ZIMBABWE @ 40

Monograph ~ VI

Values, Institutions and Development

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by **David Kaulemu**

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The Zimbabwe we Have

Introduction

Culture, values, and institutions have a central role in informing approaches to national development and in shaping its form. There is therefore need to explore how the relationships and dynamics between culture, traditions, values and institutional structures facilitate or impede the development process and how they shape and inform it. This monograph will discuss the values influencing contesting, and often conflicting, visions and practices of development in Zimbabwe from before its independence in 1980. It also unpacks underlying ideological values that motivate dominant development approaches and institutions and inspire different sections of the Zimbabwean society. Values ranging from those inspired by African struggles and philosophies to universalistic concepts based on world religions and modern concepts of human rights will be discussed and their implications for the future of the country evaluated. Given the nature of African modernity, the history of colonial experience and the location of Zimbabwe in global economic architecture, this monograph will grapple with the significance of developmental values and institutions to the welfare of Zimbabweans as they celebrate 40 years of political independence. It will interrogate the role of African traditional institutions, various faith community efforts and ideas pushed forward in the name of development, modernisation and human rights. Special effort will be made to capture varieties of experiences ranging from those of young people and women to those of various marginalised groups and communities. Focus on leadership, democratic traditions, participation and the need to deal with the challenges of cultures of violence, corruption, authoritarianism and exploitation will be facilitated. Development itself will be placed in its modern context and as part of the modernising process that integrates into a single nation the variety of backgrounds and perspectives.

Linking values, institutions and development

We consider values critical to our lives. They carry the merit or worthiness in the organisation of civilisations. In other words, they guide people in how they measure the significance of their lives and the natural and social environments around them. As a result, we do not only value our value systems, cultural norms and social institutions, we also promote, encourage and protect their existence, growth and development. We condemn

situations, social arrangements, cultures and people which undermine our values, while we support and join those who share our values. This explains why we join certain political parties, social movements and religious traditions and not others. They explain why we are in favour of building and strengthening certain institutions rather than others. Values therefore inform our politics in the broadest sense of the word[1] and how we consider our local, national and global development should proceed.

One of the best ways in which we defend our values is to ritualise and institutionalise them. We develop practises and traditions around the events, people and symbols that represent our values. We also build organisations, institutions, and social structures that promote these values. The list of national symbols, monuments, commemorations and holidays suggests what the nation regards of national value. In modern Zimbabwe, we have built many institutions – the national constitution and laws that fall under it, the courts, civil society organisations etc. in the name of justice; schools, universities and libraries in the name of education; clinics and hospitals, in the name of health; armies, police and the secret service in the name of security, etc. From the time of independence, Zimbabwe has built the National Heroes' Acre and the Zimbabwean flag with each colour on it signifying a value owned by the country i.e. red for the blood spilled in war, green for the land and gold representing mineral wealth. There have been significant contestation around the meaning and uses of these symbols (Mawere 2020, 165). This is what politics is about.

There are an indefinite number of things that we value and yet each country, each society makes priorities and there is a lot of politics around the establishment and maintenance of those priorities. This monograph broadly discusses what values have, on the whole, influenced the development of Zimbabwe as a country and what institutions have emerged as critical in that development. This analysis should inform policy development options and assess the success or failure of existing developmental directions at this stage of the country's history.

1 Many people understand politics in the context of political parties and the jostle for state power. This is politics in the narrow sense. In the wider sense, politics refers to the activities of any individual or group that works to actively mobilise people to think, organise and act in a certain way or to oppose certain ways of doing things. Hence politics is about power and how any individual or group accumulates power and uses it to bring about change in the world or to defend an established form of life. Politics can be both social and personal.

Contextualising values in Zimbabwe at 40

Zimbabwe as a nation-state has witnessed deep debates and reflections on values. For a country with its historical origins, it is expected that there will be fundamental differences about what kind of values its people should have and how to apply them. While some sections of the population feel that they have adequate and relevant values for the development of the country, it is clear that this is not the case. No culture has adequate values to inform their own traditions and their engagements with other cultures. Francis Fukuyama's idea of 'the end of history' (Fukuyama 1992) has proved problematic. It is therefore imperative that Zimbabwe allows itself adequate time and space for its various constituents to engage each other on the issue of values and establish ways of proceeding and relating to each other.

Historians and other analysts have engaged with this question by asking what Zimbabwe represents and what narratives have been developed to make sense of the country as an historical reality. At the age of 40 years, we are asking where we have come from, what has been achieved, where we have made mistakes and how we can move forward. The values we need as a nation, must be able to take each section of the Zimbabwean population beyond its common sense and its comfort zone in order to expand its imagined sense of community. This demands widening the moral world of each community and deepening its moral sense. To the extent that the post-colonial leadership has attempted to restrict and enforce the national ethical landscape to what Mudenge (1988, 364) called the 'inner core of the Shona historical experience', they have failed to provide the moral foundation that the country needs for its present and its future.

Zimbabwe, because of its history, means different things to different people. This is both a major challenge and opportunity for how the country is to develop. It is a challenge when each community insists on staying in its ethical comfort zone and tries to universalise its own particularity. It is an opportunity when communities recognise the need to grow beyond themselves as they elect to participate in something bigger than themselves and innovate and experiment with new relationships and new ethical demands. Zimbabwe is a result of historical rupture. It is a situation that calls for morality and moral action without pre-ordained ethical rules (Bauman 2005).

This monograph demonstrates that the 40 years of political independence

have seen more challenges than opportunities. Not that there have been no opportunities; but as Zimbabweans, because of our ways of imagining, we have not been able to appreciate those opportunities. Alois Mlambo and a growing number of professional historians (see Raftopoulos and Mlambo eds 2009) and analysts explain the root cause of this problem in terms of the political contestation around how different groups have tried to make sense of what Zimbabwe is as a social and political formation. The way it has been understood and what emotional attachments and responses it has elicited, have tended to determine its prospects for development and how different sectors of the population have flourished or otherwise. Contestation around the issues of national identity, citizenship, belonging, sovereignty and who has what rights explain a lot about why the country is where it is today. With a self-confident political leadership imbued with epistemological humility, and a progressive cosmopolitan common social imaginary, Zimbabwe could have greater prospects for human and environmental flourishing. Self-confident political leadership recognises that society improves when new leaders are always emerging and encouraged to do so. Epistemological humility acknowledges that no one person or group of persons have a monopoly of truth.

Debates on the ontological and ethical status of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's development, has suffered from the different contestations about the ways in which it has been imagined by various leaders, their followers, communities and party members. Dominant imagineries have been so narrow that they have alienated and prevented significant sections of the country from participating fully in the country's economics, politics and culture. This has been true both in colonial and post-colonial times. Mahmood Mamdani has helped us to understand how colonial systems constructed the legacies of 'citizens' and 'subjects' in African societies (Mamdani 1996). Historians describe how colonial and post-colonial political authorities encouraged the development of narrow and exclusivist historical accounts of the country. Kaulemu (2011,104) notes, 'Since 1890, Zimbabwe as a nation-state has always been monopolised by a few.' Each group, supported by sympathetic historians, artists, poets, writers and other analysts, provides its own interpretation of history and sociology which downplays, demonises or ignores the role of others while it legitimises their own rule and contributions. Colonists and different shades of settler regimes spread their views through colonial laws, versions of democracy,

education, cultures, sport, and religions. The national organisation of time and space and the nature of their national and local government budgets reflected their values (De La Torre 2004). Clear examples of the influence of colonial values on development priorities are Rhodesia's Land Apportionment Act of 1930[2] and the colonial education policies (Richards and Govere 2003). At independence the ontological status of the country was widened to include more people and traditions, especially the black indigenous population, but it continued and still continues to leave out many others for different reasons. This failure to recognise sections of society is a major problem for Zimbabwe in its desire to develop. As Mlambo observes,

> … there was, thus, little in the ethnic, racial and cultural past of Zimbabwe before, during and after colonialism that had laid an adequate and appropriate foundation for the development of a common national identity or an efficient modern state with a commitment to the welfare of its entire people. Colonial rule and the anticolonial armed struggle that it provoked had polarised the population along mainly racial lines, while struggle movements were divided along largely ethnic lines, in what Zimbabwean political scientist Masipula Sithole has characterised as 'struggles within the struggle' (1979). Meanwhile, postcolonial government policies and practices did little to unify the country (Mlambo 2013, 49-74).

