Chapter 7
Ubuntu and Environmental Ethics: The West Can Learn from Africa When Faced with Climate Change

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Abstract The human race is experiencing climate change and the catastrophic ripple effects, e.g. increased levels of droughts, flooding, food insecurity, etc. It is cardinal that humankind adopts post-haste collective behavior to mitigate climatic changes. Interestingly, although Africa contributes less greenhouse gas emissions (that lead to climate change) than more developed continents, it is one of the most vulnerable continents when faced with climate change. International stakeholders are motivated to implement climate change adaptation strategies, e.g. sustainable development and the introduction of genetically modified crops in Africa's agricultural sector, to lower the continent's vulnerability. However, when developing and implementing adaptation strategies, cognizance must be allocated to the unique cultural values of various stakeholders. This is often not the case as cultural value systems of communities are neglected in these processes, e.g. the African values system of Ubuntu (which focuses on relationality). It is imperative to investigate and compare individualistic-capitalistic Western values (with its focus on sustainable development and economic growth) and the values of Ubuntu as it pertains to environmental ethics. Both value systems attribute different significance to relationality between humans, non-humans, and the natural environment. From this, I argue that the individualistic-capitalistic West has much to learn from Africa's Ubuntu and the ensuing potential for climate change adaptation. Subsequently, a call for a universal paradigm shift will be made, away from the economic and development foci of individualistic-capitalistic values, towards Ubuntu degrowth which prioritizes communitarianism, and the principle of sufficiency. I suggest that relevant and diverse stakeholders meet around the "global roundtable" to consider and discuss different perspectives and cultural values when developing climate change adaptation strategies on a global level.

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7.1 Introduction

Climate change is a significant challenge faced by all of humanity. However, Africa is one of the most vulnerable and impacted continents, as it experiences increased levels of droughts, flooding, food insecurity, etc., and it is imperative to implement various climate change adaptation strategies to lower communities' vulnerability.[1] It is noteworthy that developed countries' adaptation strategies to address climate change are often based on the sustainable development paradigm, which is a characteristically Western socio-economic-environmental approach.[2]

In this chapter, I will present a brief discussion on climate change as it affects Africa and the resulting push from the globalized individualistic-capitalistic West to introduce genetically modified (GM) crops as a sustainable development strategy to address the adverse effects of climate change. Often cultural values of communities (which may differ from contemporary Western values) are not taken into consideration when decisions are made regarding the development and implementation of climate change adaptation strategies.[3] Supportively, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2012: 758) states:

> Indigenous, local, and traditional forms of knowledge are a major resource for adapting to climate change… Natural resource dependent communities, including indigenous peoples, have a long history of adapting to highly variable and changing social and ecological conditions… Such forms of knowledge are often neglected in policy and research, and their mutual recognition and integration with scientific knowledge will increase the effectiveness of adaptation.

An example of such a cultural value system is Ubuntu, and it is worth recognizing that Africans have vast cultural knowledge systems regarding their relationality to humans, non-humans, and nature.[4] For this reason, the African cultural values of Ubuntu will be presented in detail and then compared to differing values of the West to indicate that the sustainable development paradigm (focused on economics and growth), and the subsequent proposal to extensively introduce GM crops in Africa, cannot be considered the ideal solution to address the continent's vulnerability when faced with climate change. Degrowth, more specifically Ubuntu as degrowth, will be presented as an alternative *to* development—an unconventional approach to contemporary climate change adaptation strategies.

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[1] "Africa contains seven out of 10 of the countries that are considered the most threatened by climate change globally: Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea" (Bishop 2017: 88).

[2] The Brundtland Report defines *sustainable development* as: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987: 43).

[3] In this chapter, the term "West" refers to developed countries that are individualistic-capitalistic orientated, e.g. North America.

[4] Ubuntu is a cultural value system that "stresses the importance of community, solidarity, caring and sharing. This worldview advocates a profound sense of interdependence and emphasizes that our true human potential can only be realized in partnership with others" (Ngcoya 2009: 1).

