

TRANSLATION AND THE LANGUAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THIRD-WORLD DEVELOPMENT – A STUDY ON SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Understanding of ‘development’ in the West (‘something we have done’) must be different from that in Africa (‘what we aspire to’). The West thinks it knows what Africa should be, but often not it’s starting position, whereas the reverse applies in Africa. How is this gap in understanding to be bridged? The widespread notion that Western education can bridge the gap is here shown to be faulty. Instead, the necessity for African development to be guided by an African language is clearly demonstrated. Development is most effectively encouraged by outsiders who work on the level of people’s beliefs about God. They are advised to operate using an African language and through confining themselves to resources of local origin. Only thus can a foundation for sustainable development be established.

Keywords: development, language, Africa.

“The hermeneutic motion, the act of elicitation, and appropriative transfer of meaning, is fourfold... [First there is] trust... that there is something there to be understood, that the transfer will not be void. ... After trust comes aggression. ... The translator invades, extracts, and brings home. ... The third move is incorporative ... as the import of meaning ... is not made... into a vacuum... the system is now off-tilt. The [final] act of reciprocity... must compensate... This view of translation... will allow us to overcome the sterile triadic model which has dominated the history and theory of the subject.” (Steiner, 1998).

GLOSSARY

When discussing the “The West”, we are referring to peoples of European extract, including those in USA, Australia, etc.

INTRODUCTION

This article constitutes a very basic re-examination of some of the foundational tenets of the Third-World development project, with a particular focus on Africa. It looks at socio-economic development as a complex process that occurs within a social and linguistic context. It looks at it as an intelligent process requiring understanding on the part of actors that is influenced by their milieu and can only ever be contextual.

If the means and process of development are contextually dependent, this article argues, then they will be different in different places and times. As complex contexts are known from the inside, so should development needs to be driven from the inside. As the contours of language follow those of a context, the right language has to be used in the right place and for the right process.

This article draws on a model of translation (quoted in summary form from Steiner above) that considers the way in which what is new must find space in what is pre-existing. Considered in this way, translation of what is new into an existing 'system' has knock-on effects on the ways other words are used and other things are understood. Ways in which words are used, here taken as a quality of words that logically is 'prior' to their meaning, ("the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Hanfling, 1989).) are recognized as being dependent more on the context (including the linguistic context) that words enter, than the way they are used in their original context.

The very logical re-analysis of the African development project found herein has radical implications for development practice. 'Development' tends to be designed by experts in the West, then transported and 'applied' following the contours of European languages. This article suggests, alternatively, that the 'key' to success in development will arise from inside and not the outside of the African milieu. That is not to say that Africa has nothing to learn from the West, but that more attention is needed on the transfer and/or incorporation of Western know-how than has hitherto been practiced.

In order to contribute to the development of sustainable and positive change in Africa, it is advised that key players in the development field from the West should operate in Africa using local languages and resources. Such will ensure that the changes implemented fit the local context and so are sustainable.

DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE – EUROPEAN OR AFRICAN LANGUAGE?

Development, as desired in Africa and elsewhere in the world, is presumably a process of taking people from a certain way of life that is considered 'not developed' into another way of life that is considered to 'be developed'. So then the development process has a starting point (how things are today) and an anticipated end point (the developed state). The African person's vision of how they would like to live is these days strongly coloured by what they receive from the West. Before the colonial project, whatever was the equivalent to development may have included acquisition of cattle, wives and children. It could not have

included the possession of motor cars, as such were not known. The African man's (or woman's) vision for their future has been influenced by inputs and events from outside of the continent. In a sense we could even say – that some African people's aspirations for development are; the desire to 'be more like the West'.

In so far as this is the case, and it seems to be an important part of what is going on in parts of Africa, Westerners would seem to be the more knowledgeable on development. That is, in so far as this is the case, they have reached that state which Africans aspire to reach. On the other hand, any movement towards the state of 'being developed' must begin somewhere. As in any journey, knowledge of the starting point is as important as knowledge of the end point. (Without knowing the starting point, how can one plan one's journey?) Many Westerners are very ignorant of African ways of life. In this sense then, it is the African who knows the starting point who is far more familiar with what is required in order to 'be developed'.

