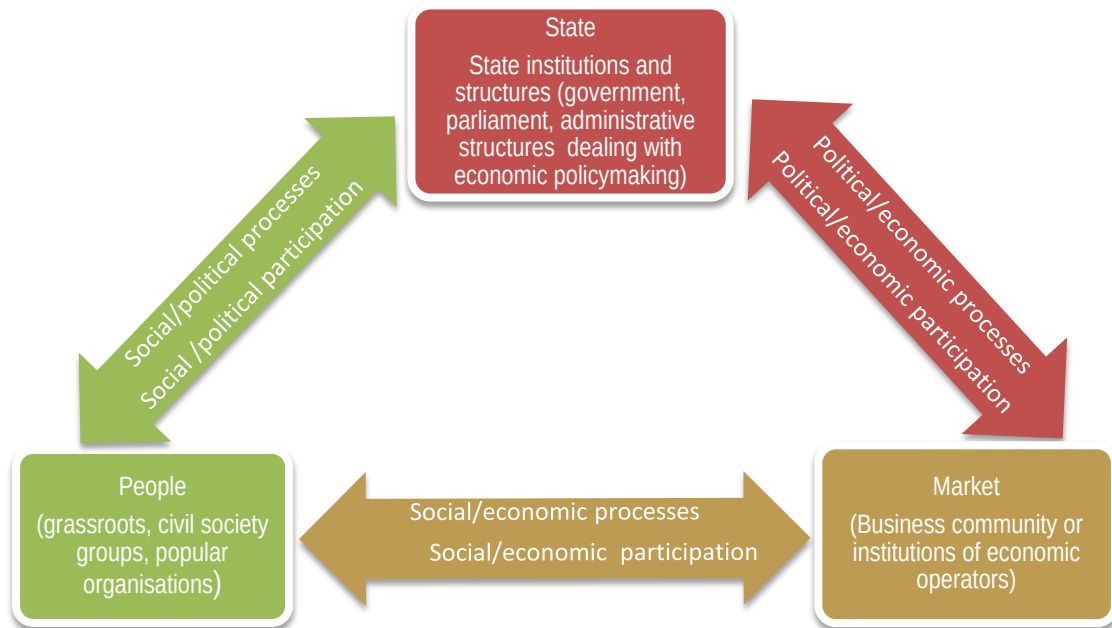
5. Development as a task of the responsible leadership

The main issue is whether the leadership that issues from the African value system can respond to the challenge of economic development. Gyekye (1997, p.148) argues that the African value system is essentially a socio-ethical way of life concerned with social relations as well as moral attitudes about what sorts of relationships should hold between individuals in society and about the need to take into account the interests of the wide society. If Gyekye's argument is followed, the conclusion would be that, in the African value system, the leadership is mainly concerned with social and moral make-up of the society. This would mean matters of economic development are not the immediate concern of the African traditional leadership. Gyekye shares this idea with Ayittey (1990, p.12). Gyekye and Ayittey are right to point out that the kind of communalism peculiar to African value system is a socio-ethical way of life. However, their failure to take note of the economic concern of African communalism is not fair. The popular and mythical belief of "*kuvugakana imbuto*" (to be born with seeds) which involves wealth and prosperity in the Burundian culture is a case in point. Social relations are inseparable from the production of wealth. In fact the economic question behind these social relations is always "how to be bake the cake together and share it together as we bake it?"⁷

The problem of the leader in Africa's quest for economic development then becomes that of the right interpretation of the African value system in terms of strategies and policies of economic development. Conversely, the challenge for the leadership in Africa is how to translate African communalism in economic terms. Below, I suggest the structure of economic development which I think is the best interpretation of the African value system in terms of economic policy for the responsible leadership. I shall call this "inclusive participatory economic development" (figure. 3).

Figure 3: The structure of economic development based on African value system

⁷ The idea "baking the cake together" comes from my discussion (on the link between African development and Sen's capability approach) with Professor Georges Enderle from the University of Notre Dame. I am grateful to Professor Enderle for his enlightening insight.



The dimensions of the African community are such that cohesion should be safeguarded and no aspects should be excluded. The kind of development that issues from this worldview is inclusive. The state, the people and the market are all needed to achieve sustainable economic development. In inclusive development, everybody is an agent and not a patient of development. Thus, the best responsible leadership in state managed economy does not qualify as responsible in the African value system because the exclusion of other forces that could equally play a role is unjust. The best leadership in market economy does not also qualify as a responsible leadership in the African value system for the same reason. The best leadership in people's local development does not qualify as responsible leadership either because the sole material survival of the people does not guarantee their true freedom.

I turn to how this inclusive development could be effected by a responsible leader in Africa.

6. Inculturation and democratisation of development: Sen's capability approach

First, I will explain the capability approach and justify its application in the context of leadership and the quest for economic development in the African value system.