The focus on Ubuntu as a solution to various environmental issues (e.g. climate change) is not a novel notion and the issues for which Ubuntu present as a solution are context-specific or focused on specific research areas. In a context-specific manner, Kelbessa (2014, 2015) argues that environmental policies in Africa can benefit from African environmental ethics by applying the principles of Ubuntu when faced with climate change and other environmental issues. Concurrently, Le Grange (2015: 301, 307) states that Ubuntu as an ecological philosophy can serve as the "framework for all policies and practices aimed at responding to the pressing environmental problems facing the southern African region". Following an approach that is more focused on a specific research area, Pavel (2015: 97) promotes the use of Ubuntu on metropolitan regional levels (inclusive of "urban centers, surrounding suburbs and rural cities and towns") as local communities thereby might identify with such strategy more intimately.

These examples of Ubuntu as environmental ethics are just the tip of the iceberg and multitudinous proposals exist for Ubuntu as context-specific or focused climate change solutions. Nonetheless, I want to propose the unprecedented—an overall environmental ethic based on Ubuntu as degrowth.[5] I aim to develop an intricate relational approach that can be utilized in the global climate change context as an alternative *to* the sustainable development paradigm, which focuses on expansive economics. I will not suggest the implementation of a greener or better model of development. Instead, I call for a break from the *status quo*, and a global paradigm shift towards Ubuntu degrowth ethics by indicating what the West can learn from Ubuntu, as an environmental ethics theory, when faced with climate change.

To facilitate this universal paradigm shift, I propose that all relevant stakeholders convene around the global roundtable when discussing alternative climate change adaptation strategies that are to be sustainable. It is imperative that cognizance is allocated to the values of communities when developing climate change adaptation strategies, as communities might have inherent strengths that can be utilized and combined with other existing strategies.

7.2 Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Beyond reasonable doubt, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) asserts that Earth's climate is warming at an exceptional rate from the mid-20th century (CDKN 2014: 4). The IPCC (2012: 557) defines climate change as:

> A change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g. by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal pro-

[5] Ubuntu as an extension of degrowth is mentioned by multiple scholars in passing (D'Alisa et al. 2014: 117; Kothari et al. 2014; Martines-Alier et al. 2014: 43; Kallis 2015: 3; Maynard 2016: 71; Perrot 2015: 27; Zozuľakova 2016: 190; Cosme et al. 2017: 331; Gupta and Pouw 2017: 87; Paulson 2017: 430). In this chapter, Ubuntu as degrowth will be presented in detail.

cesses or external forces, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.

Due to current anthropogenic behavior that subsequently leads to increased greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, climatic fluctuations are escalating exponentially, and in effect, the biosphere cannot adapt to the post-haste climate change currently experienced.[6]

Although Africa emits fewer greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere than more developed and industrialized continents, it is exceedingly affected by climate change. Supportively, the IPCC's *Fifth Assessment Report* provides evidence that surface temperatures in Africa have increased by 0.5–2 °C over the past decade, and during the 21st century, the continent's temperatures (specifically arid regions) will rise more rapidly than on other continents (CDKN 2014: 4). Consequently, access to water; food security; and a decrease in wealth and health are some of the ways in which societies can be disrupted by climatic change, and these will especially be experienced in Africa (CDKN 2014: 4).

It comes as no surprise that the sustainable development paradigm and the ensuing push from developed countries in the West to introduce and commercialize GM crops in Africa's agricultural sphere are a proposed solution to address Africa's vulnerability due to climatic change. The purpose of sustainable development is to provide structure whereby "economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection" can be harmonized (Asara et al. 2015: 375) to facilitate specific "development that meets the needs of the present [generations] without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987: 43).

As a sustainable development strategy, it is argued that the use of GM crops in Africa can alleviate the continent's hunger and poverty levels which are worsening due to climate change. Philanthropic foundations (e.g. Bill and Melinda Gates; Rockefeller) and development agencies (e.g. USAID) are supportive of introducing GM crops in Africa. According to these international stakeholders, there is an immense need for the allocation of focus to "technologies such as hybrid seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and genetic modification… to improve yields and livelihoods throughout the [African] continent" (Schnurr 2015: 202).

On face value it might seem that GM crops are the answer to Africa's climate change challenges, as there are many advantages of its implementations, such as "increased crop yields, reduced costs for pesticides, less fungal contamination, and reduced labor" (Huesing and English 2004: 92). Nonetheless, it will be useful to investigate differing cultural values of the contemporary West and Africa to indicate that this sustainable development strategy might not be an ideal solution, even though it has been successfully implemented in various other continents and countries.