The above passage identifies the root cause of development challenges facing Zimbabwe today and in future. This root cause is, first and foremost, a spiritual challenge. 'Spiritual' here does not merely refer to the activities of occult forces. Rather it refers to the major inspirational motivations that try to make sense of and emanate from the attributed ontology of an imagined community or social reality. Spirituality emanates from what is assumed to be there as an existence, i.e. 'what there is' (Quine 1980). The way in which 'what there is' is described and understood suggests and implicates in its very description some emotional attachment and response. The attempt, based on David Hume's 'is/ought' distinction to separate facts from values is a sham (Skillen 1977, 123). Moral prescriptions and obligations are insinuated in the very descriptions of what there is. This is why Zygmunt Bauman insisted that a social analyst, as opposed to a physicist, is always

2 https://www.britannica.com/topic/Land-Apportionment-Act

implicated in the social phenomena he or she analyses (Bauman 1992). This is why millions of people have died for what they consider to be their nations. The fact of parenthood or friendship, implies moral obligations. The fact of nationhood also implies emotional attachments and moral obligations. This point does not preclude the claim made by Anderson that nationalism is an artefact (Poole 1991, 107). It means that the way the facts of nationhood are described will affect what emotional responses will ensue. Certain ways of characterising the nation, alienates and excludes others. Zimbabwe at 40 needs to find ways of presenting the nation that will invite all to participate and contribute to it. The national narratives and the implicated emotional attachments and moral obligations are the foundations, as it were, of whatever else the nation will be capable of achieving.

Sorting out national priorities

Zimbabweans have had several occasions where they have sat down to discuss national issues and to form agreements on how to move forward for national development. Unfortunately these agreements have failed to address the root causes of the challenges. Hence the country is still struggling to find its feet in national development. How can proper priorities be identified and dealt with?

Many analysts believe that Zimbabwe's main challenges are economic and political. Hence we have seen a number of political settlements and sometimes economic summits and forums.[3] Prioritising politics has been the major approach that has been taken nationally and sometimes initiated and facilitated by regional and global powers. There are many, including President Mnangagwa's government, who have been publicly calling for the prioritisation of economic strategies – hence the mantra 'Zimbabwe is open for business'. And yet the major national challenges have remained unsolved because the root causes of Zimbabwe's woes, which have not been dealt with, have poisoned the political and economic discussions and settlements.

Showers Mawowa and Erin McCandless (2018, 4) have argued, 'Political settlements in Zimbabwe have been elite driven and failed to address core conflict issues.' They argue that these agreements, which include the Lancaster House Settlement of 1979, the Unity Accord of 1989,

3 https://www.tradezimbabwe.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/TPSDP-3.1.4_PPD_Export-Processes.pdf

the Global Political Agreement of 2009, and the November 2017 New Dispensation, have not been successful and resilient because they have failed to fulfil the following conditions that any resilient social contract must fulfil:

i. Political settlements and social contract-making mechanisms must be increasingly inclusive and responsive to 'core conflict issues'.

ii. Institutions (formal, customary, and informal) need to be increasingly effective and inclusive and to have broadly shared outcomes that meet societal expectations and enhance state legitimacy.

iii. Social cohesion must broaden and deepen, with formal and informal ties and interactions binding society horizontally (across citizens, between groups) and vertically (between citizens/groups and the state) (ibid.).

The argument of this monograph is that social contract conditions, which do not address the social imaginaries and inform the participants in the social contracts, are too thin to be successful. The moral order assumed by participants of political settlements will determine whether the social contract-making mechanisms will be inclusive. In fact, the question of who is included and who is not is the 'core conflict issue'. Political settlements and social-contract mechanisms in Zimbabwe will not be inclusive as long as 'the discourse of identity and recognition' (Taylor 1994, 25) is not addressed. Modern institutions require equality in the treatment of citizens. Citizens in modern legal institutions in countries like Zimbabwe are understood in their individual capacities. But how can we insist on treating citizens in this individualised sense when they have come from different historical and cultural backgrounds, including from backgrounds that respect hierarchies and social embeddedness? What does it mean for modern '[p]ublic institutions, including government agencies, schools, and liberal arts colleges and universities to recognize or respect the particular cultural identities of citizens' (Gutmann 1994, 3)? This question has not been settled for Zimbabwe and no formal platforms have been created to get citizens to genuinely and dialogically negotiate appropriate responses to this question. Explaining the process of identity formation and social recognition Charles Taylor (1994, 34) argues,

> Thus my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt,

> partly internal, with others. …My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others.

The development of identity and social recognition described here applies not just to individuals but also to groups and cultures. Zimbabwe has not created space and time to facilitate this dialogical development of a Zimbabwean identity that facilitates self-recognition and recognition by others. For as long as we continue to avoid this engagement, it is difficult to see how our public institutions can be inclusive and social cohesion widened and deepened.

The perils of imagining citizenship in Zimbabwe

In 2012, The African Forum for Catholic Social Teaching in association with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung ran a project on how Zimbabweans imagined nationhood and citizenship. Articles for a book were solicited. The project 'was intended to bring out how that imagination (of nationhood and citizenship) has influenced political, economic, social and cultural developments in Zimbabwe'. These were my thoughts then as editor of the volume,

> The responses to this call were telling. My own reading of the responses could itself be telling. There was a general reluctance to talk explicitly about the ontological and spiritual identity of Zimbabwe and how that identity informs the ways in which citizenship is imagined. There are many questions that Zimbabweans still hesitate to talk about in public, even though we will sometimes admit to our prejudices in private. As Zimbabweans, we shy away from public discourse unless we are assured of acceptance and victory. The universal common good is alien to our psyche. Since 1890, we have never really accepted multiculturalism. In many ways we are colonial subjects who have imbibed colonialist exclusivism with a vengeance. (Kaulemu 2012, v.)

In the same anthology, Diana Jeater demonstrates how deep this question of the social imaginary is when she explains why ZANU-PF continues to hold power and support even though it is violent, incompetent and authoritarian. She tries 'to understand the un-coerced affinity with ZANU PF that is still felt in many rural areas, which seems rooted in something more visceral, or perhaps more spiritual, than political affiliation alone' (Kaulemu 2012,vii). She writes,

> Neither partisan, oppressive behaviour by the state nor unprecedented economic collapse significantly undermined rural peoples willingness to vote for the primary perpetrators of the political violence, ZANU PF. The MDC, meanwhile, found that its platform of defending citizenship, civil society and property rights seemed too often to fall on stony ground. Why has the MDC not been able to build up a stronger sense in Zimbabwe of the citizen and a citizen's rights vis-à-vis the state? (Jeater 2012, 124.)

Analysts argue that what the country needs are effective and inclusive institutions as well as social cohesion modelled on the social contract. Jeater is raising the question of whether enough has been done to interrogate the spiritual foundations and the social imaginary behind ZANU-PF support. She is also pointing to the fact that while much effort has been put towards building democratic institutions and procedures, the spiritual and moral order informing most citizens is still not consistent with the spirit behind those institutions. So, the former can experience elections without necessarily committing to the modern imaginary appropriate to the process. In public, political leaders also present themselves as if they are committed to democratic processes and yet they still conjure up feudalistic images of being 'fathers' and 'mothers' of the nation. And most citizens allow themselves to be carried along by these imaginings.

Our leaders sometimes seem to be accepting that what we have are first and foremost, technical challenges which need technical experts – to fix the economy, the monetary policy, the fiscal policy and to fix our social and political, democratic systems. It is true that those technical solutions are needed. But the challenges the country is facing are really symptoms of a deeper spiritual and moral crisis that stems from lack of 'the adequate and appropriate foundation' that Mlambo talks about. What is this territory called Zimbabwe? What do different sections of Zimbabwe say it is? What ethical and moral attachments do they make towards it and other sections within the country?

It is lack of this spiritual and moral foundation that explains why Zimbabweans have failed to find each other in negotiation in order to relate to each other and deepen and widen their identities in ways that go beyond the divisions, corruption and injustice characterising the country today.

As a country we have neglected to build the national spiritual backbone; the national moral foundation – what Taylor called the national social imaginary – that is the spirit that informs

> ...the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (Taylor 2004, 23.)

For the national politics, culture and economics to be sustainable, the country and indeed the whole world needs a basic spiritual and ethical perspective which is all inclusive and is inspired by the common good. It is this morality and spirituality that becomes the cement of the national and global universe. The Vatican Council II, in the document '*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*' or '*Gaudium et Spes'*, explains the common good in the following words:

> Because of the closer bonds of human interdependence and their spread over the world, we are today witnessing a widening of the role of the common good, which is the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The whole human race is consequently involved with regard to the rights and obligations which result. Every group must take into account the needs and legitimate aspirations of every other group, and still more of the human family as a whole.

