

# Community Sites of Knowledge: Knowledge Creation and Application for Sustainable Peace in Africa

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## **Abstract**

*In this article the question is asked: What is relationship between knowledge creation and sustainable peace in Africa? The specific aim of this article is to identify specific principles of knowledge creation and sustainable peace that can serve as propositions for further research. The knowledge foundation of this discussion is a literature study, interpretative interaction and participation in focus-groups during field research in collaboration with the Community Sites of Knowledge (CSoK) and the Marcus Garvey Pan African Institute near and in Mbale, Eastern Uganda. It is that knowledge systems are converging towards a glocality of awareness and action. This convergence facilitates the complementarity of endogenous and modern institutions and the inclusive participation of the community as a building block for sustainable peace, transformation and progress. The finding is that relationship of knowledge creation and sustainable peace in Africa is characterized by glocal interconnectedness, the converging of knowledge and central value adding. Some important recommendations are offered to communities, conflict and dispute resolution practitioners, African Universities and state structures concerning the application of endogenous knowledge for sustainable peace.*

## **Introduction**

Successful conflict and dispute resolution requires knowledge, not only knowledge offered through formal learning but also knowledge that is embedded in real-world experiences of people. People who practice dispute and conflict resolution need to understand the causes and consequences of conflict and the skills to find creative and innovative solutions, as well as humanistic values to activate peaceful transformation of society. Practitioners need to develop the skills to reconcile, restore relationships, and promote non-dualism and equality as well as meaning making in cultural, cross-cultural and historical context to ensure sustainable peace in society. Such advanced understanding and skills require a specific way of knowing and sustainable action.

Against this background the question is asked: What is relationship between knowledge creation and sustainable peace in Africa? The relationship is probably multi-dimensional and cannot be covered in one article of limited scope. Therefore, the aim of

this article will be to identify specific principles of knowledge creation and sustainable peace that can serve as propositions for further research.

The knowledge foundation of this discussion is a literature study, interpretative interaction and participation in focus-groups during field research in collaboration with the Community Sites of Knowledge (CSoK) in Eastern Uganda, as well as participation in a symposium, a conference and a seminar that were dealing with the theme. The research involved specific community sites of knowledge in Uganda and modern learning institutions committed to these community sites of knowledge. The research was therefore focussed on the local level, but with the awareness that every local community forms part of a broader society and global humanity.

The research approach to the study was transdisciplinary, with awareness that conflict and disputes are multi-dimensional. The research therefore moved beyond the strict boundaries of disciplines to a space where all knowledge claims can be evaluated and validated in order to explain knowledge creation for sustainable peace. Such an approach required gathering of data and interpretation of information within a specific epistemology, in this case the way of knowing of the Iteso clan as part of east African society. The research furthermore required an iterative linkage with space studies, a trans-disciplinary field of study in its own right.

The discussion will be deployed by offering the theoretical assumptions that underlie this discussion and will include the concepts of 'glocality', knowledge production and sustainable peace. The discussion will therefore depart from this conceptual framework to present the field research in the community sites of knowledge of knowledge near Mbale, Uganda. Finally the impact of the research on theory and practice of knowledge production for sustainable peace will be presented. By way of conclusion some principles of knowledge production for sustainable peace will be identified, followed by recommendations that may lead to solutions to causes of conflict that prevents sustainable peace in Africa.

## **Theoretical assumptions**

This article asserts that sustainable peace in Africa if institutionalization of peace and political cooperation informed by a knowledge production system characterised by a holistic or 'glocal' consciousness in which sharing of knowledge learned from indigenous knowledge, exogenous knowledge and endogenous knowledge leads to reconciliation, participation, convergence, transformation, state building and renewal. These concepts will now be discussed in more detail.

According to Nonaka knowledge production is about making tacit knowledge explicit. Intangible knowledge assets are described as tacit knowledge, and include all intellectual capital, which is the collective education, skills, experience, energy and attitudes that influence production and services. It is owned by the individual and is renewable.