[6]The concept *Greenhouse gasses* is defined as "any of the gases whose absorption of solar radiation is responsible for the greenhouse effect, including carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, and the fluorocarbons" (Anon s.a.1).

7.3 Cultural Values

As it cannot be assumed that all humans share the same socio-economic-environmental values, it is necessary to focus on deeply ingrained cultural, moral, and religious values when investigating means to address climate change on local and global levels. The investigation of differing values are significant for climate change adaptation as these will indicate varying priorities allocated to the perceived risk and need for adaptation. A contemporary cultural value (found in some world-views of the West) is self-enhancement, and in a contrasting manner, conservation is associated with more traditional values (as found in Ubuntu) (O'Brien 2009: 168). Such traditional worldviews and following values can be described as a need "for belongingness and group identity, that recognise local knowledge, and that support traditional sectors and livelihoods" by preserving cultural identities (e.g. relationality to nature) (O'Brien 2009: 170).

Regardless of a variety of climate change adaptation aid from the West to Africa (e.g. GM crops as a sustainable development strategy), the unique African cultural spheres of communities have often been neglected (e.g. the cultural environmental ethics of Ubuntu). This oversight should be addressed as various values can serve as motivation for behavior which is imperative for the sustainability of climate change adaptation strategies. Subsequently, Ubuntu will be discussed in detail to highlight some of its key aspects.

7.3.1 Ubuntu: *"A Person Is a Person Through Others"*

Ubuntu is a cultural concept originating from sub-Saharan Africa and is often expressed by the pervasive maxim "A person is a person through other persons".[7] This linguistically loaded concept extends normatively into the embodiment of human relations and prescribes moral obligation towards other humans, non-humans, and nature.

The popular maxim "A person is a person through other persons" can be rewritten as "A person is a Person through others" to provide clarity. Here the word "person" (small letter *p*) refers to individual humans, whereas "Person" (capital letter *P*) refers to the personhood, self-hood, and humaness a person should strive for by interacting with "others" (humans, non-humans, and nature) to *become* fully human.[8] According to Metz (2011: 537), "one can be more or less of a person, self or human being, where

[7] Although multiple definitions of Ubuntu are present in literature, conceptual traits as applicable to environmental ethics and climate change adaptation will be presented.

[8] The concept *humaness* should not be confused with the concept *humaneness*. *Humaness* refers to a the development of "one's (moral) personhood, [which is] a prescription to acquire *Ubuntu*" (Metz 2011: 537); whereas *humaneness* is descriptive of "characterized by tenderness, compassion, and sympathy for people and animals, especially for the suffering or distressed" (Anon s.a.2). Noteworthy, *humaneness* does not by definition extend to the natural environment.

the more one is, the better". As such, the ultimate goal in life should be to *become* a Person. That is "a (complete) person, a (true) self or a (genuine) human being" (Metz 2011: 537). This can be achieved by moral interactions with others to attain Ubuntu.

7.3.2 Communitarianism in Ubuntu: "I" in "We"

As stated, *becoming* a Person cannot happen in isolation as Ubuntu is attained through the interaction with others. Therefore, it is useful to investigate communitarianism as a trait of Ubuntu where the individual does not exist in isolation but is instead seen as an inherently communal being as focus is allocated to social relations and interdependency.

Communion is the "conceiving of communal relationships as an objectively-desirable kind of interaction that should instead guide what majorities want and which norms become dominant" (Metz 2011: 38). In reality, the person does not lose individual identity; instead, it is exemplified by communion. Through the interaction with unique others, a person can subjectively grow and attain Ubuntu—to *become* truly human (Person). This communitarianism has a moral dimension as it motivates the social virtue of practical altruism through sharing and communion with others (Wiredu 1996: 22).

"Identity" and "solidarity" are interlinked themes when investigating communitarianism in Ubuntu. In group context the members will identify themselves as "I" in "We", and this will motivate the coordination of behavior to achieve shared goals by engaging in communal projects (Metz 2011: 538). This attainment of shared ends is expressed through solidarity whereby members engage in mutual aid and exhibit positive attitudes through sympathy and altruism (Metz 2011: 538).

7.3.3 Ubuntu and Ukama

The idea of community in Ubuntu also prescribes communion between humans and nature, which is often expressed through identity, respect, and solidarity. Supportively, "no person is complete in him/herself; s/he is fully human in as far as s/he remains a part of the web of life, including creation and the earth" (LenkaBula 2008: 378). This is conveyed by the concept of *Ukama*, which is an extension of Ubuntu. This concept refers to relatedness, more specifically, relatedness as found in the cosmos.