Spirituality does not have to be understood only in the religious sense here. Even atheists have a spirituality – a manner of understanding which not only explains how they organise their life, but also inspires what they support and oppose. The spirituality of European modernity that inspired colonialism was informed by a certain view of the world, respect for a certain interpretation and respect for reason, prevalent use of scientific methods of analysis and their application in technology (Cahoone 1996, 27). An understanding of this spirituality can explain modern administration, law, and systems of domination (Best 2011, ix-xxv). It can also help to understand counter-spiritualities. Spirituality in this wide sense embodies values and ways of orienting life. Hence we have seen in modern society the tendency by politicians to teach the spirituality centred on material

production and economic growth (Earle *et.al.* 2017, see especially Chapter 4, 'The struggle for the soul of economics'). Economists have re-defined spirituality in terms of rationalisation, free markets, consumer sovereignty, the financialisation of human affairs and the commodification of nature (Aldred 2009, 47). Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2005) and Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* (2015), complain that globally, human beings have allowed modern science and technology to tell us that God's creation is not sacred and to orient life according to this understanding. What spiritualities inform the development of Zimbabwe at 40?

Fire-fighting and political leadership

Zimbabwe has never had a truly national discourse that genuinely discusses national issues that was all inclusive, even though the country has had several opportunities to do so. The opportunities were always treated as fire-fighting efforts to diffuse volatile situations of different interest groups fighting against each other. The Lancaster House Conference was a reasonable opportunity, but in the aftermath of a bitter war, not fully utilised. It was limited in that it became a political agreement rather than a comprehensive national agreement. Participants were dominated by political leadership and programmes. The participants thought more about securing and entrenching their respective political interests, rather than building a nation from various communities with separate histories and cultures. The narrow, and sometimes unhealthy, political contestations can be seen in the way in which participant leaders focused more on competing with each other than in building the nation. Even the Patriotic Front failed to show the required unity of purpose for nation-building. After independence, political contestation grew increasingly unhealthy, as violence was used in political contestation including during elections. The global goodwill that had built up at independence, began to wane and with the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in 1991, the country was on a slippery slope towards division and conflict. It was clear that the struggles for independence had not accumulated enough cultural capital and national spiritual resources to carry the country through.

Since the mid-1980s, the country has been in fire-fighting mood. This comes in two forms. The rich and powerful get sucked into power struggles, and chasing money. They have no peace as they fight to out-manoeuvre each other using political functions, ethnic groupings, state institutions and even religious and civic organisations.

But the poor and the powerless also have no peace. They are busy struggling for the next meal, the next rent, the next accommodation, and the next litre of fuel. The demands of the immediate present have shunted the future out of the way and little effort has been made to consider the bigger picture: what sort of society we want, and how it ought to be organised?

The Zimbabwe we Want

There have been efforts to create space and time to engage the identity question and the politics of recognition. In 2006, in the spirit of Christian values, three church mother bodies, The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, and The Zimbabwe Council of Churches came together as the Heads of Christian Denominations (HOCD) to invite the nation to a national visioning process. They went through a dialogical engagement process to produce a National Vision Document entitled *The Zimbabwe We Want.* They invited the nation to reflect on this document with a view to making their contributions. They also invited the government to engage with the process. They argued that Zimbabwe could not be allowed to self-destruct. They noted the economic, political, social and cultural crises that the country was experiencing, and wanted to bring normalcy to the situation through developing a new or alternative vision. Many people, organisations, churches, and civil society had in the course of the previous three decades made commendable attempts to build a new Zimbabwe; these were invited to make their contributions and build on their experiences. They planned to collaborate with existing documents and institutional processes in order to strengthen their effort. They wanted to be inclusive but principled. They said they needed to be guided by a sense moral responsibility for the nation and its history – always respecting the dignity of the human person, never losing sight of the humanity of others and committed to the common good. The HOCD recognised that the country was coming from a history characterised by division, inequality, conflict and injustice. They pointed out that they were aware that people are experiencing poverty, insecurity, unemployment, and many forms of social violence. They acknowledged that the country was having leadership challenges which gave little hope especially for the young people. They therefore felt the need to take responsibility for changing this situation, aiming at social, political and economic transformation. For this to happen, they wanted to begin the change that we want to see.

The HOCD proposed major policy positions which they thought would allow members to gravitate towards 'speaking with one voice' on major policy positions and would be complimentary to *The Zimbabwe We Want*.

The HOCD proposed that the nation have a 'Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and National Healing' process in response to their observation that 'a new narrative for Zimbabwe requires us to face the truth about our past, finding justice and encouraging national healing and reconciliation."

Leadership development and commitment for a new nation

Zimbabwe needs a new breed of ethical leaders with new skills set and especially a wide social imaginary. After years of anti-colonial struggle, Africa needs leaders who can now help their countries stabilise socially and grow their economies. It needs leaders who can help people deal with various forms of trauma, encourage formal processes of reconciliation, and lead efforts of building social cohesion to facilitate participation in the complex phenomena of economic development, peace-building and social cohesion in the context of globalisation. Good ethical leadership means more than basking in past glories and expressions of good intent. It means not only having the ability to inspire, but also the skills to organize, facilitate and deal with people's emotions and especially frustrations. It requires an appreciation of the forces that have shaped our countries and continent and, in turn, the forces which have shaped our ideas, behaviours, personalities and traditions. The following are the demands of national ethical leadership:

a. National leadership is about convincing different constituencies to contribute to national development. It is about helping the nation to overcome its challenges by peacefully mobilising all people and all available resources.

b. Ethical national leadership challenges and raises to higher levels the national imaginative abilities of citizens. True leaders challenge national cultures, traditions and imaginaries. They challenge their followers to venture beyond their intellectual, emotional and social comfort zones. True leaders inspire citizens to transcend themselves and to go beyond selfishness and provincialism – beyond exclusivism and narrow mindedness. They inspire ordinary people to commit themselves to solidarity across class, race, gender and ethnic boundaries. They move people towards the common good.

c. National ethical leader must have a wide social imaginary that is comprehensive enough to be nationally inclusive and historically nuanced. A wide social imaginary lives with contradiction and ambiguities recognizing the need for continuous social engagement on friction points. In all this, a wide social imaginary is recognised by it 'never losing sight of the humanity of others'.

d. The role of political leaders is not merely to teach people what to want and what to aspire for. It is also to listen to people, and find new and innovative ways of creating the processes, institutions, behaviours, cultures and systems that can facilitate the fulfilment of human welfare.

Zimbabwe needs economic transformation that will inspire economic prosperity for all. While the right to private property is recognised as fundamental to economic efficiency and prosperity, that right, is not inviolable. It can be overridden by the demands of the common good. Zimbabwe must try as much as possible to abandon economic inequalities and economic marginalisation of people.

Social Transformation

Socially and culturally, we grow by relating to others, sharing ideas and experiences and engaging in discussion. This is why the freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly and freedom of association are critical to human growth. We desire to be recognised, respected and to grow in that recognition. A society that restricts and indeed criminalises these desires digs its own grave. Our political leadership feels threatened by people who think and people who want to be free. A society or political regime that makes people feel guilty for desiring what is natural is an oppressive inhuman society. The Zimbabwe we want is not such a society, so we will have to prioritise the need for working for the social, cultural and ethical transformation and engaging regional, continental and global fraternity.

Reflections on Moving from Where we Are to Where we Want to Be

The legacy of weak and conflicting spiritual and ethical foundations

A fundamental challenge of development for Zimbabwe is that the country is yet to appreciate and develop an all-inclusive historical account that positively and publicly acknowledges the contribution to its history by *all* its constituent members. It needs to find ways of embracing the variety of pre-colonial social formations, colonialists over a century with their varied intentions, strategies and push factors, the different shades of nationalism, liberation movements in all their courage and weakness, as well as ethnicity, class, age and gender. Recognition of the complexity of Zimbabwe as a social and political formation is critical in determining its ontological status and developing the moral vision that informs its development. This ontological and ethical need is now being acknowledged by a significant number of historians, writers, artists, musicians, poets, journalists and other professionals. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009, 46) explains the complexities that call for a multi-faceted and multi-layered appreciation of the country:

> like all historically and socially constructed phenomena, [Zimbabwe] is exceedingly difficult to define. It is a complex mosaic of contending histories and memories, making it as much a reality as it is an idea – a construction not only moulded out of precolonial, colonial and nationalist pasts, but also out of [sic] global values of sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity. It is an idea born out of continuing synthesis of multilayered, overlapping and cross-pollinating historical genealogies, and contending nationalisms, as well as suppressed local and regional sovereignties.