There is clearly a difference between the understanding of development of Westerners as against Africans. A strategy that is being widely used to bridge the development gap is the promotion of education. Yet it is widely known that educational curricula being used in Africa are almost universally Western in origin. Even the languages in which the curricula are presented are almost invariably Western. Many African children make enormous efforts at learning Western languages over many years. For example, hundreds of thousands of children in Kenya alone complete Form IV studies every year. (1.2 million Kenyan children are in secondary school in Kenya (Oyaro 2009).) That marks the end of twelve years of intense full time study. But if these curricula are coming from the West, how can we be sure that they are suited to the different starting positions of African as against Western children?

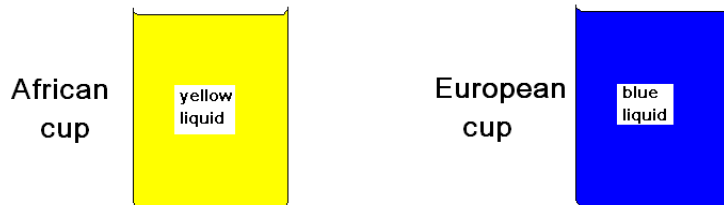
This point bears some repetition and emphasis. That is to say, that the more 'fortunate' (i.e. educated) African (Kenyan) child can easily, between ages 6 and 18 or so, spend 40% of their waking hours engaged in learning about the West. A vast proportion of the prime-time of African youth is spent learning about Western ways, in a Western language that they are taught within this period. This is before counting any post-secondary education!

Some may argue that the education prescribed in Africa is not 'about the West', but about Africa. In some ways, of course they are right. The vast majority of teachers employed in the schools on the continent are African, born and bred. How can they teach anything but what they know, and because all that they know has been acquired in Africa, are they not teaching 'African things'? In that sense, this is very much the case. But despite this, in so far as the study is in a foreign language and oriented to a development that exists outside of the teachers' and students' personal experience, the content of the curriculum is 'foreign'. The underlying aim behind curricula is not to teach 'what is there in Africa', but what is not there. It intends to teach children not what is, but what (according to somebody's vision) 'ought to be'.

Some may respond to the above paragraph by saying that teachers everywhere frequently teach beyond their own experience. Secondary, tertiary, and even primary teachers anywhere in the world may be required to function outside of their immediate competence. Much of a teacher's competence is acquired from books, and not from first-hand experience. So what is the difference between African teachers doing this, as against European teachers doing this? The basic difference I suggest arises because European curricula are designed for European contexts, whereas African curricula are designed for a non-African context. A European curriculum is designed to elucidate what is already happening and can be built upon. An African curriculum is intended to bring something into existence that is not there – but instead of doing so from a basis of what is already there, it, in effect, attempts to build on a foundation that (locally) does not exist. So, whereas the European teacher dealing with what is outside of his immediate experience is still handling something that is foundational to his society, this may well not apply to the African teacher. This is the case if or when the European teacher deals with what is foreign, such as a curriculum about China; even if 'China' is foreign; the approach taken to China will be familiar. An African teacher teaching about China, on the other hand, will usually be required to teach what is foreign in a way that is foreign (i.e. a European's approach to China).

We can look at this educational theory by comparing two cups; one African and one European. At our starting position, before the coming of the European to Africa, the African cup was full of African culture, and the European cup full of European culture. This is illustrated in Figure 1, in which yellow liquid represents Africa and blue liquid represents Europe.

Figure 1. Cups illustrating the cultural contents of Africa and Europe, before mixing.



At some point in the process of the colonization of Africa, it was thought that the European ways of life were better than the African ways of life. On that basis, it was considered that the African people 'ought' to appropriate aspects of European culture (the term 'culture' being used in a very generic way).

Once the 'superiority' of European ways was established, the process of 'pouring' from the European to the African cup began. But as soon as it began, a problem arose, which has yet to be resolved. The source of the problem, a situation that many seem to want to deny, is that the African cup was not empty. Instead of finding itself in an empty cup, the new European content became a part of an African context. What the theorists apparently did not (and do not) realize, is the possibility of mixing. When a blue liquid is added to a yellow liquid, the result is not a small amount of blue liquid, or a yellow liquid with some blue liquid in it, but a green liquid, which is different both from a yellow liquid and from a blue liquid. Any additional liquid added is,

therefore, added not to something blue, or to something yellow, but to something green (see Figure 2). (See Steiner’s account of ‘reciprocity’ (1998:316).)