Explicit knowledge is tangible and is in written or recorded format. It includes books, manuals, magazine libraries, policies and procedures, which can be identified, articulated, captured, shared or applied. It may also include large databases that can be exploited through data mining to reveal trends and patterns in support of business processes. It is formalised, captured and leveraged to produce a higher value asset.<sup>1</sup>

During the Fifth Annual International Conference on Knowledge, Culture and Change in Organisations, presented by the University of Agean in Rhodes during 2005<sup>2</sup>, a general conclusion was that there is a movement away from controlling and making knowledge tangible to emphasis on cross-cultural sharing of tacit knowledge through word-of-mouth. A social framework, where knowledge can be created and transferred among cultures and disciplines', encouraging collaborative relationships and cultural sensitivity, is increasingly becoming a good practice.

In the context of this discussion the terms 'knowledge creation' will therefore be used, implying that to generate new knowledge involves both the activity of making tacit knowledge explicit as well as the transfer of knowledge among people as part of learning, decision-making or reflective discourse.

Knowledge production for sustainable peace departs from the assumption of 'glocalology' as an epistemology aiming at developing a holistic consciousness that can bring about a new moral and 'glocal' society. Such a society will be based on 'glocal citizenship' a new 'glocal economy' and a just society through restorative learning and understanding, founded on the recovery of the divine word from the divine source (the 'heart'). This means the recognition of the importance of dialogue between different traditions in a quest for the truth.<sup>3</sup>

For the purpose of this discussion, the first element of this 'truth' is indigenous knowledge, referred by Hoppers et al as knowledge relating to the technological, social, institutional, social, institutional, scientific and developmental, including those used in the liberation struggles. It is about excavating the technologies behind practices and artefacts, architecture, medicine and pharmacology, and recasting the potential in a context of democratic participation for community, national and global development in 'real time'.<sup>4</sup>

This indigenous knowledge develops into endogenous knowledge, when local lived experiences are engendered, produced, grown or found within, affected by contact with surrounding or other influences. The term 'endogenous' allows for the creation of knowledge by a specific social system and diffusion of that knowledge across cultures, assuming that knowledge is not static. Endogenous knowledge is visible in terms of the way people connect with each other and with the rest of the universe, centres and networks of knowledge sharing, processes, tools and impact on the lives of people.<sup>5</sup>

Ake asserts that unless we strive for endogenous development of science and knowledge we could not fully emancipate ourselves as Africans. Even though the principles of science are universal, its growth points, applications and the specific

problems that it solves are contingent on the historical circumstances of the society in which the science is produced.<sup>6</sup>

Endogenous knowledge is from the vantage point of the local people and not from Western trained elites. It is therefore Afrocentric knowledge that leads to the empowerment of African people, not dependent on development Eurocentric and Americanised rulers.<sup>7</sup>

‘Exogenous knowledge (from an African point of view), is knowledge accumulated throughout centuries on different aspects of life, shared with the people of Africa, and appropriation by African of the knowledge available elsewhere. Such appropriation should coincide with a critical re-appropriation of Africa’s own endogenous knowledge, and an African process of accumulating and producing knowledge, and capitalising on it.’<sup>8</sup>

Dia explains the iterative relationship between indigenous, exogenous and endogenous knowledge stating that the first requirement for knowledge production is the need for a new participatory process that focuses on building convergences between formal and informal institutions, empowering beneficiaries and local communities. Reconciliation between indigenous groups and formal institutions brings together dominant societal values of indigenous cultures as well as the technical and organizational philosophy that support modern institutions. Convergence begins when both formal and indigenous systems recognise the need for sustained interaction. Renewing, informal institutions need to create relationships with adaptive formal ones, revolving around programmes and projects, releasing synergy between the interacting institutions and achieving institutional convergence.<sup>9</sup>

Synergy and convergence of institutions for sustainable peace is emphasised by the assertion that peace-building is a multifaceted endeavour that includes building democratic governance, protecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law, and promoting sustainable development, equitable access to resources, and environmental security.<sup>10</sup> Once actions (in this case knowledge development across societies and through the convergence of formal and informal knowledge) undertaken by international or national peace becomes institutionalized, it leads to the absence of armed conflict (‘negative peace’) and the involvement of a small number of participatory political actors (as a component of ‘positive peace’), seen as sustainable peace.<sup>11</sup>

These theoretical assumptions highlights two propositions that will inform the reasoning in this discussion:

- Knowledge systems are converging towards a glocality of awareness and action, systematically forcing into the background the historical perception brought by colonialism that indigenous knowledge is subordinate and that Western knowledge is superior.

- The complementarity of endogenous and modern institutions and the inclusive participation of communities are building blocks for sustainable peace, transformation and progress.