The challenge of development for Zimbabwe has been the failure and sometimes the refusal to recognise and appreciate the ethical implications of this complex historical origin. Instead, there has been the attempt to narrow and simplify the history by banishing all ambiguous and ambivalent legacies of history. Hence the development of narrow exclusivist moral visions which have made it difficult to construct and cultivate all-inclusive political visibility and social solidarity that could inspire the desired national development. After independence, the hope was for this inclusive recognition and solidarity to be established and institutionalised in order to

harness all possible contributions. But 40 years later, we are still divided and resist positively acknowledging each other's national contributions. This has been tragic over the last 130 years: the use of national institutions to neglect, restrict and destroy national treasures simply because they have been identified as belonging to groups not recognized by those in power. Much national wealth in the form of human and animal life, natural treasures, physical properties and ethical and emotional attachments and rights has been lost through the Rhodesian wars against indigenous peoples, apartheid legislation in education, politics, culture and economics. More was lost in Gukurahundi, Murambatsvina, Fast-track Land Reform, etc. One of the major reasons is the narrow moral imagination of our colonial and post-colonial political leaders and the shallow social imaginary of our society in general.

How we got here: the narrow appropriation of history

The national post-colonial political leaders attempted to monopolise power by giving and using a narrow historical account of Zimbabwe. At independence in 1980, an impression was initially created that the leaders, especially members of ZANU-PF, wanted to include everyone in order to facilitate nation building.[4] Superficial efforts were made to create an inclusive government that included members of parties other than ZANU PF. It was not long before these impressions were shattered and the circle of those regarded as true members of the nation progressively narrowed. Mlambo (2013, 54) demonstrates that this amounts to 'a self-serving oversimplification of the country's past meant to legitimise ZANU-PF rule as the logical and rightful successor to Zimbabwe's precolonial rulers of what was then, ostensibly, a united Shona nation. The reality is very different'. Stan Mudenge, a Zimbabwean historian and a leading member in Mugabe's leadership pushed this narrow account, when he concluded in his award winning book on Zimbabwe:

> Present Zimbabwe, therefore, is not merely a 'geographical expression' created by imperialism during the nineteenth century. It is a reality that has existed for centuries, with a language, a culture and a 'worldview' of its own, representing the inner core of the

4 Historians often refer to Robert Mugabe's independence speech in which he called on all Zimbabweans to forget past conflicts and reconcile for nation-building, development and prosperity. https://www.ft.com/content/b89309c0-d2e0-11e9-8d46-8def889b4137 (See also Mlambo 2013)

> Shona historical experience…present Zimbabweans have, both materially and culturally, much to build and not a little to build upon. (Mudenge 1988, 364)

Mugabe insisted on this account of 'the inner core of the Shona historical experience', which assumed Zimbabwe to be a 'natural "Shona" nation' (Mlambo, 2013: 54). Terrence Ranger (2004, 215-234, see also Raftopoulos and Mlambo 2009, xxxi) called this 'patriotic history', which Mugabe tried to teach in schools and promote in national newspapers and the rest of the mass media. National policies reflected this narrow historical sense. The spirituality behind 'patriotic history' can be used to understand major developments in the struggles for independence and the post-colonial policies of Mugabe's leadership. It can shed light on the historical tensions between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU, and how these culminated in Gukurahundi and the sustained developmental neglect of the Matebeleland regions (see for example the politics surrounding the Matebeleland Zambezi Water Project in Hadebe 2015).

Mazarire (2009) demonstrates the complexity of Zimbabwe's pre-colonial history. He shows that the history is made up of the stories of the large states and empires that rose and fell, but also of the 'small societies' that had links to their 'parent' societies. Using Mazarire's analysis, Mlambo (2013, 54) rightly concludes that,

> The lived experiences of the people now known as Zimbabweans do not sustain patriotic history's claim that Zimbabwe has always been a nation. In fact, Zimbabwe has always been a land of different communities with different cultures and histories whose collective lives cannot be recounted through one single historical narrative.

One way in which the lived experiences of Zimbabweans contradicts patriotic history is what Masipula Sithole called 'struggles within the struggle'. The epistemological widening of Zimbabwean historiography has contributed to the widening of the national imagination. Yet this is still not enough. Munyaradzi Munochiveyi (2011) demonstrates that more work is still needed to widen the range of sites of struggle and the voices of those who have been marginalised by patriotic and nationalist histories. Indeed many academics, politicians, journalists, publishers, religious leaders and activists, artists, writers, poets and other professionals have been engaged in interrogating the values underlying developments in Zimbabwe and

pushing the boundaries of Zimbabwean nationalism. ZANU-PF has been resilient in defending patriotic history and reinventing itself and its arguments, which have often been supported by teargas, arrests, abductions, police raids and military operations (Sachikonye 2011, 49).

This widening of the imagined Zimbabwean community is critical for governance and development. The ZANU-PF led government has tried to prescribe and narrow the kind of people who qualify to talk about the Zimbabwean revolution and development. These prescriptions have directed ZANU-PF national policies on land questions, citizenship, national heroes, press freedom, human rights, political freedoms and development in general (Sachikonye, 2012). The failure of such policies can be explained in terms of the narrowness and shallowness of their assumptions. This national challenge can be addressed by the cultivation and widening of a national social imaginary that is consistent with social justice at all levels of society. For this to happen there is need for all to participate.

Widening the mind and deepening ethical responses

Human beings now live in situations that challenge our knowledge and ethics, our social imaginations, and our emotional responses. C. Wright Mills (2000, 5) summaries the modern predicament in the following:

> The very shaping of history now outpaces the ability of men to orient themselves in accordance with cherished values. And which values? Even when they do not panic, men often sense that older ways of feeling and thinking have collapsed and that newer beginnings are ambiguous to the point of moral stasis. Is it any wonder that ordinary men feel they cannot cope with the larger worlds with which they are so suddenly confronted?

This predicament is being faced by all human beings on earth. Mills argues that these challenges require the development of 'a quality of mind' which he calls 'the sociological imagination'. He recognises, however, that the sociological imagination 'is found in the social and psychological sciences, but it goes far beyond these studies as we now know them' (2000, 14) and it 'enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society' (2000, 6). In more contemporary language, Jeffrey Sachs expresses the same point but emphasises the difficulties of grasping the links between biography and history. Mills too

recognised these difficulties and this is why he declared that to grasp the links between biography and history is the sociological imagination's 'task and its promise'. Jeffrey Sachs (2008, 3) says,

> The defining challenge of the twenty-first century will be to face the reality that humanity shares a *common fate on a crowded planet.* That common fate will require new forms of global cooperation, a fundamental point of blinding simplicity that many world leaders have yet to understand or embrace. For the past two hundred years, technology and demography have consistently run ahead of deeper social understanding. Industrialization and science have created a pace of change unprecedented in human history. Philosophers, politicians, artists, and economists must scramble constantly to catch up with contemporaneous social conditions. Our social philosophes, as a result, consistently lag behind present realities.

What is critical is the recognition that a certain 'quality of mind' is demanded by contemporary circumstances. This 'quality of mind' is both about grappling with information and about searching for appropriate ethical responses to the human condition. This search is based on the assumption that while old ethical values are important, they may be found wanting, even though we cannot begin our search without them. Zygmunt Bauman (1992) describes this in terms of moving from common sense to 'thinking sociologically'. For him, while common sense is indispensable as a starting point for knowledge, it needs to be widened and deepened. He concludes,

> One could say that the main service the art of thinking sociologically may render to each and every one of us is to make us more *sensitive;* it may sharpen up our senses, open our eyes wider so that we can explore human conditions which thus far had remained invisible. …
>
> To think sociologically means to understand a little more fully the people around us, their cravings and dreams, their worries and their misery. We may then better appreciate the human individuals in them and perhaps even have more respect for their rights to do what we ourselves are doing and to cherish doing it; …..Eventually, sociological thinking may well promote solidarity between us. A solidarity grounded in mutual understanding and respect, solidarity

> in our joint resistance to suffering and shared condemnation of the cruelty that causes it.