Figure 2. The process of appropriation of European ways in Africa – as it is.

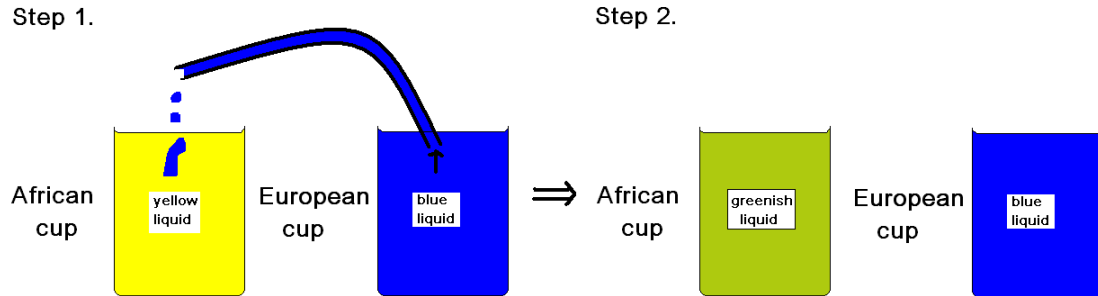
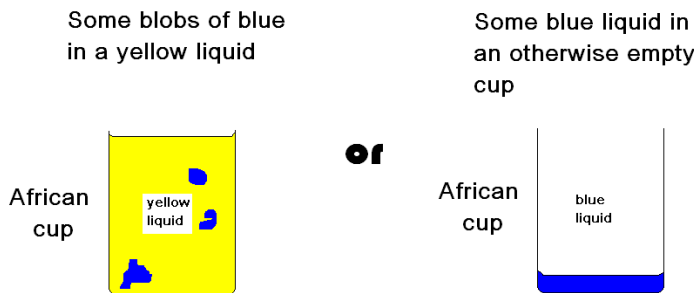


Figure 3 (below) illustrates what is, these days, largely assumed to be the outcome of bringing European content into Africa. Either blobs of blue liquid in yellow liquid that are largely unaffected by the yellow liquid around them, or a small amount of blue liquid in an otherwise empty cup. It is then assumed that subsequent inputs from the West will interact with what has already been imported as it would react with its home context, i.e. as if blue liquid is being added to blue liquid. (The same principle would of course apply to the reverse process, i.e. bringing African content into Europe.)

Figure 3. The outcome of introducing European ways into Africa, as is widely assumed.



When European understanding enters Africa, in actual fact, a new and unique combined-understanding arises. This is in some ways neither entirely African, nor entirely European. (Although, as I suggest below, it is actually ‘African’ and not ‘European’.) It is not ‘partly African and partly European’, as its origin would suggest. Rather, frankly, the resultant combination is a new thing; a new context, a new combination. As people’s contexts (in the broad sense of the word ‘context’) change, then they generally have an incredible ability at adjusting to them. The people of Africa have been influenced from the outside, and out of a combination of that and what was already in Africa, a new context has arisen.

But here has come the problem again. If a new context has developed, then the progress or advance of that new context really needs to be navigated by those familiar with it. Whatever is new that comes from Europe will have found a place in the pre-existing African context. Both will have been transformed in a complex way as a result. (Translation is aggressive, says Steiner (1998:313).) Further understanding and progress will now depend on alignment between what is there and further new input(s). In other words, if a new input of some sort enters an existing system, then that system takes it on board. In the process of taking it on board, both the new input and the existing system will change. The change is likely to be the greatest on the side of the new-input, as it is almost inevitably a relatively small component entering a larger system. This will affect the way in which further inputs are received. (Liquid poured from one cup (A) into another (B) will inevitably become a part of B, rather than B a part of A. So the liquid in the African cup is closer to the yellow of Africa than to the blue of Europe (Figure 2).)

That is to say, as one person entering a larger community will be the one expected to adjust to the ways of that community and not vice versa, so indeed any new input of any sort into a community will need to adjust to that community. The community will certainly adjust to take it on board (or eject it), but that adjustment will basically be on its own terms. Only extremely rare will a whole community adjust to the terms of a lone stranger! If there is a bucket of diesel and a spoonful of petrol is added to it, then we have diesel with petrol added, not petrol with diesel added. So, in our examples above of the African cup, we have yellow liquid with blue liquid added, and not blue liquid with yellow liquid added.