6.1. Capability approach

The capability approach is becoming increasingly the cornerstone in the assessment of economic development as well as the methods and policies that should lead to such development. It was formulated by Amartya Sen and later joined by Martha Nussbaum. Both Nussbaum and Sen (1993) stress the capability approach back to Aristotle's conditions for human flourishing. Sen argues that the capability approach is related to Aristotle's analysis of the good for human beings, leading to an examination of the functions of a person as well as his exploration of life in terms of activity (Sen, 2003, p.4; 1992, p.5). He also stresses the capability approach to Adam Smith and Marx (Sen, 2003, p.4). Both Smith and Marx discussed the importance of functionings (further explained below) and the capability to function as determinants of human well-being. Marx's political economy conceived the success of human life in terms of fulfilling the needs of human activity (this links us back to Aristotle). Sen shows that the focus on freedom that capability reflects is featured by Marx's suggestion that we need to replace the "domination of circumstances and chances over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances". Smith discussed the functioning of appearing in the community without shame, an achievement which is valued in all societies.

I now consider the concept “capability” closely. For Sen, capability refers to the ability of people to lead the lives they value and have reason to value. The concept of capability has two aspects which are central to Sen’s philosophy of development, namely: functioning and agency.

The concept “functioning” comes from the verb “to function”. To function is to be involved in activity. For Aristotle, the well-being or the flourishing of people depends on their ability to function, that is, to be involved in activity either actually or potentially. For Sen, “[A] functioning is an achievement of people, that is, what they manage or succeed to be or to do” (Sen, 1987, p.7). Precisely, functionings are physical or mental states (beings) and activities (doings) that allow people to participate in the life of their society. Functionings range from the elementary physical ones such as being well-nourished, being in good health, being clothed, and sheltered, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality to the most complex social achievements such as being literate being happy, taking part in the life of the community, having self-respect or being able to appear in the public without shame (Sen, 1992, pp.5, 39 &110). In relation to functionings, capability

represents the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that a person can achieve. [...] a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another (Sen, 1992, p.40).

Conversely, capabilities are the functionings which a person has the potential to undertake (Jackson, 2005, p. 103). Capabilities indicate the extent of the freedom that people have in pursuing valuable activities or functionings (Drèze & Sen, 1989, p. 42). Capabilities may include such abilities as reading and writing, being well-informed, having real chances of participating freely in the life of the community- in short all those aspects of life that allow one to fully function as a human being individually and in community (Sen, 1999, p.233).

The second concept linked with capability is human agency. It is a person’s capability to act. Sen talks of seeing people as agents rather than patients. He refers to an agent as “someone who acts and brings change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives” (Sen 1999:19). With this concept of agency, Sen has been accused of being individualistic in his approach insofar as he emphasizes individual capabilities and seemingly ignores the way collectivities affect individuals (Evans 2002, Stewart 2005). Certain scholars such as Ibrahim (2006), Ballet, et al. (2007), Cleaver (2007) have responded to such criticism by developing a perspective of collective capabilities. However, the critique of Sen as being individualistic in his capability approach is not warranted.

There are two perspectives from which Sen addresses the individual and the communal dimensions of capability. The first is that of culture to which he alludes abundantly (1999, 2005, 2006). The consideration of culture is dictated by the fact that neoclassical economics is done in a way that would make us believe that people live in a culture-free context. The second is the liberal philosophy of which the extreme could deprive the individual of the awareness that activities are undertaken in society. Hence Sen’s concern is how to address economic and social circumstances that affect the individual. This concern brings him to consider not individualism but agency (see Jackson, 2005). Agency becomes an answer to the question of how individuals participate in the life of their own community while at the same time preserving their individual autonomy and responsibility.

Thus Sen concentrates on individual capabilities along with the fact that the individual is embedded in the society. He makes it clear that individuals are socially embedded agents who interact with their societies and flourish fully only by participating in political and social affairs (Sen 1999: xi-xii, 2002:79-80). Nevertheless, Sen is aware of the tension that exists between the individual and the community as is obvious in his reflection on culture and human rights, social choice and individual behaviour, individual freedom and social commitment (Sen, 1999), and recently his reflection on culture and development (2005) as well as violence and identity (2006).

The advantage of Sen’s capability approach for this reflection on Africa’s economic development is that it links well with the African value system as the locus of leadership in Africa. By emphasizing agency and the fact that individuals are socially embedded, Sen’s capability approach gives us a clear picture of the harmonious interaction between the individual and the community which a responsible leadership has to foster in the process and achievement of a sustainable development. The responsibility of a leader in

Africa must be seen in people exercising their agency and expanding the real freedoms people enjoy (cf. Sen, 1999, p.3). These freedoms include the freedom to engage in the process of development.

6.2. Capability approach and the operationalisation of inclusive economic development

There are two ways in which the capability approach could help in the operationalisation of inclusive economic development, namely, the very definition of capability as “the freedom of people to lead the lives they value and have reason to value ” and agency. Both aspects allow to ground economic development in what people believe and value. They both start with the question of people’s self-definition, the awareness of themselves, as well as their particular context and the potentialities they have. Their uniqueness and the uniqueness of their context include envisaging economic development on their own ground and the freedom to do so. This is what I refer to as the inculturation and democratisation of development.