While Mills and Bauman talk of the quality of mind in terms of 'sociological imagination' and 'thinking sociologically', they go beyond sociology: they point out that this quality of mind can be found in the best literature, journalism and psychology and can be promoted through art, poetry, music and other professions. I read Mlambo as promoting this quality of mind through a certain way of studying history, when he said (2013, 54):

> Clearly, historians and historiography are important in shaping society's self-perception, particularly societies such as our own that are struggling to develop common national identities and to establish states that are truly inclusive, in the wake of rather traumatic, divisive and acrimonious pasts in which one dominant group presided over a system that marginalised the majority and effectively wrote them out of history. The danger today, as is becoming evident in Zimbabwe, is that with the ascendancy of the African majority to political power throughout Southern Africa there may simply be an inversion of the previous dispensation, in which history is now used to marginalise the former dominant white groups, who in turn may well be written out of national histories.

Mlambo then goes on to call on history teachers to cultivate students with a quality of mind that helps them to 'to produce historical accounts that are as unbiased as possible so as to provide a context in which members of past antagonistic groups can understand each other better and, hopefully, find each other' (Ibid.).

Imaginaries of governance in the Zimbabwean context

The nature of governance determines who participates and the manner of that participation in the life of a country. Most people in Zimbabwe will agree that many things are not working well in the country's politics, economics, social and cultural arrangements and especially in how human beings are relating to each other and to the rest of the environment. There is more and more awareness of the need to sort out how we live together and how we govern and are governed. This requires not only the appropriate spirit of generosity and respect, but also innovation, humour and playfulness. It requires inclusiveness in terms of professions and talents.

Our history has demonstrated the other side of the same point – the more people are excluded from systems of governance, the more poisoned and disastrous the social and political environment can become. We trust that the more people actively participate in their own governance, the better their lives will be. Hence our efforts, as a nation to work on the national constitution and to deal with national healing and reconciliation. As a nation, we are best when we can heal each other's social wounds and politically reconcile with each other so that we can come together to run our national affairs in a manner characterised by social justice, peace, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability. This does not mean we should all be in one political party or that we should all think alike.

Everyone must participate. This means recognising and taking seriously the fact that Zimbabwe is a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-racial society. We need the right conceptual tools to imagine what sort of Zimbabwe to build and the emotional responses appropriate. While social and emotional responses informed by our various historical backgrounds may be useful when they contribute to the national efforts, they also carry the danger of being too narrow and too shallow. We all need to recognise the negative intellectual and emotional baggage we carry from our respective histories. It is through social listening, social learning, political dialogue, debate, negotiation and respect that we can learn from each other how each one of us can transcend provincialism to achieve universal solidarity. It would be wrong for any one group, even a majority group, to force its traditions and ways of doing things on others without negotiation and dialogue. We all need to compromise.

Participatory governance and expanding social imaginaries

What we imagine good governance to be informs our sense of who will participate in it and how. Our various historical traditions and cultures have informed our imagination, conceptual frameworks and emotional responses to the issue of participation in governance. We conjure up images, metaphors and vocabularies from our various traditions to express our understanding and prescriptions on governance. We must always beware that multi-cultural societies, like Zimbabwe, demand the respective expansion of our various historical social imaginaries. In the past, each group, steeped in its traditions, has tried to universalise its particular values. This has made it difficult to establish the universal participatory governance that we need.

Our society has been undermined by the narrowness of our social imaginaries. We have been let down by the sorts of things people imagine governance to be and how that imagination informs and guides their respective values, attitudes and conduct. This encouraged colonials to treat Africans with little respect. Colonial systems treated black people as if they were non-rational animals or sub-humans. That system was bound to fail because the reality of African humanity was inevitably going to burst the falsehoods in the colonial governance arrangements. Communist societies tried to reduce the humanity of their citizens by conceptualising and treating them as machines who were part of a mechanical system of production. Post-colonial leaders sometimes imagined their citizens as if they were children to be spoon fed in return for unquestioning following and electoral support. The big men of African post-colonial society encouraged a social imaginary in which ordinary Africans were forever grateful for being liberated. Again, that narrow political imaginary that expected rational human beings to act like unthinking children was bound to fail.

Social imaginaries informing governance in Zimbabwe may not have descended to the depths of fascism and Rwandese tribal cleansing, but they were certainly close on this slippery slope. We must learn from such moments of madness that certain emotions and attitudes can be dangerous to the nation when fed into the national psyche. Certain political slogans cultivate emotional responses geared towards turning political opponents into enemies and political debates into wars: these are based on narrow visions of our society. Zimbabweans must develop an inclusive system of governance that recognises that politics cannot be banished, disagreement cannot be wished away, and neither should political opponents be silenced by intimidation or elimination. An inclusive system of governance plans for and deliberately develops respectable spaces for political opponents. It cultivates appropriate emotional responses towards them, always treating them as human beings who have a right to be there.

Defining the social imaginary

If it is possible to build Zimbabwe into a viable nation-state,[5] the country must develop the intellectual understanding and emotional attachments appropriate to this kind of project. Cumulative historical, sociological and anthropological evidence demonstrates that 'like most African states created by colonialism, Zimbabwe is not yet a nation and that it is only in the process of becoming' (Mlambo 2013, 53) Ndlovu-Gatsheni (20011, 2) illustrates the failure of the attempt by the ZANU-PF post-colonial party and government to develop, and 'maintain a hegemonic and monologic narrative of the nation'. Like many other analyses on Zimbabwe, he reminds us of the many 'struggles within the struggle' (Sithole 1979) and 'the struggles after the struggle' (Kaulemu ed. 2008) that demonstrate the lack of a common social imaginary that could act as the backbone or foundation of Zimbabwean 'nation-building and state-formation' (Mlambo 2013).

To appreciate the conditions for nation-building and state-formation, it is useful to discuss the concept of social imaginary. Social theorist Charles Taylor (2004:23) defines social imaginary as;

> ...the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.

How have different sections of the Zimbabwean society imagined their social existence and that of others? How have they imagined the way they relate to each other? What stories and images about themselves and about others inform the values and attitudes that determine their systems of governance? What metaphors do they live in? In short, what have been their imaginaries of governance? Imaginaries are important because they inform how members of society treat each other and how they respond to each other. They inform their friendships, enmities and modes of governance. If they imagine their nation to be like a small village with chiefs and headman, that imagination will inform how they conduct their

5 There is good reason to believe that Zimbabwe, just like other ex-colonies of European colonialism, has been given a specific global role in the global economy that makes it non-viable as an independent economic entity. Oswaldo de Rivero, a former diplomat of Peru, who represented his country in negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade for more than 20 years, came to this conclusion and has made a very strong argument in his book on development (2001).

business and how they treat each other. If they imagine their society as characterised by divisions, hostility and war, this imagination will shape their attitudes and emotional responses to issues of governance.

Taylor (2004, 23) makes an important distinction between social imaginary and social theory. For him, social theory is what academics and intellectual theories invent to understand social reality. As such, social theories are based on models and language that individual analysts develop in order to make sense of social reality. Social theories are therefore shared by small groups of people and usually professionals like historians, sociologists and philosophers. Social imaginaries on the other hand are 'the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings', and are therefore 'shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society' and are 'that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy'.

Wrestling with the modern legacy and African traditional metaphors in governance

In this section I suggest how governance could benefit from African tradition metaphors, as opposed to ways in which such metaphors have been used to constrain governance.

Our political leaders should have big hearts and wide minds, capable of helping all of us, including political opponents, to live together. In African traditional societies that role seems to have been played by the Old Man and the Old Woman – *Sekuru* and *Ambuya* – whose roles are critical in their social governance. Part of what it means 'to grow old' (*kuchembera* or *kukura*), is to give up close involvement in the narrow or day-to-day political fights. When someone says, '*Wakazondiwana ndakura*,' it may mean, 'You met me after I have matured, mellowed and grew to be more responsible.' The suggestion is that 'to grow up' (*kukura*) is to develop into a more responsible, socially sensitive and politically mature person who sees the bigger picture. The old man and old woman is given the socially responsible role of looking at the big picture – reconciling people, defending the weak and helping the powerful to be responsive to the needs of others. *Sekuru* and *ambuya* are people who are considered to have lived their lives and are now ready to help the young live their lives too. They have retired, and do not compete with the young on the job market, have few vested interests, are unlikely to be vexed by clash of selfish political and business interests. They are supposed to have given up the old grudges,

partly because many of their peers will have died and some of the issues they fought for will have been taken over by others using new techniques and approaches. This is why they are people to whom even murderers, political malcontents and social transgressors turn to for advice and support. They play the role well because they have long life experiences that protect them from being shocked by any transgressions. Because they know everyone, they can talk to anyone in ways that can help resolve difficult issues. This should be the role of eminent persons, retired presidents and other political and social leaders.