When a pre-existing African community receives a new input from the West, it will adjust to alter, appropriate, and/or expel, that new thing. The ‘relational’ nature of the new thing, as received, will be transformed (as its relational context will have totally changed). That is, as mentioned above, blue liquid brought into a yellow liquid will ‘relate’ differently to its context than would some blue liquid that remained in a blue liquid.

As the African community adjusts to that which comes to it from the outside, then so will its language, often in wide reaching, subtle ways (Steiner, 1998). Not that the thing described itself will change in a physical way! A cabbage introduced into a community that has never known what a cabbage is, will still be a cabbage. But, in ‘relational’ terms, instead of being a ‘part of a normal diet’ (as perhaps at its point of origin), it is likely to have become a rare or ‘exceptional thing’. The way it is understood in and incorporated into a community will be different in the new community than in the community of origin. We could say that the impact of the ‘thing’ and the words used to describe or discuss it will be different in the new as against the old community. Another example is a wheelbarrow. A wheelbarrow transported to Africa may be transformed from being a rarely used object kept in the back of a garage (perhaps the position of many wheelbarrows in the USA), into a constantly-used object that is frequently borrowed by a wide variety of people, until it breaks (more likely situation in certain parts of Africa). Many other examples could be given. A word will be used

differently in its host community, than it was in its community of origin. Such difference in the use of a word equates to a difference in the meaning (impact) of a word. After all, “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (already cited above, Hanfling, 1989).

Note that the important context of adjustment in the impact of a thing is that of the recipient African community, and not that of the source or European community of the thing. The transport of one ‘wheelbarrow’ to Africa will hardly change European’s understanding of what a wheelbarrow is. But a wheelbarrow may be quite transformative and quite transformed in its impact on an African community which, before that, had no wheelbarrow. Much the same is likely to apply to almost any input from Europe to Africa; at least in the short term. Because the language of the recipient community is the one that goes in parallel with that community, so the key language to be used in order to assist the new thing find its place in the new context is, in the case we are looking at, the African language. The European language is, in this sense, useless, because it follows the contours of a totally different context to that of the recipient community:

It would be wrong to consider a wheelbarrow in Africa as something that can easily be neglected in the back of a garage, if this is not the case. It would be wrong to consider a cabbage to be a part of people’s every-day diet in Africa just because this may be the case in Europe.

We can illustrate this, again, by going back to the illustration of the two cups. Pouring from the European cup into the African cup will result in addition of European content to Africa, and not vice versa. The European content will find itself overwhelmingly in the African context. Any further addition of European content will continue to find itself in the same position; adding to predominantly African content. Even if Africa would be transformed, it will still be an African context and different from an European context. The prerogative continues to be on Africa to take Europe on board, and not vice versa. In fact, European content can continue to be added to Africa for a long time, even for infinity – and for all that infinity of time it will still be Africa to which European content is added. Even if or when, let us say, so much European content has been added to Africa so that the original African liquid, in actual content terms, is a tiny fraction of the new total. The fact that European content found the African context and was influenced by it as it entered it will mean that the African context will, in many ways, be different from the European context.

A parallel example would be to look at foreign restaurants in America. Which language is the most helpful measure of the impact of, say, Vietnamese restaurants on American society? Will it be what is said about them by Vietnamese people in Vietnam, or by Africans in Africa using Vietnamese and African languages? Will it be discourses in Vietnamese or African language that occur in America? Or will it be in English (i.e. ‘American’) discourse occurring in America? Certainly, in practice, the latter has pride of place; when Americans want to explore the impact of Vietnamese restaurants on American society, they will do so using American English. They may totally disregard as irrelevant any opinion of Vietnamese people in Vietnam

about their restaurants in America, as expressed in the Vietnamese language. So why then does the same principle not transfer? Why is the impact of Western inputs into non-Western lands assessed using Western languages and not using the languages of the receiving countries? How can this even be?

Going back to the Europe in Africa example, I believe I have amply demonstrated that it always is and always will be the African context that will receive European inputs and, in effect, the European context that will lose control of that of its European content that goes into Africa. This situation warrants being looked at in more detail linguistically. A European language is competent at dealing with and suited to a European context. An African language, on the other hand, is suited to an African context. As a European context can never determine how European inputs into Africa may or may not be accepted, so European languages that arise out of a European context cannot be competent in managing European content once received into an African context! Rather, it is the African language that will receive the content of European origin. I hope it is becoming clear that effective management of an African context has to be through the use of an African language. In other words, it is impossible to effectively manage the development of an African context using a European language. (Scholarly considerations of the widespread use of European languages, such as English, often do not seem to perceive this level of problem. For example, McKay states that “the main negative effects of the spread of English involve the threat to existing languages, the influence on cultural identity, and the association of the language with an economic elite” (2002:20).)