These propositions will be scrutinized by discussing the observations and findings of limited field research done together with the Community Sites of Knowledge of the P'ikwe and Iwokudan clans of Eastern Uganda.<sup>12</sup>

## **The Community sites of Knowledge of P'ikwe and Iwokodan**

Semi-structured interviews, briefings by community elders and interpretative interaction with the P'ikwe community revealed how, motivated by a concern about rising poverty, deepening inequity and inevitable conflict, the Iteso society of Uganda implemented the 'Community Sites of Knowledge' (CSoK).

### *P'ikwe*

The CSok is a holistic concept following an intrinsic model that is used to cope with socio-economic and environmental conditions after the war when people returned from camps in 1992, putting knowledge into action. This paradigm follows a rural agenda, applying sustainability and resilience within a 'glocal community'. Human development takes place through recognition of a 'Creator' and the self in relation to nature and fellowship with other human beings. The CSoK is an approach to self-organization and cooperation by poor people in need towards self-transformation in view of persistent marginalisation by a central government.

Re-centralizing the rural agenda involves endogenous resource mobilization, data-narrative, community mapping and historical memory, dialogue and knowledge sharing to form the knowledge foundation for economic production, combining the spiritual principles of the community with analytical, scientific methodology.

Several platforms are used for rural innovation hatching, capability building and to offer lifelong learning and life skills to individuals. The local community (some very vulnerable people) is organised in Head, Hart, Head and Health clubs or '4H-Clubs', aligned with extended families as the smallest socio-economic unit. Leaders of change from the community, local schools, strategic partners, and agents from other stakeholders, also serve as important platforms of knowledge sharing and action.

The P'ikwe Community Initiative follows a methodology that brings together all knowledge from the community, academic and other partners in a Community Study Center (CSC). An old farmhouse is used for this purpose. In the CSC knowledge on indigenous and endogenous agricultural practices are gathered by Key Farmer Trainers

who captures it on script. At the CSC this knowledge is codified and stored on a computer system. At the same time knowledge workers at the CRC gathers information on pre-determined themes to supplement the knowledge from the community, periodically attending seminars or enter into discussions with the Marcus Garvey Pan-Afrikan Institute in Mbale or representatives of the agricultural department of Makerere University in Kampala. The CRC therefore serves as a facility where all knowledge is integrated.

The knowledge is then used to train inter alia by Key Farmer Trainers who takes this value-added knowledge back to the community to train the households in the village on the best methodology to embark on agricultural ventures, using all possible knowledge in income-generating projects such as honey production. The key trainer fulfil the role as change manager, mentor, supervisor and knowledge manager, using the community as a 'living laboratory' to produce collective knowledge for projects. What is also significant here is the use of technology such as modern electronic recording and playback instruments by the Key Farmer Trainer to capture and distribute knowledge. In most cases training takes place under, for instance, under a mango tree in the village, indicating that effective learning is not dependent on modern facilities.

Knowledge is placed directly into action at a Value Adding Centre where sunflower oil is produced for the open market, using modern equipment. The Value Adding Centre is a good example of a process that involves the selection of the right type of sunflower seed for the specific climatic conditions of the area that would produce the most and best quality oil, planting methodology, harvesting and eventually producing the sunflower oil. The seeds are supplied by the National Agricultural Research Organization. The Namalere Agricultural Research Institute designed animal traction, weeders and harvesters for the community, based on knowledge provided by the community on what the characteristics of implements should be to be applied successfully in the specific earth types of the region.

The case of the CSoK of P'Ikwe illustrates the fusion of indigenous, endogenous and modern or exogenous knowledge to apply restorative agriculture towards self-empowerment and the restoration of structures. In a broader sense it indicates a way of establishing institutions and improved interaction between marginalized communities and central governments in general, contributing to human development as a prerequisite for good governance, service delivery and a peaceful society.

### *Iwokudan*

The aspect of using traditional structures to contribute to good governance is also illustrated by the focus group meetings and interpretative interaction with the traditional leaders of the Iwokudan community, an Iteso clan in Kamuge, Pallisa District, near the town of Mbali in North Eastern Uganda community. In this case the endogenous form

of governance and traditional ways of dispute resolution is of specific significance.