African leaders who led us to political independence tried to imagine the new nation-states in what they thought were traditional terms. They helped to build social imaginaries informed by 'traditional' experiences to justify their modes of governance. Unfortunately many of them tried to play double roles. They tried to be eminent persons while they were also acting as revolutionaries with many vested political and economic interests that brought them into confrontation with fellow citizens. They wanted to be respected as eminent persons yet they were still deeply engrossed in live combat with fellow citizens. They either failed or refused to defend their own citizens because those citizens had different political opinions from theirs. One-party states were defended by images of African traditional societies. In this discourse, nation-states were conceptualised as cattle kraals where there needed to be only one bull, or chicken runs with only one cock. Cattle kraals, however, with one bull and chicken runs with one cock are not natural institutions, but human constructs, and as such cannot provide a moral ideal to guide humans. Yet this simple and false idea inspired many good people to hate, fight and sometimes murder.

Much imagination was invested by those who invoked 'African socialism' in conceptualising the nation-state as an African family governed through the African court (*dare*) which is said to have relied on building consensus. We were not encouraged to question the moral legitimacy and power dynamics of the African court system itself. Could it adequately work as a metaphor for an ideal family or a morally adequate system of social and political governance? If you were African, you were supposed to accept and defend this understanding of African traditions without asking whether this paradigm was the best that we could use to handle contemporary African social, political, economic and technological challenges.

Such African traditions were presented without considering the role of today's African people in interpreting them and selecting what was relevant and in their current contexts. Our ancestors were intelligent people who reflected about their situations and tried to provide answers to their own social and political questions. They were not perfect and did not always agree with each other, sometimes even fighting with each other. But they selected values, systems, and attitudes from their elders to solve their own challenges. They debated about the best ways of following their respective traditions, as we see today on such occasions as weddings and funerals. History shows communities sometimes splitting and parting ways. Yet some of our modern African traditionalists present our ancestors as if they never cherished debates on the meaning of their traditions. Hence, we now have exclusive, self-appointed interpreters of African traditions, Ubuntu, African liberation struggles and African governance, and self-appointed arbiters of what it means to be fully and authentically African.

For example, some leaders have suggested that African participatory governance could be inspired by the African court system. Others suggested that the African family system could be a paradigm for contemporary African political governance. Experiments inspired by the African court and the African family systems were rife and spearheaded by liberation movement: Nyerere's Ujamaa, Moi's Nyayoism, and Kaunda's Humanism are some examples. African victims of these experiments have a clear view of their moral limits. Women have raised serious issues about some of the ways that participatory governance has been conceptualised by the dominant political leaders on the continent to the detriment of women (Harcourt ed. 1994). Serious questions have been raised about the how such paradigms have impinged on the rights of many Africans, since many Africans have suffered and lost their lives in the name of African traditions of participatory political governance. Although the ideas of the village court and that of the African extended family system have many good points to inspire us (see Fouere 2014), their incorporation to political programs amount to the invention of new 'traditions'. In such struggles to handle the complex multi-tradition, multi-cultural, multi-religious character of modern African states some Africans have persecuted other Africans in the name of making them more African.

Most of our invented political traditions and governance frameworks still rely on binary oppositional paradigms of us/them; friend/enemy,

local/foreigner, insider/outsider, etc. We still don't know how to handle ambiguities. In particular, our social imaginaries are yet to handle adequately the question of Zimbabwean citizenship. Today, people who know no other country than Zimbabwe are still being rejected as aliens. Hence they cannot fully participate in the life of their communities because they do not have birth certificates, identity cards or passports. Our political emotions still cannot handle the possibility of a white child being fully Zimbabwean and that child is not being helped to see herself as part of Zimbabwe and to feel Zimbabwean. Deep down in our hearts, the idea of a woman president still appears ridiculous in the way that Americans used to laugh at the idea of a black president.

Without recognising the reality of ambiguity, we are bound to fail on political participatory governance. For as long as we only want to be with the people who think, talk and look the same as us, we are excluding others from participation. Just as Hitler caused much suffering by embarking on a project of eliminating difference and banishing ambiguities in people's identities, we find ourselves, as essentially good people, plunged into horrible human tragedies for trying the same.

Challenging churches and their traditions

The paradox of established churches as organisations in Africa is that they are at once hierarchical and yet have done much to promote democracy and equality through working in civil society and engaging the political, economic and cultural realms. Churches in Africa have sometimes positively championed democratic processes, human rights, social justice, and participatory approaches to community and national governance. But institutional churches, implicated in European colonial and imperial processes, have not always reflected the very values centred around the idea of social equality and justice that they have sometimes championed in society.

However, pressure seems to be mounting from outside and from within the church, for the value of equality to be promoted and realized within the churches themselves and in society in general. There has been greater talk, to encourage the participation of the laity, the youth and women in church structures and institutions. The vision or model of the church underlying most church documents and traditions has remained 'clearly hierarchical'. Yet this conceptualization of the church, though historical, was not necessary. There are alternative models of the church that recognize

equality of believers – ordained or not, religious or lay. It is important that as Zimbabwe develops as a nation, the major institutions in the country that support this development must reflect the values of democracy and respect. In Zimbabwe's history, leadership styles and models of governance have greatly influence the country's politics. In many ways, the Anglican Church before independence, and the Catholic Church after independence, have accompanied the governments of the day and influenced its leadership.

With reference to the Roman Catholic Church, Teresa Okure (2011, 14) points out the history of why the church is largely conceptualized as hierarchical.

> …the ecclesiology that governs our thinking, consolidated for years by the one-sided ecclesiology of Vatican I [the ecumenical council of 1869-70], is that the church is primarily the hierarchy. Vatican I was to develop the concept of the church as hierarchy and the people of God. Only the first part was developed before war disrupted the council. As a result, we were saddled with, and for years have lived with, that incomplete ecclesiology of the church as hierarchy. Almost a century later Vatican II [1962-65] developed the concept of the people of God (*Lumen Gentium* [LG], no. 2). Meanwhile, we had constructed our theologies, canon law, ecclesiology, and even church buildings in the hierarchical model, radically identifying church with clergy.

Okure points out, 'The hierarchical church operates with ranks.' Rank introduces inequalities of status, power and recognition in the organization of duties and practice of traditions in the church. In Vatican I ecclesiology, emphasis on rank helped to make the church traditions depend more on clericalism than the full and equal participation of all believers. Use of rank to understand the church has therefore, undermined alternative ways of being church such as 'Family of God' and 'The People of God' which focus more on the equality of all believers. Church as the people of God focuses on what contributions different believers can make towards the work of the church rather than what rank they can occupy. It focuses more on function than on rank. The emphasis on church hierarchy, combined with colonially invented African traditions, resulted in structures characterized by, initially racial, and later laity-clergy and gender discrimination, contributing to the deepening of racial, gender, age and sometimes tribal divisions and inequalities.

As a hierarchical organisation steeped in clericalism, churches have been linked to social processes that directly and indirectly undermine equality and justice within their own structures and practices. For example, the Catholic Church in Africa is allowed, by states and societies generally, to discriminate against women in its institutions and practices. The constitutions of most African countries and The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, together with other international legal instruments to which most Africa governments have acceded, prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, political views, age, race and culture; nevertheless, the church in Africa is allowed to practice different forms of discrimination in its structures, institutions, ceremonies, and practices. For example in its training programmes and cultural traditions and practices the Catholic Church legally discriminates against women, who are not ordained as priests and consequently are not trained in seminaries. It is only recently that women are allowed to be involved in the training of priests, and even then they are excluded from top leadership roles.

The significance of this discrimination can be appreciated when the full role of the priest or the pastor in the various churches is understood. A priest or pastor has social power especially in the African context. All major decisions at a parish or mission station are generally made by the priest. In the African context, especially in the rural areas, this is very significant since the parish and the mission are the centre of many social, economic and cultural activities. Schools, clinics, development community projects, cultural events are in most of these areas controlled by the church. In fact the church, in many parts of rural Africa is the single most powerful institution. Sometimes, even the government uses church institutions to conduct its business. So priests, bishops and church leaders of various churches who are in charge of church institutions can be powerful indeed. Local church members and communities and parish councils in Africa hardly have power to make decisions without the authority of the church leaders, bishops and priests. In many ways the institutional structures of the Church seem to have combined with the hierarchical structures of an invented African traditional society to produce highly undemocratic social practices within its structures.