The implications of the above should be clear; although a European language can assist in the moving of European content to an African location, it is not the best to use, in assisting that particular content to find a place in the African context. For that purpose it is totally ill-equipped!

Yet some people could argue that a European language could be fitted into an African context. That is, that European languages are appropriate for use in African contexts. And, in some ways, one would have to agree. It is not perhaps impossible (although surely very problematic and difficult) for a European language to be changed to fit an African context. Let us say that Africa has many languages and that the African people choose to take and use a European language for the sake of inter-ethnic unity. The terms, definitions, impacts, and meanings of the European language could, then, be appropriated by the African context! For example, a ‘wife’ in a European context generally means an only wife, but in an African context, it could come to mean one of many wives. Witchcraft, considered a rather out dated and primitive practice in Europe, could be accepted as a ‘normal’ practice (i.e. the word could have a ‘normal’ impact) in an African context. Anger that could be considered quite a ‘normal’ response in Europe, could be considered a dangerous and outlawed response in Africa, and so on. (On the understanding that anger is more serious in Africa than in Europe, because it can, by means of witchcraft forces, result in misfortune.) In this sense, an African community could greatly alter the European language in question as they appropriate it into their context.

Success of the above, however, presupposes certain things. One thing it presupposes is the possibility of a European language developing in an African context independently of the way it develops in its European context. If it is allowed to ‘develop independently’, then it can independently adjust the meanings and impacts of its terms to the African context; but if it is not allowed to adjust, then a tension will arise regarding word meanings and impacts. For example – is witchcraft widespread in Africa? In terms of European understandings of witchcraft as evil and primitive – clearly to say that could be offensive to Africans. But in terms of witchcraft as a ‘spiritual’ cause being sought for every mishap in life, it would be very accurate to say that it is widespread. Does a lady being someone’s wife imply only one wife, or not? Does the term ‘father’ include one’s paternal uncles (as in Africa) or not (as in Europe)? When a ‘sheep’ is mentioned, is it a large woolly animal (Europe) or a much smaller hairy animal (Africa)? In summary, unless a European language that is used in Africa develops in isolation from Europe, can it fit itself to the contours of African life, or will it result in “a wash of mimicry” (Steiner, 1998) and confusion?

The situation we find in the world today, is one in which some people (e.g. African people) cannot appropriate a European language and make it their own. The forces of globalization are working strongly against that. Instead, in order to please international ‘assessors’ of all sorts – a European language, such as English, even when used in Africa, has to be used in such a way as to satisfy Europeans. Musimbi points out that the standard for English in East Africa remains British English (Musimbi 1991). Because English is learned in much of Africa, in order to benefit from international networks (Musimbi, 1991), the use of non-standard English would cancel out such advantage. It is likely to bring speakers mockery and derision! We therefore cannot agree with McKay that it is a ‘fallacy’ to consider that the standard for an international language needs to be set by mother-tongue speakers (2002:44). People, not being free to appropriate a language, means that using it in a foreign way can result in meaning things they do not intend, not meaning things they do intend, and, quite often, not being able to say what they intend. This is the confusing situation that much of Africa finds itself in today as it attempts to run its affairs using unfamiliar tongues.

Various reasons may be given for the preference in Africa for European languages. The biggest reason may, however, be one that is less frequently mentioned: where European languages are, money is, and where money is, European languages are. The nature of the Aid industry means that this money does not arise from the role of a language in aiding understanding African people to understand themselves. A language can be such as to increase incompetence levels in the local population. It may conceal critical areas of life from the attention they need and deserve. It may turn, otherwise, proud and competent people into dependent beggars living on a system that they can neither comprehend nor control. It may prevent the understanding of problems and resolution of tensions leading to disputes becoming crises, becoming conflicts, and becoming wars. Such incompetence’s can, in turn, result in the receipt of more aid money, as very often the poorer and more incompetent people are, the more they receive foreign aid. What counts is not how well people

understand this language or one another through using it. What counts is more likely to be the amount of aid money that can be attracted through the use of a European language.