Prior to colonial rule the heterogeneous society of Uganda was organized along chiefdoms, and clans, later on described by Western anthropologists and their African converts as 'tribes' as discrete social entities. In this context, the political organization of the Iteso was clan-based, ruled by Elders, regulated by traditional customs which controlled social behaviour, harmony and stability.<sup>13</sup>

The clan is the basic social and political unit, administrative and judicial in character. The clan leader is called the *Apolon ka Aketer*, usually a person of courage, impartiality and wisdom, elected from the Elders. He acted as arbitrator in the event of disputes. In serious cases such as murder and debt, the traditional settlement of disputes was performed by the *Apolon ka Aketer* assisted by the *Airabis* or *Aurianet* (Council of Elders). Successful settlement involved compensation and ceremony.<sup>14</sup>

Today the Iwokodan Clan Community Site of Knowledge is structured in such a way that the Elders form their own 'Cabinet' consisting of several 'Ministries', thus based on indigenous structures, developed through colonial and modern influences that evolved into what may be called endogenous structures. This structure of governance serves as a mechanism of resolving conflict and disputes, in a way that has always been part of this community.

A focus group meeting in Iwokodan (Eastern Uganda) articulated how the community is empowered to dispense traditional restorative justice today, fusing modern and traditional approaches. After the modern court system in Uganda failed to dispense justice, the traditional justice system of communities such as Iwokodan proved to be the most accessible court system in comparison with the costly and slow state apparatus. The traditional courts have very few technicalities in comparison with the rigid procedures of a modern court that most rural people do not understand. Furthermore, these traditional courts are not punitive but reconciliatory.

In Iwokodan the elders of the extended family forms the 'court of original jurisdiction' or '*cooj*' (meaning 'bonfire'). The case is then escalated to village level ('*etem*') where the case is heard by the village chief, and then to county level ('*ebuku*'). Fusion with the modern system is then taking place when a case is taken to a formal Court of Appeal '*Napollon*', which falls under the Minister of Justice.

The focus group continued to explain how a twenty year old land dispute between two brothers were resolved on the level of the clan. The father, who passed on, did not leave clear instructions on who should own the land after his death. Consequently, the two brothers came into conflict on which the land belongs to and even divided the land that was under consideration. Recourse to the modern court system had no results, including the case dragging on in the High Court for more than a decade. Indications that this dispute may turn violent prompted the Elders of the clan to intervene and resolve the dispute once and for all.

Lengthy discussions, including narratives about the history of the conflict in which the

women in the clan had a prominent input, resulted in a decision that a Diviner should be called in to give guidance to the Elders. Without going into detail, it is understood that the Diviner made contact with the late father, who gave clear guidelines about what the father wants. The late father indicated his disappointment in their behaviour and insisted on shared ownership and joint decision-making on the land. Both brothers accepted the resulting verdict of the Elders and peace was restored in the community.

The Iwokodan Clan Community shows how traditional structures can still serve the purpose of good governance in a modern context, including using the traditional way of dispute resolution complementary to modern court systems. Furthermore, it demonstrates how the collective knowledge of a community, including not only formal education or what became home grown through experience, but also what can be called the reality of beliefs, can empower the community to resolve their own problems the way traditional communities have been coping for centuries. Moreover, it shows that endogenous structures of rural communities provide the fabric for critical local governance infrastructure and broader participative democratization, which may be very valuable for the prevention and resolving of conflict.

### *Evaluation*

The CSoK of P'Ikwe and Iwokodan are good examples of glocality in action. In the CSoKs of P'Ikwe and Iwokodan we find not only the use of endogenous knowledge for the physical production of agricultural products and applying endogenous techniques and tools for such production, but also a living example of the convergence of knowledge for conflict prevention and dispute resolution. A local knowledge foundation that involves original customary ideas, putting the ideas into the context of a holistic cosmology of interconnectedness between human beings and nature, manifests visibly in the form of knowledge centres within community sites of knowledge, linked to modern learning institutions. In this way the fusion and validation of all knowledge in this specific cultural environment can be achieved with the key trainers as epistemological expert and important agents of transformation and self-emancipation of society.

What made the communities of P'Ikwe and Iwokodan special is that, through the initiatives of community leadership, they succeeded in reviving their own traditional household and village structures, successfully inquired and mapped the 'memory archives' of key indigenous knowledge holders from the community. Moreover, they succeeded in linking with 'modern knowledge' to create and apply endogenous knowledge towards self-empowerment and production to break out of a situation of extreme destitution and poverty.