While the concepts of democracy and democratisation are common to our socio-political vocabulary, the concept of inculturation is rather uncommon. I borrow this concept from Third World Christian theologians who use it to mean the process by which Christianity could take roots in and the colour of local cultures. It could equally be applied to economic development to mean the process by which economic development could be a validation of what people believe and value. Cardoso suggests that the involvement of all actors in development be linked to political activity (in Goulet, 1989, p.168), that is, bringing what is economic and cultural in the political sphere. According to Sen (1999, see also Pellissery and Bergh (2007, p.284, Crocker 2007, 2008), this could only be achieved through public reflection and debate. That is what I call “democratization of development”.

The strategy to make this inculturation and democratisation of development possible is participation which is both the exercise of individual and collective agency. Participation means that all actors are agents; no one should be made patient in the processes of development (Sen, 1999; Crocker 2008). There are many kinds of participation but not all them make the inculturation and democratisation of economic development a reality as it is obvious in Crocker’s typology (Crocker, 2007, pp. 432-3):

- *Nominal participation*: People participate in group decision-making only as a members of the group but, for instance, do not attend meetings, maybe because of responsibilities, lack of will, or feeling that they are harassed and unwelcome;
- *Passive participation*: A member of a group attends decision-making meetings only to listen to report about decision already made. For Drydyk (2005) passive participation is limited to being told what is going to happen or what is going on already;
- *Consultative participation*: This refers to the participation of non-elites participating by simply giving information or opinions to the elite. However, the non-elites neither deliberate among themselves nor make decisions;
- *Petitionary participation*: The non-elite participate by making petitions to authorities to make certain decisions or do certain things as a remedy to their grievances;
- *Participatory implementation*: Elites determine the goals and the main means while the non-elite implement the goals and decide the tactics. Drydyk (2005) calls it functional participation.
- *Bargaining participation*: The non-elite individually or collectively bargain with the elite, but mostly as adversaries rather than partners; the motive of the bargaining being largely or exclusive self-interest;
- *Deliberative participation*: Both the non-elites deliberate together, engage in reasoning and scrutinize the proposals, reflect in order to reach agreements on policies geared to the common good. Drydyk calls this kind of participation interactive participation geared to a joint analysis and reflection in order to get solutions to issues.

The first five types of participation refer to what I may call *accidental participation*. There is no public reflection and debate involved as far as people are concerned. The occurrence or non-occurrence of this kind of participation does not prevent “the course of things” (what has been planned at the level of leadership and expertise) to take place. In this kind of participation, people’s involvement is practically limited to approval and execution as is the case in “top-down” strategies of economic development or

autocratic type of leadership. Accidental participation does not fulfil the requirement of “capability as the freedom of people to lead the lives they value and have reason to value” and agency. It cannot respond fully to the exigencies of the African value system expressed in economic terms and the required kind of leadership.

Deliberative participation refers to *essential participation*. In this kind of participation, all actors are agents. Their full participation is essential to the process of development; in fact, it is already development in process. Development starts with them and is essential to what they become. It transforms them as they give it a shape (cf. Adedeji, 1991, p. 49). In Hodgett’s terms, by exercising their agency, people acquire the political and social awareness that help them to leapfrog in their development (Hodgett, 2008). This progressive empowerment is what Sen (2003) refers to as capability expansion which is another definition of development. This is where the African responsible leadership (transformational leadership with participative and consensual blend) become crucial. Thus, the issue of how inculturation, democratisation, and deliberative participation in economic development link with the responsible leadership which issues in the African value system finds its answer here? The challenge that the responsible leadership in Africa must always face is to arrive to a kind of economic development which is an end-product of people’s essential participation. Put differently, leadership has to make sure that the socio-ethical African community becomes a political community which achieves economic development through public reflection and debate. The experience of African palaver, deliberation under the tree, traditional consultative institutions might need to be revisited.

Conclusion

The paper focused on a double question of whether the African value system provides a responsible leadership and whether this leadership could respond to the challenge of Africa’s quest of development. I defined the concept of leadership and argued that, in the African value system, a leader is both natured and nurtured, both born and made. I outlined the African value system and its various dimensions and argued that this value system in itself provides responsible leadership. I suggested that African leadership must to be transformational while retaining its participative and consensual flavour of the directive style.

I argue that the problem of leaders in Africa is always the right interpretation of the African value system in terms of economic policies. I put across the structure of economic development that fits with African value system and argued that this can’t but be inclusive participatory economic development which consists of the synergy of the state, the people and the market. I drew on Sen’s capability approach and suggested that this type of economic development could be translated into practice through a process of inculturation and democratisation of economic development thanks to the public debate and reflection, which expands people’s capabilities.

If the argument is convincing enough, the future leadership will need to mirror itself in the African culture and rethink the democratic quality of leadership beyond the Western pattern. I believe that the consensual processes characteristic of African traditional political ordering transcends the majoritarian democracy, and therefore, needs to be revisited. Sustainable economic development in Africa carries this price tag.

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