The artificial dominance of non-local languages (caused by outside aid) may not be ill intended. I believe that many Europeans are very well intended in their efforts at ‘helping’ the Third World. What they have less often thought through carefully are some of the implications outlined in this account. In short, they have not realized how easily the use of outside languages can distort and undermine local capacities, competence, and confidence. The alternative to this is to seek to contribute to people or a society from the inside of their own understanding. There are two ways of doing this. Either a person from Africa comes and learns from Europe, and then translates what he/she acquires back into his or her own context in a way that fits, or someone from Europe who wants to contribute to Africa does so once having acquired a detailed knowledge of the language and context of Africa. Both of these alternatives include the necessity of translation, the omission of which, these days, often has serious consequences.

Given the necessity for a person from Europe to operate according to the language and context of Africa if he or she wants to be a purveyor of sustainable change, I want to go on to discuss, in more detail, just how this person can begin to be coming ‘from the inside’ in Africa.

The ways in which people’s beliefs in ‘the divine’ affect their lifestyles seems often to be forgotten in today’s scholarship. Part of this ‘forgetting’ arises from Westerners’ (misguided) assumption that they are somehow, religiously or theologically, ‘neutral’ just because they label themselves as atheistic, agnostic, or having a ‘private religion’. What they have forgotten is the theological and religious past that has made them who they are today. Christian agnosticism is of a different nature than, say, Hindu agnosticism (if there is such a thing). Trying to hold a position of being ‘agnostic’ cannot simply cancel centuries of history. Christianity, Greek scholarship, and many other belief systems have fashioned the European mind of today. To attempt to deny Africa access to the same because of some quibble arising from modern or post-modern European rejection of faith in God can be unkind, or worse, immoral.

The fact that many historic influences of Christianity on Western society are frequently not recognized as such is, I suggest, much to do with the results of their historical impacts having become almost universally accepted as ‘normal’ by native European peoples. To assume that others have the same values as Europeans may, however, be a grave mistake in a globalizing and increasingly inter-dependent world. European assumptions regarding the basic equality of humankind are not shared, for example, by Hindus who believe strongly and implicitly in the caste system. European assumptions about dualism in the universe (the physical being distinct from the spiritual) are certainly not shared by all people everywhere, many in Africa being a case in point. (Many African have a holistic view of life.)

Ignoring people's beliefs and convictions about God and his nature can be ignoring the most powerful, internally originated, driving force that human society has ever had! Pretending that one is going to transform African people from the West, while ignoring God's appeal and transformation can be ignoring the very one who can effect desired sustainable internal changes. If notions of equality, mutual love, compassion, concern, and freedom from fear of witchcraft and evil spirits arise from faith in Christianity and belief in a Christian God, then these beliefs may be the most important things to promote in the interests of sustainable 'development' from the inside of Africa. Certainly there is a strong case to be made to the effect that sustainable development will not be achieved in many African contexts where witchcraft thrives (Nyaga, 2007).

Their beliefs about the divine can certainly affect people's decisions on resource allocation. Africa is a case in point. In different parts of the continent, vast amounts of resources can be used in caring for the dead (Kodia, 2005). This is shown in lavish funeral ceremonies and rituals, often attended by large numbers of people, who fear the revenge of the spirits of the dead should they not do so. The notion of the existence of a Holy Spirit, who is more powerful than oppressive and destructive 'evil spirits', is good news for people living in the grip of fear of such.

I suggest that if lasting sustainable change is the aim, then affecting the way people allocate the resources that they already have is more important than adding outside resources. This is for a number of related reasons. One is that people's response to receiving outside help in a certain area of their lives may often be to reduce the amount of personal resources that they invest in the same. Hence, outside subsidy can be counter-productive. For example, an outside body's provision of funds to subsidize the support of abused women in Africa, can result in a community paying less attention to such women. Provision of school fees can reduce community involvement in education. Over the long term, outside aid for education teaches people that education is something provided by the government or by others. So, it is not worth their while investing time or effort into developing it.