Human relations in a community is seen as a microcosm of relationality in the cosmos. When investigating the relationships between humans, as well as humans and nature, Ubuntu (humaness) is the tangible form of Ukama (relatedness) (Murove 2009: 316). The relationship between humans and nature plays an integral role in a person *becoming* a Person, as the principle that all relationships must be based

on respect, dignity, collaboration, identity, and solidarity creates the foundation of Ubuntu environmental ethics.

Ubuntu as a concrete form of Ukama does not only prescribe moral behavior towards the present generations. Instead, Ukama represents a bond between past, present, and future generations based on relatedness (Le Grange 2015: 306). The question arises: "*How does inter-generational relatedness influence attitudes toward nature?*" Responsibility towards others is founded on Ukama, and this dual moral responsibility that extends to past and future generations is based on respect and gratitude.

In many traditional African beliefs, ancestors (predecessors) are still included in the community.[9] This is supported by Ukama where everything is related in the cosmos. That being so, the current generation has moral responsibilities toward past generations due to respect and gratitude owed to predecessors as they were responsible for looking after nature as prescribed by Ubuntu. This respect towards nature as exhibited by predecessors facilitated responsible stewardship, which in turn created the beneficial natural environment inherited by the current generation (Wiredu 1996: 46). Gratitude towards the past generations motivates the continuous guardianship of nature, and by treating nature with respect and dignity, the current generation can ensure that future generations inherit a natural environment that will satisfy their basic needs.[10]

This dual responsibility can also be explained by the Ubuntu characteristics of identity and solidarity. The identity of a person in terms of "I" in "We" (as part of a group) includes both past and future generations. The current generation acknowledges that predecessors lived in solidarity which extended to intergenerational relatedness, and thus the current generation must act altruistically towards future generations.

From the above discussion, it is apparent that a person wanting to attain Ubuntu should strive to *become* a Person through relationships with others—humans (past, present, and future generations), nonhumans, and the natural environment. Ubuntu prescribes the principle of sufficiency whereby the present and future generations are provided with resources to meet their basic needs through acts of altruism and the achievement of shared goals.[11]

It is worth noting that the principle of sufficiency is not equated to the sustainable development paradigm, which focuses heavily on development as a means for the current generation to meet their basic and false needs while also ensuring that future generations will be able to meet their needs.[12] As can be deduced, the Western *status quo* of the individualistic value of non-relational autonomy and capitalism differs

[9]It is useful to refer to predecessors instead of ancestors (which is culture-specific) to facilitate a more secular conceptualisation of Ubuntu.

[10]Basic needs are essential for physical survival.

[11]The *principle of sufficiency* refers to sustainable livelihoods whereby natural resources are used and distributed to meet basic needs for human survival.

[12]In contrast to basic needs which are essential for physical survival, false needs refer to economic and material "wants" that are not considered essential for survival.

from the described traits of Ubuntu. It is imperative to compare these values to indicate the noticeable differences between the modern ideology of the West and the more traditional cultural values of Ubuntu.

7.3.4 The Individualistic "I" in "Me"

Prevalent in contemporary Western culture is the important individualistic value of non-relational autonomy, which can be described as "I" in "Me". Each individual has an obligation to develop an autonomous identity to differentiate the person from others; individualistic values and personal freedom are pursued and the individual's human rights take precedence over the rights of others; the needs of the individual are higher priority than that of a group; the individual can exist outside a community without loss of identity; and independency, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance are highly praised as the individual is responsible for the achievement of personal goals through competition with others.

These individualistic values stand in contrast to communitarianism in Ubuntu. According to Murove (2014: 37), colonial scholars view Ubuntu as a phenomenon of human primitivity and a "manifestation of an infliction of dependency complex syndrome" which should be conquered by individualistic values. Theron (1995: 35) similarly asserts that Ubuntu "side-steps the slow Western development of the idea of personal responsibility… Without this consciousness the fruits of technology cannot be enjoyed. …[it] teaches Africans to evade responsibility, rather, to hide behind the collective decision of the [group]."