Many Christian churches in Africa also have strong rules and traditions that discriminate against the laity, ordinary members and non-Christians. In most church centres, parishes and dioceses of the established churches,

the role of the laity, ordinary members and especially women, is at most to advice the priest, pastor or bishop, who always has the power to reject the advice. These practices, although discriminatory and condemned in other social realms, are allowed in the context of churches. Priests, pastors and bishops are in most institutional churches appointed and ordained from above. They are therefore accountable to their superiors rather than to the people in their congregations and parishes. In many cases, parishes and church communities do not train their own priests. They 'receive' priests from the bishop, or the church administrators who decide how they distribute the available priests, pastors and preachers to parishes within their respective jurisdictions. When there is a shortage of priests and pastors the ordinary church members are forced to put up with abuse from some unscrupulous pastors, priests and bishops. Sometimes when congregations complain to the high authorities about the conduct of priests they are given, the authorities sometimes threaten to withdraw 'their' personnel without any possibility of replacement. Because of the culture of clericalism, most lay faithful cannot imagine a healthy congregation without a priest or pastor, and so accept the unacceptable. When clerics have such power, it is not surprising that abuse of those under them sometimes occurs.

In many local church communities in Africa, women's participation is limited even though women are the majority of the followers of the church. In parishes of established churches, girls are usually not allowed to serve in key rituals. Most leaders in local church communities are dominated by men even though the majority of members of the churches are women and children. In this respect, African churches resemble African political parties.

In this sense, churches are legally and socially exempted from the anti-discriminatory laws that are established to encourage social equality among citizens. Since church organizations claim a right, which is allowed, to discriminate on grounds of gender, religion, and culture, to this extent, they are categorised as private corporate citizens, who are allowed to decide on their cultural traditions even when these undermine some of the values of state citizenship. It is assumed, not always correctly, that the members of the church have all used their democratic choices to be part of the church. The role of churches in cultivating the type of leaders we have need to be interrogated and negotiated.

Paradoxically, however, churches in Africa have at the same time

claimed the right to take up a public positions on public issues. Christian churches in particular have been instrumental in the growth of civil society organisations and even alternative political parties. In Zimbabwe, the Catholic Church and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches have played big roles in the struggles for democracy, political independence and in nurturing the growth of civil society in the country. In Malawi, churches played a central role in the fall of the dictator Kamuzu Banda and in ushering in a democratic dispensation. In Zambia, churches have been at the centre of resisting abuses of the national constitution and in fighting against corruption, poverty, injustice and the provision of health care, education, and social support. To this extent, churches have been at the centre of fighting for social equality and challenging various forms of social and political inequality.

Hence churches in Africa have been able to maintain an ambivalent membership of civil society. Looking at the political experiences in Zimbabwe and the Southern African region, I ask whether a more democratic church in Africa could have fought for greater social and political equality better than the hierarchical churches that we currently have.

The idea of Civil Society and Movement to Democracy

The idea of civil society has a long history and means different things to different people. I take, from its complex history, the suggestion that it is a realm which makes 'synthesis of private and public 'good' and of individual and social desiderata' (Seligman 1992, x). As Adam B. Seligman points out, the idea 'embodies for many an ethical ideal of the social order' (*Ibid.*). It is a realm that recognises, respects and facilitates the growth and fulfilment of individuals, groups, and associations. It does not seek to annihilate those individuals, groups, communities and solidarities that do not conform to some arbitrary standard given a priori. It is this idea of civil society that could act as a paradigm for the fight for equality and for democratic politics in Africa and the world in general.

The good news is that there are signs that this ethical ideal is being realised in some aspects of national, regional and world politics. There is greater respect for the different characters and cultural backgrounds of people in international for as the Human Development Report 2004 points out,

> Cultural liberty is a vital part of human development because being able to choose one's identity – who one is – without losing the respect of others or being excluded from other choices is important

> in leading a full life. People want the freedom to practice their religion openly, to speak their language, to celebrate their ethnic and religious heritage without fear of ridicule or punishment or diminished opportunity. People want the freedom to participate in society without having to slip off their chosen cultural moorings. (UNDP 2004, 1.)

The undermining of civil society has been at the centre of many challenges of the modern world. Democracy is weakened when civil society is diminished. Modern society has seen the expansion of the state on the one hand and the capitalist market on the other at the expense of 'intermediate' institutions that can be the basis of a healthy society.[6] These intermediate institutions include the family, and various local associations that are based on voluntary participation and solidarity. Civil society is the realm which builds the relationships that sustain society although it is not entirely free of evils. In this sense any society wanting to pay attention to its social imaginaries in order to widen and deepen them for a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious society, will need to engage families and communities in order to help them dialogically engage each other. Civil society works with a unique logic. It contrasts itself to the logic of contracts found on the market and that of coercive public obligation of the state. Explaining this point, Pope Benedict writes (2009, paragraph 39),

> When both the logic of the market and the logic of the State come to an agreement that each will continue to exercise a monopoly over its respective area of influence, in the long term much is lost: solidarity in relations between citizens, participation and adherence, actions of gratuitousness, all of which stand in contrast with giving in order to acquire (the logic of exchange) and giving through duty (the logic of public obligation, imposed by State Law)… The exclusive binary model of market-plus-State is corrosive of society, while economic forms based on solidarity, which find their natural home in civil society without being restricted to it, build up society. The market of gratuitousness does not exist, and attitudes of gratuitousness cannot be established by law. Yet both the market and politics need individuals who are open to reciprocal gift.

Thus for Pope Benedict 'A strong civil sector is the basis of a healthy

6 Civil society can also be the source of injustice in society.

society and a healthy economy; economic contracts and state bureaucracies cannot hold a society together in peace, nor increase its solidarity.' We will see below how civil society is the realm in which human beings meet as human beings and not as cogs in an economic or ideological machine. This is critical in a society that needs to develop a new social imaginary out of dialogical engagements of people, families and communities emanating from different backgrounds and where conflicts and violence has characterised past engagements.

New sensibilities in the world context

Important changes are taking place in the world. With the scientific and technological revolutions taking place in and transforming the world through the spheres of information and communication, there have been fundamental changes in ways of thinking, organising, acting and being in the world. The end of colonialism, the end of liberation struggles coupled with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of real socialism, have brought about new conceptual paradigms that encourage new social behaviours and political cultures. Old binary oppositional approaches are being challenged by more inclusive politics informed by more nuanced sense of history and social analysis. The old sharp conflicts between the white world and the black world; between the colonisers and the colonised; men against women; the young and the old; these are being transformed into collaborative global fights against racism, exploitation, oppression, poverty and the protection of the planet that includes them all. More and more transformative efforts are being made across cultures, religions, economies, and ideologies to establish global standards for the respect of human rights and the environment. As Semu Pathe Gueye (2005, 129) points out,

> …little by little and through various cultural, intellectual and psychological difficulties of adaptation and adjustment, without the participants necessarily being conscious of that, politics is moving from the paradigm of 'exclusion' and 'conflict', to a new paradigm of 'communication' and 'dialogue'.

Professor George McLean (2005, 89) characterises this shift in the following way,

> Now, however, the peoples of the world seem to be moving beyond rationalism to a great project of reconstructing democratic practice.

> This focuses no longer on ideologies and structures, but on people in natural communities and solidarities and their efforts to become increasingly creative and to take responsibility for their life. This, in a way, is the utopian vision of Marx as people seek to realize the conditions of freedom to begin, with others, to shape their common life after the ideals of justice and peace, harmony and cooperation. As a result the focus of attention reaches beyond the political with its focus on power, and the economic with its focus on profit. It focuses upon its people, now no longer as amorphous masses or tools of industry, but as persons informed and responsible, uniting freely in human solidarities, to act responsibly and creatively each in their own field. This is the reality called civil society or civil culture emerging as a newly vibrant reality which promises in contrast to the negative and skeptical critique of modernity to begin positively to shape a more globally sensitive 3rd millennium.

This realm of civil society is the new paradigm that can inform not only world politics and economics but also African social imaginaries and practices. African political leaders, especially those in Zimbabwe shall need to re-discover this paradigm of civil society as it confirms their humanity, morality and agency.

New political sensibilities

George McLean in the above passage demonstrates the significance of civil society as a realm which re-discovers the importance of human beings as social agents and not merely as tools for religions, ideologies, and economic systems. This re-discovery of human agency and enhanced human moral responsibility strikes a chord with trends in Christian social teachings and in African traditional morality. This is important for Zimbabwe as it creatively encourages the invention of new traditions for the future.