## Impact on knowledge creation practices in Africa

Kwesi Kwaa Prah highlighted the need for a convergence of knowledge and institutions by reminding us that since colonialism in Africa, the process of the production and reproduction of knowledge illustrates the idea of a 'civilizing' mission, through which Africans were Christianized and taught to read and write in an attempt to produce Africans who would be of service to colonialism. This pattern of education and knowledge production was inherited with only minor revisions by the post-colonial state. Africa's development should be premised on the culture embedded in the social life of Africans, to be accessed through African languages as the basis of social identification and access the knowledge of the people. Western ideas must melt into African culture and become African cultural adaptations of Western or universal modes of thought and social practice. This approach should avoid the conventions, values and attitudes of archaic traditionalism while absorbing the practices and innovations that strengthen the cultural basis of what African societies. Institutions that have taken thousands of years to evolve should not be cast aside but reformed to remain significant in the individual and collective life of societies.<sup>15</sup>

The CSoK practice heeds to these recommendations by first of all emancipate the communities involved from colonial practices to what is relevant and applicable in the contemporary context. The users of the knowledge is now also involved in creating new knowledge, actively participating in gathering, supply, evaluation, validation, analysis and meaning making towards the creation of a new and useful body of knowledge that can be used for decision-making, learning or just to critically reflect on possible solutions.

The involvement of people in new knowledge creation reminds us of the understanding of the United Nations that all people are creative beings and carriers of tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge in a 'knowledge society' that involves all members of a community in knowledge creation and utilization and supports the goal of high quality and safety of life for all people everywhere. To be a 'Smart Knowledge Society' (as distinct from a 'Nominal or Warped Knowledge Society') requires a new sense of direction in development and a commitment to converting knowledge into products and services. Private business enterprises and the market economy combine the capacities of modern Information, Communication Technology (ICT) with information and group thinking organized in shared spaces for knowledge creation. Institutions and organizations enable people and information to develop without limits to be mass-produced and mass-utilized knowledge throughout the society as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

This explanation reflects the reality in many communities of practice in the modern world. However, achieving this ideal in a rural, developing context takes a special kind of commitment to achieve. The CSoKs under discussion demonstrates this commitment and shows that the involvement of community members is a crucial point of departure

towards successful knowledge production for sustainable solutions, and in this case, lasting peace. The sense of direction is already there, and the fledgling state of production is a sound platform to build upon, taking cognisance of the crude reminder that without reliable connectivity through the use of ICT infrastructure the knowledge production process will be slow and cumbersome. It is therefore crucial that the interconnectedness among a 'glocal' community is enabled and enhanced by modern technology.

The field research confirms earlier findings by Velthuisen that knowledge production in Africa implies a process of value adding during which all knowledge claims are included towards holistic or global knowledge, achieved through a culture of learning. That implies the adjustment of practices in the community to enable sharing and networking as an imperative for self-emancipation, to participate in a globalised world and to compete if necessary. It furthermore implies interactive communication to share divergent worldviews and transfer knowledge about a dynamic 'glocal' environment during which cultural diversity is recognized, both in response and in the creation of new knowledge. Processes should be in place to make tacit knowledge (what is in the minds of people, sometimes only articulated through narrative) visible and useful.<sup>17</sup>

The establishment of Community Study Center (CSC) correlates with the findings of Velthuisen that the establishment of a knowledge centre is a good practice for knowledge production. According to these findings, knowledge centres involves community members and practitioners or scholars with a new vision for the future, to deliver better understanding of the causes and consequences of conflict and changed behaviour.

An ideal knowledge centre is:

- Representing broad society, accommodating the intellectual capital of the community and intra-linking with other stakeholders who chose to promote understanding of a situation or to contribute to solutions.
- Under joint control of the community and other mandated actors;
- An intra-active, cohesive, joint working group involving all stake-holders in equal relationships;
- A trans-disciplinary information-processing unit where research, joint knowledge products, and early warning of things that may go wrong are generated.
- A producer of knowledge products that presents innovative ideas for the formulation of solutions;
- Empowering communities to find solutions for challenges on their own or collectively but equally with other actors;
- Guided by regulatory instruments to guide aspects such as confidentiality, intellectual property and responsibility.