This judgement of Ubuntu is faulty as the identity of the person is not lost because s/he is part of a group. On the contrary, individual plurality is significant in Ubuntu. A person can *become* a Person, a genuine human, through the interaction with unique others. Furthermore, responsibility towards others is based on consideration of the interests and concerns of others *in relation* to the individual's. For that reason, Ubuntu challenges the doctrine of individualistic values such as "I" in "Me", as Ubuntu "… is derivative from [the] relationship with other persons, … it is not an incorrigible property of the individual but something that is shared with others and finds nourishment and flourishing in relationships with others" (Murove 2014: 42).

7.3.5 Homo œconomicus

Individualistic values and the pursuit of self-interest in the capitalistic-orientated West motivate behaviour. *Homo œconomicus*—economic human—pursues false needs in the name of economic growth and development with limited attention being allocated to the differentiation between basic and false needs. In individualistic-capitalistic societies, the person's identity is often defined by the accumulation of wealth through the fulfillment of self-interest. Capitalism is based on the commodifi-

cation of resources to facilitate economic growth, and the person is often defined as a consumer. Success and happiness are determined by materialistic gratification, which is ironic as false needs can never truly be satisfied and thus the individual is trapped in an ongoing cycle where behavior is motivated by self-interest and greed. Through individualistic values and the pursuit of self-interest in the capitalistic society, human beings are alienated from each other following "I" in "Me".

In the pursuit to attain Ubuntu, identity is ascribed in terms of "I" in "We" instead of "I" in "Me". Ubuntu rejects the model of *Homo œconomicus*. Instead, focus is allocated to meaningful relationships with others which should be based on empathy, caring, harmony, and altruism as opposed to competition. Based on the traits of identity and solidarity, Ubuntu can be described as "anti-egoistic as it discourages people from seeking their own good without regard for, or to the detriment of, others and the community" (Munyaka and Motlhabi 2009: 71–72). Hence, it is argued that Ubuntu stands in opposition to "market-oriented economic logic of maximalisation [sic]" (Van Binsbergen 2001: 58).

7.3.6 Nature

Homo œconomicus focuses on mass-consumption, economic growth, technological innovation, and material accumulation. In individualistic-capitalistic Western societies, humans have authority and control over nature as it should be dominated and utilized to meet basic and false needs. From humankind's god-like stance towards nature, technological and scientific approaches focusing on concepts like growth, progress, and development are often implemented to augment nature (e.g. through genetic engineering) so that the environment can meet the needs of *Homo œconomicus.*

Nature is seen as something that should be commodified, and it is routinely interpreted through economic terminology—where resources are measured in monetary values as described by the concept "natural capital". This attitude towards nature is prevalent in the sustainable development paradigm where economics dominate both society and the natural environment as illustrated by the fact that gross domestic product (GDP) growth is regularly used to measure sustainable development (Giddings et al. 2002: 190).[13]

Dominance over nature and the commodification of natural resources stand in sharp contrast to the prescribed relational attitude towards others in Ubuntu (as the concrete form of Ukama—relatedness). In *becoming* a Person through others (humans, non-humans, and nature), it will be counter-productive to commodify and misuse natural resources to satisfy self-interest that will support the accumulation of personal wealth. Instead, Ubuntu prescribes the principle of sufficiency as humans should live in such a way that others' needs are met in relation to one's own needs

[13]Gross domestic product (GDP) can be defined as "[the] total market value of the goods and services produced by a country's economy during a specified period of time… It is used throughout the world as the main measure of output and economic activity" (Bondarenko 2017).

(Murove 2014: 40). By striving for a lifestyle based on sufficiency, the person and the community only utilize resources in nature to satisfy their basic needs. Nature is not commodified and used in competition that will satisfy self-interest (cf. Box 7.1).

Box 7.1: Interview with Sense Mokoti (E.A.G.E.R.: Voices of Southern Africa—Documentary)

Examples of how rural communities in Africa live according to the Ubuntu value of communitarianism and the principle of sufficiency are prevalent in an interview held with Sense Mokoti, a woman living in rural Botswana (Chobe flood plains, Kachikau).

