Chapter 1
“Rural Development” and the Search for an African Development Paradigm

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ABSTRACT
This chapter departs from the premise that African problems demand not African solutions but solutions founded on the principles of African culture and philosophy. The chapter analyzes hegemonic Euro-American-centric ideas of development and rural development from the perspective of the African philosophy of ubuntu. This chapter per the author dismisses the idea of “rural development” because it argues that “rural” is an oxymoron in African culture and philosophy and thus a discourse of a colonial heritage. The chapter understands “rural development” as a narrow Euro-American-centric construction founded on the principles of economism and classism of the Western philosophical ethic and which, according to the chapter, needs decolonization through ubuntu. The chapter further suggests pathways towards an African “rural development” paradigm.

INTRODUCTION
The natural capacity of Africans’ self-consciousness and their curiosity about the world in which they live, together with their capacity to wonder, puts paid on the pesky and racist question of whether African Philosophy exist. The idea of a “worldview” creates the possibility condition of difference of perception. It distinguishes one worldview from another, such as an African worldview from a Eurocentric or...
Asiatic worldview. The difference of worldviews also tells us at least two things, a.); that knowledge, and by extension, philosophy, is always contextually situated, and therefore not always universally resonant and b.), that knowledge production arises through praxis. The attributes of context in the production of knowledge therefore also creates the possibility condition for knowledge to be also cultural.

In this chapter, we provides some critical reflection on the idea of development and “rural development” in Africa, from the perspective of the African philosophy of ubuntu. This is a philosophy predicated on the African worldview, knowledge system and cultural norms. Ubuntu is the root of African philosophy in all its myriad manifestations and articulations (Ramose, 2003). It is a philosophy that is specifically associated with the African people in general and the people of Xolobeni in the Eastern Cape, South Africa in particular. Ubuntu is the basic tenet that holds the African community and culture bounded together. It is a window through which the Africans look and interpret the world in which they live.

We draw in the case of the dramatic developments in the “rural” community of Xolobeni for more critical reflections and insights. The case of Xolobeni will assist to elucidate, from the perspective of the philosophy of ubuntu, the problematic philosophical foundations of the Euro-American-centric regime of development called “rural development” taking place in Xolobeni. The once tranquil and cohesive community of Xolobeni is now divided and a common site for disharmony and legal battles, all in the name of “rural development”. We further also suggest pathways towards an African centered “rural development” paradigm that will liberate it from the dysfunctional grip of Euro-American-centrism.

We begin our chapter by providing a brief background and an overview of the historiographical analysis of bot Western and African philosophy, and the philosophy of Ubuntu. This will allow us to foreground our theoretical framework. Following that, we provide a critical examination of the idea of development, “rural” and “rural development”. Immediately after, we follow with proposals for pathways towards a transformative African development paradigm, and concluding remarks.

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

African philosophy has been a subject of much public and academic debate in recent times. Key amongst the contentious issues raised in the debate by scholars of the Western philosophical tradition, is whether African philosophy exists. To pose this question differently, the question is whether Africans are at all philosophical beings, to begin with, and whether they are inherently capable of doing philosophy.

It is thanks to Ramose’s incisive book African Philosophy through Ubuntu, and especially the chapter on The struggle for reason in Africa that this question is
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