- Part of an intra-connected, collective, trans-disciplinary community of practice and learning network (including the modern university system).<sup>18</sup>

Although the Community Study Center (CSC) in P'Ikwe is focussed on agricultural knowledge production, similar centres can produce knowledge in other spheres to serve the needs of the community, for example, to provide early warning and create foresight of the probability of incidents that might occur in the short term (such as genocide and disputes), or in the long-term, the probability of conflict in and among societies.

In this regards Faris point out that, in the African context, the theory and practice of informal process should be explored as a means of social transformation and as an instrument for sustainable development, particularly in the area of governance. Within a holistic system of dispute resolution, disputes are not divorced from the socio-economic conditions and culture of disputants and related communities.<sup>19</sup>

Malan explains it further by saying that understanding and addressing conflicts in their social context where they are emerging or have emerged, means that values and beliefs, fears and suspicions, interests and needs, attitudes and actions, relationships and networks are taken into consideration in exploring the root causes of a conflict. This understanding will enable timely precautions against conflict, and conciliation. A shared understanding of the past and the present is developed, restoring, maintaining and building relationships. The interest and involvement of the people around the disputants is almost always implied or incorporated and returns to the foreground when the community takes part in affirming an agreement and monitoring its implementation.<sup>20</sup>

The assertions of Faris and Malan indicate that knowledge creation on community level holds the key to prevent, monitor, and resolve conflicts as well of restoration of relationships as the most important outcome of conflict resolution and community participation.

## **Implications of the CSoK for the Modern Learning Institution**

If the creation of knowledge on community level can be enhanced by mostly the exogenous knowledge brought by modern learning institutions, the CSoK venture indicates that boundaries that used to exist between academic and non-academic learning are becoming blurred, as the 'excluded middle' (in this case modern learning institutions) is increasingly included. Knowledge is necessary for production and communities seek interlocking networks of economic and social relationships globally as Africa moves into a 'learning economy'. Nowadays business, communities and several non-academic settings, where groups of people from different disciplines and institutions come together, are centres of learning.<sup>21</sup>

In this regards the CSoKs realises the vision of the late Professor Nabudere that a

Pan-Afrikan university must be a new kind of university, not only in the approach to teaching and research, but in its strategic conception and its placement at the base of African and human emancipation and liberation. For the Pan-African University to set a path in the search for knowledge and truth, it must be built on a sound spiritual basis of African spiritual life that has enabled the African people to survive as a human community throughout the centuries.<sup>22</sup>

The achievements of the CSOKs in question respond to this reminder by closing the distance between the community and the state, by incorporating the culture of the community in learning and by facilitating the participation of the remote community in the global world of learning. In this case, the strategic placement of the Marcus Garvey Pan Afrikan Institute as part of a CSOK enabled the modern learning institution to serve as catalyst for self-emancipation and self-empowerment of the communities in question. Furthermore, it rests on a specific epistemology that is African, but also modern and exogenous.

It therefore also satisfy the need for dialogues and communication between civilizations to create a better understanding of human action and an ethos that involves the recapturing of the moral and spiritual dimensions of 'holistic justice'.<sup>23</sup> In this regard the complementarity of modern courts and traditional institutions are demonstrated by the practices of the Iwokudan clan in the context and in conjunction with modern state structures.

The dialogue and knowledge sharing between the key trainers, community knowledge centres and the Marcus Garvey Pan-Afrikan Institute and with bigger universities all over Africa and beyond creates the window of opportunity for the community to successful utilize global learning and what the state of Uganda and other states has to offer in terms of early warning and solution to conflicts. The closeness to society achieved by this initiative creates the opportunity for modern learning institutions to implement similar initiatives elsewhere, taking in consideration that the success of the CSOK of Mbale rests on the people achieving access to knowledge for all (in which use of local language is essential), enriching learning content with endogenous African knowledge and using methodologies that rural people are comfortable with. It is especially the recognition of the spiritual and moral foundation of the communities involved that enables culture-driven creativity and innovation.

These cases also provide a good point of departure for Makhanya's call that a modern university in Africa should promote knowledge systems in all their diversities, including, ensuring that African endogenous knowledge systems are central to the core business of the university. Endogenous knowledge should be visible in curriculum development, teaching and learning, research development and innovation and community engagement.<sup>24</sup>

Although modern universities may in many cases still have a long way to go towards this ideal end-state, the involvement of several research institutes and universities such as

Makerere in the CSOKs, indicates that bringing indigenous and endogenous knowledge into the modern curriculum and then bringing that new enriched curriculum back to the people is achievable. What is specifically significant is the knowledge contribution of Africa for sustainable solutions, not relying on solutions imposed on Africa.