She explains how the community's livelihood is based on the principle of sufficiency when she describes how natural resources are used when building a homestead: "Like this is a tree branch [points to the frame of the house front door]. This is just soil [points to the walls of the house]. This is grass [points to the roof of the house]. We can just pick a pole from a tree; we dig mud from the ground; then we cut grass. Then it's a home. We don't have to have money to have a home." (NWU-ACDS 2018). She goes on by saying: "The community here in the rural areas, they are self-reliant. They keep their cattle; they keep goats; they keep chickens. They make their food, they plow… and they are very generous. We have our food, we have everything, and we help each other. That's how we live." (NWU-ACDS 2018).

She mentions natural phenomena and how the rural community experiences it. "I heard that there was drought last year. But I did not experience it because my neighbors here … they plowed their fields and I went to help them to harvest; so I got a lot of maize and pumpkins…". Also, "when it's flooding there [points to the flood plains], there's fish, there's waterlilies, and we have plenty of food even if it floods." (NWU-ACDS 2018).

This interview is indicative of communitarianism and how the community members identify as "I" in "We". Through communal activities, goodwill is exhibited to meet shared goals. Here nature is not commodified and used in competition with others. The community practices the principle of sufficiency as they live in close proximity to nature.

When considering Ubuntu and the contrasting traits of the individualistic-capitalistic West, it will be useful to indicate why the sustainable development strategy of utilizing GM crops in Africa, might not be an ideal climate change adaptation strategy. Alternatively, Ubuntu will be presented as an alternative *to* development.

7.4 Sustainable Development and GM Crops

Philanthropic foundations (e.g. Bill and Malinda Gates; Rockefeller) and bilateral international organizations (e.g. USAID) are moving to implement practices and programs in Africa to lower the continent's vulnerability when faced with climate change. From a sustainable development stance, it might seem that the West has genuine, selfless concerns for Africa and the effects of climate change on vulnerable communities, as they are pushing the utilization of GM crops in Africa's agriculture to address poverty and food insecurity. Sustainable development, in its attempts to modernize ecology, subsequently "renders environmental problems [as] technical, promising win-win solutions and the (impossible) goal of perpetuating development without harming the environment" (D'Alisa et al. 2014: 9).

It is noteworthy that foreign economic interest in Africa is often presented under the guise of sustainable development, and nature is frequently described as "natural capital" which is an indication of the monetary value allocated to the environment. Supportively, the billionaire Bill Gates asserts that "the great thing about agriculture is that… once you get the right [GM] seeds and information—a lot of it can be left to the marketplace" (as cited by Thompson 2013).

As the focus is placed on increasing income and international market-related competition, the incorporation of GM crops in Africa undermines the Ubuntu principle of sufficiency. Here cultural traditions are ignored, and socio-cultural power is taken away from the local community members by "forcing" transition towards modern technologies. This process of commercialization (based on economics) promotes the over use and often abuse of nature, and disregards the relatedness of humans and nature as stipulated by Ukama. Commercialization also stands in contrast with the prescribed behavior that current generations should sufficiently utilize the environment based on gratitude towards past generations. Interestingly, Ubuntu and the prescribed principle of sufficiency are similar to the concept of degrowth, and this will be discussed in the following section.

7.5 Degrowth and Ubuntu

The paradigm of sustainable development has been reformulated to fit capitalistic ideals, and it is argued that growth takes center stage when implementing sustainable development strategies (Asara et al. 2015: 380). This paradigm prescribes that the needs of the present generation should be met through development as prescribed by capitalism, without compromising the future generations' ability to satisfy their needs. Supportively, Swyngedouw (2014: 9) states that the "the public management of things and people is hegemonically [sic] articulated around a naturalization of the need of economic growth and capitalism as the only reasonable and possible form of organization of socio-natural metabolism". It is based on these capitalistic traits of sustainable development, and the socio-economic-environmental crisis currently

experienced by humankind, that degrowth is presented as an alternative *to* sustainable development and growth (Zozuľakova 2016: 187).

So what is degrowth? The Degrowth Declaration of the Paris 2008 conference (Research & Degrowth 2010: 524) defined degrowth as "a voluntary transition towards a just, participatory, and ecologically sustainable society… The objectives of degrowth are to meet basic human needs and ensure a high quality of life, while reducing the ecological impact of the global economy to a sustainable level, equitably distributed between nations". It might seem that degrowth is partially in agreement with sustainable development; however, this is not the case. Degrowth does not focus on "alternative, better, or greener development" as proposed by sustainable development (D'Alisa et al. 2014: 9). It calls for a break from the modern state of affairs and its capitalistic-orientated sustainable development by imagining an entirely different global society where consumption is lessened. D'Alisa et al. (2014: 4) elaborates that:

> [E]mphasis here is on *different,* not only *less*. Degrowth signifies a society with a smaller metabolism… a society with a metabolism which has a different structure and serves new functions. Degrowth does not call for doing less of the same… In a degrowth society everything will be different: different activities, different forms and uses of energy, different relations, different gender roles, different allocations of time between paid and non-paid work, different relations with the non-human world.