Changes in lifestyle, brought about through the investment of outside resources, are likely to be only temporary and to create dependence on those resources. Provision of free soya flour, for example, can increase people's protein intake, but, unless they like the soya flour or observe a marked increase in well being and attribute it to the soya flour, any advantage is likely to be lost when the free product is no longer available. If the product is desired, but then expensive when no longer available at a subsidized rate, then someone can have been habituated to living beyond their means. Often this brings frustration at the withdrawal of subsidy, and certainly in Africa, a tendency to give people a desire for things that are economically out of their reach.

Much better in the long term than attempts at ‘manipulation’ using outside resources, (I.e. donor funds with strings attached.) is the use of persuasion to induce changes in people’s use of their own resources. This could be persuading a drunk to leave alcohol in order to go to church and contribute to the church building fund. It could be persuading a farmer to invest his hard earned cash into hybrid seed. It could be persuading a parent to send their child to school. It could be persuading young people to avoid extra marital sex, persuading someone to buy medicine for a sick child, to take up sport, to plant a tree, etc. Success in persuading a person to reallocate their own resources can be real, lasting success, which can be pre-empted in an unhelpful way by the investment of outside resources. Such persuasion, generally, needs to be intelligent, or at least intelligible, which requires the use of a language someone understands. Someone is unlikely to volunteer to learn an entirely new language just so that they can be persuaded over something using that language. Someone persuaded using an unfamiliar language retains the often difficult task of converting, or implementing, that of which they have been persuaded into their own language.

Without a very effective administrative system in place, incoming resources are likely to skew the indigenous context in ways that are not indigenous. This has already been mentioned above in terms of education. Outside subsidy has resulted in education in much of Africa, instead of being a response to the local context and local realities, being a response to what is foreign. Today’s enormous English based educational setups would not have been established in Africa without subsidy from the capitalist West. Kenya, alone, has a growing number of universities that enable increasing numbers of Kenyan people to get a grasp on what the West is doing, but often not to stand independently on their own two feet. What Kenyan universities teach does not have local roots (Matundura 2004:9).

The three strategies that will enable a European to begin to speak from the inside of an African context are to:

- (1) Take people’s beliefs about ‘god’ and belief change seriously,
- (2) Operate without personal provision of outside subsidy to one’s activity, (a European working in Africa is likely to find that people have ‘outside’ resources already at their disposal. Utilising such over which this European has no control, is different from his/her bringing in resources.) and
- (3) Insist on using the language of the people being reached and not European languages in interaction with them.

Only thus can Europeans contribute to the closing of the gap between Europe and Africa in a sustainable way through Europeans’ appreciating the starting point for African people and being able to move from it with African people in the search for a better ‘developed’ end point. The practice of following these three guidelines is known as ‘vulnerable mission’, and is variously described at: www.vulnerablemission.com.

CONCLUSION

Efforts have, in recent decades, been made at closing the 'gap' between the Third World (the focus here is on Africa) and European ways of life by movement from the West. That is, the West has been exporting its languages and technology in the hope that these would transfer over to Africa, resulting in 'improvements' in African lifestyles. The success of this project has been limited. It seems to have been more able at achieving corruption and dependency in Africa on the West, than African initiative and internally driven change.

This has been found to have been due to a basic logical flaw which is articulated in various ways in this essay. Fundamentally, it has been a failure to adequately perceive the impact of pre-existing African ways of life on everything that is newly introduced. This is explored, in some depth, from a linguistic point of view, drawing especially on the translation theory of Steiner (1998). In short, the transformation involved when something new from Europe reaches Africa is such as to render the source (European) language seriously incompetent in understanding and guidance of existing and new African contexts arising upon the introduction of a new language or other outside inputs.

The practical implications of what is here reported are far-reaching. Rather than voluminous Western inputs gifted into Africa being guaranteed to be an asset to the continent, they may be a liability. A translation process is identified as a necessary intermediate stage in inter-cultural communication. This article makes a clear case to the effect that European language hegemony in much of Africa may be a root cause for the continent's ongoing under-development. Given especially the globalized ongoing control of European languages from Europe and elsewhere, the use of African languages is suggested to be a necessity for effective sustainable development in Africa to be achieved.

The author, a European who has lived in rural Africa since 1988, suggests that the kind of difficulties predicted by the above analysis are very common but frequently concealed, especially in 'translation' back into European languages. The way forward is for contributions from Europeans to Africa to be oriented to people's 'religious beliefs' (the heart of who they are), to be communicated using their languages, and to be implemented through persuasion rather than buying influence through the use of outside subsidies or aid.

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