The experience of the CSOK guides us towards a unionised and endogenous way of knowledge creation that involves the community as the guiding actor, the modern university as main instrument of dialogue and mutual penetration between local knowledge, the broader world of learning and modern state systems. In this paradigm, however, the centre of knowledge production is not the modern university or state, but the local community, with the realization that empowerment of communities, understanding of challenges, and early warning of dysfunctions such as disputes can only be addressed effectively as a multi-stakeholder venture driven by the community in question.

## **Implications for sustainable peace**

The CSOK concept is directly related to the concern of Paris, that the rapid introduction of democracy and capitalism in the absence of effective institutions increased rather than decrease the danger of renewed violence. An alternative strategy for post-conflict peace building emphasizes the reconstruction of effective security, police and judicial institutions as the first step in the transformation of war-torn states into stable market democracies.<sup>25</sup>

The CSOK not only brings a specific perspective on dispute resolution methodology, but also solutions to good governance in the broader sense, addressing more than one 'pillar' of democratic governance for peace. The CSOK is a manifestation of democratic governance in reality, economic –self empowerment, social development, technological innovation, environmental management and justice for all.

After the Cold War this vision of 'peace building' in post-conflict contexts, brought some success, e.g. stability in Mozambique but also failures, such as the DRC and the Sudan, where violence broke out after the peace building initiatives. It was clear to observers that more sustainable peace building required an increased emphasis on building political institutions for transformation of post-conflict states. State building has emerged as a global policy priority and new paradigm for building peace in post-conflict societies. However, the practice of state building is full of dilemmas for which there are no simple solutions. A first step is to realize that state formation is primarily an endogenous process, over which international actors have only limited control.<sup>26</sup>

The use of endogenous knowledge to build societal structures that can enhance the formal structures of governance adheres to the requirement of institutional building, as an imperative for peace, involving as many as possible political actors. Institutions such as knowledge centres and 4-H Clubs may not have the inclination to be political

structures, but it serves as instruments of mobilization for good governance and socio-economic development.

A further critical element of peace building, is to prevent the reoccurrence and relapse into conflict. An early warning and early response systems (EWERS) serves this purpose. However, in general, EWERS systems in Africa remain weak and inadequate. To function well, EWERS should be embedded in good governance structures, democratic institutions and leadership, closely linked to ongoing peace building efforts on the continent. EWERS can only be successful with closer engagement with local actors and organizations. Numerous conflicts emerge from the local level, thus much information can be gathered from that level. The role of traditional and local leaders, community-based organisations, and faith groups become more prominent in providing information, as they will also have to make decisions on early response options. Continental and regional organizations have a lot to contribute to EWERS on the continent.<sup>27</sup>

The CSoK, and especially knowledge centre may become a powerful instrument of early warning, bringing with it the possibility of closer engagement between local people and organizations responsible for monitoring and responding to threats. In this way the local people enjoys the opportunities to express their perspectives on causes of a conflict and a way to resolve it without relying on distorted views, created from a distance, imposed on them.

## **Principles of knowledge creation for sustainable peace**

According to Zartman<sup>28</sup>, traditional conflict management practices in Africa can be readjusted and refurbished to fit into a modern context. We have to determine what is new, different from that which is universal and conceptualized, how conflicts are managed, what the contextual societal conditions are, which mechanisms and practices operates, what kinds of conflicts can be handled and the relevance/appropriateness of traditional African conflict management practices to modern conflicts.

In this regard, taking in consideration the impact of CSoK on knowledge production, modern learning institutions and sustainable peace, the following principles of knowledge production for peace can be identified:

- **Glocal Interconnectedness.** A closeness of the community, societies moving closer to each other, the complementarily of structures, enabled by the restoration of relationships, personal sharing of knowledge and enhanced by ICT.
- **Knowledge conversion.** The user of knowledge, the community, is a main actor in the processing of knowledge, implying a collective evaluation, validation, capturing, value-adding, retrieval, analysis, interpretation and meaning making of all knowledge.