To facilitate the imagining of a new and unique global society, degrowth can set the stage for the implementation of different cultural practices, such as Ubuntu. Various authors (D'Alisa et al. 2014: 117; Kothari et al. 2014; Martines-Alier et al. 2014: 43; Kallis 2015: 3; Maynard 2016: 71; Perrot 2015: 27; Zozuľakova 2016: 190; Cosme et al. 2017: 331; Gupta and Pouw 2017: 87; Paulson 2017: 430) identify Ubuntu as an extension or ally of degrowth, as Ubuntu represents a different type of development model when compared with modernization and its focus on growth. However, these authors only mention Ubuntu in passing, and a detailed discussion of Ubuntu as degrowth will be presented.

Based on the preceding discussion of Ubuntu the link with degrowth is clear. This is particularly prevalent when Ubuntu as degrowth prescribes alternative activities and relations to others (human, non-human, and nature). To elaborate, Ubuntu advocates respect, dignity, collaboration, identity, and solidarity in a person's relations to others and the principle of sufficiency is prominent. Based on communitarianism, "I" in "We" should coordinate behavior to reach shared goals through joint projects by means of mutual aid and altruism instead of chasing self-interests. Similarly, degrowth prescribes this same principle which is based on sharing, simplicity, care, and commons (D'Alisa et al. 2014: 3).

If a person is orientated towards communitarian well-being, the commodification and misuse of non-humans and natural resources will be counterproductive in the attainment of Ubuntu. Similarly, Watadza (2016: 82) asserts that Ubuntu "encourage[s] the development of a non-exploitative attitude towards the environment, an attitude that if cultivated by all will leave the world more sustainable [than] it currently is". Therefore, Ubuntu as degrowth is proposed as a viable alternative *to* modernized development.

7.6 The Call for Change: What the West Can Learn from Ubuntu

Anthropocentric behavior is one of the leading causes of climate change. The *Homo œconomicus'* drive to satisfy self-interest through material wealth accumulation is contributing to our planet's death. The idea that capitalism and sustainable development will save us from extinction is a theory that must be set aside as it is precisely this notion that has set us on this apocalyptic path. A key reason why the modern individual is not taking climate change seriously enough to motivate the needed collective post-haste behavior is that such actions directly challenge the Western individualistic-capitalistic paradigm where humankind is seen as autonomous and separated from nature (cf. Klein 2014).

The Earth, and all its life forms, are at war with the global economic system (which favors the individualistic-capitalistic paradigm) and Klein (2014: 19) supportively states the "what the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity's use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it's not the laws of nature".

Subsequently, I call for a change; not only a change in human economic behaviour but also a call for a universal paradigm shift. This paradigm shift should be from the "I" in "Me" ideology which is rooted in individualistic values, capitalism, and authority over nature, towards the "I" in "We" paradigm as found in Ubuntu degrowth, which encompasses communitarianism, respect for nature and future generations through the principle of sufficiency.

This paradigm shift calls for the birth of a "global village" whereby individuals from across the world identify as a group—the human race, "I" in "We". Furthermore, the maxim "It takes a village to raise a child" should rather be read as "It takes a global village to raise present and future generations". All people should be seen as partners, who in solidarity should work together on communal projects, such as climate change adaptation strategies. It is imperative that self-interest and greed be set aside so that the global community can come together and help each other, especially the most vulnerable people when faced with changes in climate that will determine not just our future on this planet, but also the existence and quality of life of future generations.

This call for change should not be interpreted as a move to socialism or communism under the guise of Ubuntu as degrowth. The paradigm shift that is needed should move away from the focus allocated to economic terms, and the *Homo œconomicus* (economic human) must evolve into the *Homo Empathicus* (empathetic human) that recognizes relatedness to nature and others as in Ukama.