For Christian social thought and African traditional ethics, it is in the context of families, local communities and solidarities that persons are formed and take moral responsibility for constructing their own lives and those of they relate to and love. It is in these contexts that 'conscience' in religious language, or '*hunhu/ubuntu'* in traditional ethics, is moulded. Thomas Bridges confirms that human beings are first members of families and communities. He points out (1994,1), 'Ethnic, class, and religious communities shape human desire and self-understanding in accordance with some more or less coherent world view or concept of the good life'.

The family and local community as loci of moral development require protection, cultivation and support. But they also require to be challenged for they need to relate to the outside world and to new moral challenges demanded by new environments, new technologies and the meeting of various peoples and cultures in the age of globalisation. This can be easier for Zimbabwean societies who now have members of their families scattered all over the world, studying, working and living. This is an opportunity to learn from others and to challenge ourselves.

The principle of subsidiarity explicates this respect for local conceptions of the good life stating that,

> one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. In as much as every social activity should, by its very nature, prove a help to members of the body social, it should never destroy and absorb them. (Pope John XXIII 1961, Paragraph 53, citing Pius XI 1931).

We are being encouraged, more and more, to conceptualise local and international social realities with particular focus on people as active, responsible social agents and not merely as cogs in economic machines or pones in power games. As McLean points out, this is the new context of civil society. Civil society, therefore, has come to provide a new vision of a moral order that informs alternative views of politics and economics.

Winds of change on the African continent

Zimbabwe and other modern African states emerged first as rationalist modern colonial projects, appendages to the European political power and economics. Their visibility and significance were taken from the point of view of the modern Europe. The cultural vitality and social creativity of African local communities and solidarities that should have made up the civil society were denied public legitimacy and official recognition. African social realities were, on the whole, therefore not allowed to officially and directly input into the colonial state structures and market economy. Thus, African civil society and culture were regarded at best as private and irrelevant, and at worst as criminal and evil. African peoples

themselves were made invisible as active moral and social agents. They could only redeem themselves by making themselves useful as tools for slavery, the slave trade and colonialism.

However, the colonial project did not succeed in annihilating African civil society in the form of African families, communities and other solidarities. It failed to completely destroy African value systems, with their ways of organising and relating to others. Instead, it pushed them underground, where they reconstructed themselves for struggle and war against colonialism. Yet the orientation of war and violence affected the African local communities and solidarities. They moulded African personalities that were traumatised by slavery and colonialism. Divide-and-rule tactics of the colonial system helped to reconstruct, reinvent and intensify existing ethnic and other local conflicts. But in those conflicts, positive solidarities and personalities emerged, although they were limited by the boundaries of struggle. African civil society needed more universalist social imaginaries to expand their solidarities beyond narrow ethnic and racial groups. These began in the processes of the globalisation of African struggles as illustrated by the world-wide Anti-Apartheid Movement. Religion in general and churches in particular were deeply implicated in the universalisation of African struggles. As universalist institutions, churches helped turn African local struggles into human struggles. They provided channels for African local solidarities to escape dangerous exclusivist and violent approaches.

A re-conceptualisation of politics and economics in the light of the paradigm of civil society and in line with the new global sensibility could help us move towards greater social equality in the world. We must get inspiration from all our various traditions, where we are reminded that politics, economics, culture and development are about human beings as moral agents and not tools for political ideologies and economic systems. Our traditional communities themselves must, in turn, learn from, and renew themselves through, their own social teachings and from new global sensibilities. All this must positively contribute to the development of Zimbabwe as it stands at a crossroads at the age of 40.

Values, processes and institutions for becoming Zimbabwe

A consistent theme in these reflections is the need to break out of the confines of narrow history and ossified traditions and exclusive interest groups competing to control resources. There is need to develop instead

more inclusive and cooperative perspectives of the varied groups and individuals that make up Zimbabwean society. This theme suggests the following conceptual framework composed of fundamental values to inform the process of change, the different levels at which healing and reconciliation must take place, and guiding principles for implementing the process.

Fundamental values that need to inform the healing and reconciliation process include:

Truth – the truth of the past must be gathered, analysed and shared nationwide.

Justice – people who committed wrongs should be held accountable for their actions and victims should experience some form of reparations.

Mercy – people should also show each other some graciousness and mercy in order to build a future together.

Peace – always seeking to establish peace and not just as the absence of war but encouraging development with common purposes, respect and solidarity between peoples and organised groups.

Levels for healing and reconciliation should include:

Personal level – people will need to repair their sense of loss, pain, anger, guilt and fear to facilitate their reconciliation with others.

Relational level – relationships in families, communities and in the nation which were broken by greed, tribalism, racism, sexism, and political violence will need to be restored.

National level – healing and reconciliation must ultimately be coordinated and sustained by structures and processes at the national level.

Cultural level – a culture of solidarity and friendship that respects all people, regardless of origin, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, membership of political party needs to be encouraged. A culture of solidarity with the rest of God's creation needs to be cultivated.

Guiding Principles: this process will have to be an inclusive and consultative process paying special attention to impoverished and

marginalised groups. It needs to be a community driven process which is informed by the needs and ideas of the people at the local levels. It must have a clear breath of the mandate and timeframe; a process with clear goals and clear terminology used in the process; an independent and credible process that leads to fundamental and appropriate institutional reforms and the rebuilding of the state and its structures with special attention to:

- The National Constitution
- Relations with the ruling party and opposition parties
- Banishing violence

Moving Forward towards an all-inclusive nation

1. Discernment[7]

We must go through a process of national discernment to develop a wide sense of our history, and accepting that various forces have contributed to the construction of modern-day Zimbabwe. Discernment is the ability to appreciate the present historical moment in light of the past and to be sensitive to the ambiguous legacies and hybrid cultures in our national history. In other words, history should not be understood as proving the exclusive virtues of one group of people against the exclusive vices of another. Any attempt to write a narrow history of the country that ignores the reality of various groups and languages is a violent act that will impede dialogue. This does not mean that everything from every culture and tradition should be depicted as morally acceptable. But it means accepting these traditions as part of the legacy of Zimbabwe and allowing healthy debates about the significance and implications of these legacies for today and the future.

2. Taking an option for the impoverished and marginalized

Discernment requires keeping track of who is enjoying the benefits of history and who is bearing most of the social and political cost. It means looking at the world from the point of view of the impoverished, marginalized and the victimized. Although those

7 This sections is inspired by African values and values highlighted by the African American philosopher and public intellectual Cornel West 1993 (see Kaulemu 2011 for a more extensive use of West. The section is also informed by the values of Christian social teachings, especially Catholic social teachings, which relate well with selected African sensibilities.

who suffer do not have a monopoly over truth or virtue, a condition for truth is to allow them to tell their own stories in their own words.

3. Respect for the humanity of others: Human Social Solidarity

Our histories and disagreements should never imply that we lose sight of the humanity of others: we should never define ourselves in ways that imply the de-humanization of others. In Zimbabwe we have names for each other, which are sometimes implicated in violence by categorisation. To be in solidarity with others means recognizing them as human and working to help create social conditions that facilitate the fulfilment of the desires. It also means helping to remove the obstacles in their lives.

Essentially our crisis is a moral and spiritual one. Our major intellectual and emotional weakness is our inability to see ourselves as one nation bound by human connection that is all inclusive. We have not, so far developed enough universal social solidarity that covers the whole nation. Social virtue is always learned through practice; we have never learned in our divided nation the virtues of comprehensive solidarity. It is this spiritual and moral crisis that explains why Zimbabwe remains a divided society.

4. Humility and the ability to track our own hypocrisy

Humility helps to respond to social division, suspicion and hostility. Without humility people find it difficult to look critically at themselves and acknowledge their own weaknesses. Without humility people find it difficult to acknowledge the strengths of others. Without humility people cannot admit to the need for forgiveness.

5. Tracking Hypocrisy

Tracking hypocrisy is 'accepting boldly the gap, in our lives, between principles and practice, between promise and performance' (West, 1993:5). He insists that we have to have courage to point out human hypocrisy while at the same time 'remaining open to having others point out that of our own' (ibid).

6. Hope

To have hope is to believe that human beings, in spite of our present crisis, still have the capacity to do something right and to solve their

problems: the future is still open ended and we have not come to the end of history. Our children need to be given a sense of hope for their future. My whole reflection in this brief is inspired by hope.

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