7.7 The Global Roundtable

When discussing climate change and which strategies to employ for adaptation, it is crucial to recognize that conflicting values can have a dire effect on the implementation of such strategies. For Le Grange (2015: 307) it is mandatory that the cultural, moral, and religious values be considered and that these values "should be aligned to common principles defined in the interest of the environment".

It is therefore essential to recognize that the values of the individualistic-capitalistic West differ when compared to the values of Africa's Ubuntu. Noteworthy, the aim of this chapter is not to demonize the West and to consequently state that vulnerable communities cannot benefit from sustainable development and GM crops for food production when faced with climate change. However, Asara et al. (2015: 382) wisely states that "[u]ncovering the ideology and practice of economic growth (connected to capitalism) as the ultimate driver of unsustainability [sic] may help sustainability science to further flourish and be more influential in re-defining the Earth's sustainable future".

From this, it is suggested that when formulating climate change adaptation strategies, all relevant stakeholders should be included in the conversation around the "global roundtable". It is imperative to acknowledge various cultural views that might differ from the West and that value systems, such as Ubuntu (where alternative values are allocated to others in the community, nature, and future generations), can provide unique perspectives when identifying climate change adaptation strategies.

The West has much to learn from others who are not driven by individualistic values and economics, but by the need for survival. These communities, e.g. indigenous Africans, live in close proximity to nature and have "strong reciprocal relationships with nature, drawing on local ecosystems on a small scale while caring for and regenerating the land so [that] it continues to provide for them and their descendants" (Klein 2014: 192). Humans should no longer be seen as separated from each other, non-humans, and nature. Rather, human existence is relationally rooted in ecological life (Le Grange 2015: 306) and Ukama (as an extension of Ubuntu) "provides the ethical anchorage for human social, spiritual and ecological togetherness" (Murove 2009: 317). The individual's focus should be on *becoming* a Person through others, and it is through relationality that humans can attain ensuing socio-ecological well-being.

Conclusively, Ubuntu should be "harnessed and combined with other values to support common principles aimed at addressing a deepening global socio-ecological crisis" (Le Grange 2015: 307). Ubuntu cannot be equated to the loss of identity, as it praises pluralism and diversity, and this makes it possible for shared principles to be defined even though various groups with different values are sitting at the "global roundtable" when discussing much-needed climate change adaptation strategies.

7.8 Conclusion

Climate change is a challenge faced by all of humanity and Africa is one of the continents that will be exponentially impacted. It is imperative that humankind, in a post-haste collective manner, implements appropriate climate change adaptation strategies to mitigate the effects of extreme temperatures and natural phenomena that can have dire consequences for human existence and the planet.

A popular adaptive strategy proposed by individualistic-capitalistic Western societies, based on the sustainable development paradigm and its focus on growth, is the commercialization of GM crops to address hunger and poverty in Africa which are amplified by climatic changes. Unfortunately, "[International and] national policies can inadvertently disregard or undermine cultural, traditional and context-specific practices that support local adaptation to climate change" (CDKN 2014: 28). Thus, cultural values in Africa, e.g. Ubuntu, are often ignored in the formulation and implementation of adaptive strategies.

As it cannot be assumed that values regarding relations toward humans, non-humans, and the natural environment are the same across all cultures, the individualistic-capitalistic values were compared to Ubuntu values. Ngcoya (2009: 1) asserts that "Ubuntu stresses the importance of community, solidarity, caring and sharing. This worldview advocates a profound sense of interdependence and emphasizes that our true human potential [*becoming* a Person] can only be realized in partnership with others". Ubuntu's "I" in "We" is the antithesis of "I" in "Me" (based on individualistic values) and should be implemented in response to the individualistic-capitalistic Western values where it is acceptable to misuse and abuse natural resources in the name of capitalism, progress, growth, and development.

It is argued that Africa has inherent strengths that can be utilized for climate change adaptation, such as sustainable and sufficient livelihoods (Skidelsky and Skidelsky 2012: 6). Ubuntu is extensively similar to the degrowth paradigm which proposes an alternative approach *to* development. From this, a call for a universal paradigm shift is made—away from an individualistic-capitalistic orientation; towards the environmental ethics of Ubuntu degrowth.

Humankind can rethink and restructure the way they perceive their relation to humans, non-humans, as well as nature and it is suggested that various stakeholders, with diverse perspectives, converse around the "global roundtable" when developing climate change adaptation strategies.

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