- Central Value-adding. A central facility where value is added to:
  - A synthesis of knowledge that can be used for innovation, decisionmaking and early warning;
  - the knowledge of the individual and modern learning institutions; and
  - products for the consumer market and services for the community and broader society.

These principles shapes the foundation of a model that illustrates how humankind is moving closer to each other, an opportunity that is posed by modern communications and a 'networking' world. The CSoK is a manifestation of this trend on local level, where people in distress use their most ancient weapon to protect and survive: their collective knowledge. Moving closer together enable them to learn more from each other, moving closer to the centre enable them to learn more from others, and moving across human made boundaries bring opportunities for sustainable peace and a quality of life that is attainable by putting their knowledge into action.

## Conclusions

The relationship of knowledge creation and sustainable peace in Africa is characterized by glocal interconnectedness, knowledge conversion and central value adding. This relationship serves as a driving force for sustainable peace through the creation and application of knowledge. Through knowledge creation, communities in Africa can successful muster and merge knowledge to take control over their own destiny by transforming the community into a 'site of knowledge'. Sustainable peace requires knowledge, not only knowledge offered through formal learning but also knowledge that is embedded in real-world experiences of people. People who seek sustainable peace need to understand the causes and consequences of conflict to find creative and innovative solutions to activate peaceful transformation of society.

In interaction with the communities of P'Ikwe and Iwobudan it was found that the crux of knowledge production and application is the process and practices that takes place in community sites of knowledge and between and with other institutions. The local community is the guiding actor and the centre of endogenous knowledge application, because the community is situated at the crossroads where local knowledge and learning provided by modern learning institutions meet. In this way, communities are empowered to understand the challenges facing them, including the challenge of persistent disputes and violent conflict, and early warning of emerging conflicts.

Empowerment of the community includes learning in one's own language,

participation in developing learning content and methodology suitable to the specific culture. Multi-cultural scholars join together to participate and facilitate learning, preferable in knowledge centres established in CSoKs with the purpose of merging knowledge, collective learning and to establish a way of knowing and understanding human disputes unique to the local community to prevent or resolve their own disputes in an endogenous and innovative way.

The convergence of knowledge on community level enables the restoration of relationships, increased production of goods, changed behaviour, skills development and local institutional building, continuously reducing the risk of conflict. Knowledge belongs to the people, and if people create and apply knowledge collectively and in a non-dualistic way it, *inter alia*, creates good relationships that prevents conflict and lead to lasting peace.

Collaboration with the community by the rest of society enhances social cohesion and non-dualism, empowering communities, contributing to democratic governance structures in general, especially where structures are severely damaged or destroyed by political rivalry and violent conflict. Furthermore, successful community sites of knowledge imply that mechanisms are in place to provide early warning of grievances and frustrations and to prevent violent conflict. Community structures furthermore provide the facility for timely dispute resolution.

Community sites of knowledge create the opportunity for joint projects, involving modern universities to move closer and to intra-act with communities, as part of a bonding founded on the principles of Glocal Interconnectedness and central value-adding.

## **Recommendations**

Communities should empower themselves, using the wealth of knowledge inside the community and the wealth of knowledge from a global knowledge network to produce goods and services to break out of the cycle of poverty and to re-establish positive norms and values in society. Developing communities should take the initiative to establish community sites of knowledge consisting of learning centres as point of entry, a network of participating families, bi-cultural key trainers, and visiting scholars to enhance the dispute resolution and violent conflict prevention capacity of the community. Such a capacity would involve a research capacity, a capacity for design and development of home-grown solutions, learning and teaching facilities and provision of services to the community such as dispute resolution and other needs-driven solutions.

Conflict resolution practitioners, as communities of practice, should take cognisance of glocality as a new way of knowing about disputes and violent conflict and how to resolve it. A new understanding is required to restore justice and the dignity of people who still suffers from the aftermath of political conflict and socio-economical neglect or misfortune. The consideration of historical facts or current affairs is just not enough



anymore to make a wise call: understanding the current cultural context is required to sustain peace.

African Universities should identify and place suitable scholars with communities who can communicate in the language of the community with the aim of empowering community members with best practices that may contribute to the inherent capacity of the community without dominating them. Facilitators from modern learning institutions should become culturally one with communities in a relationship characterised by mutual-empowerment through knowledge sharing.

Other stakeholders who have interests in a community should engage in joint projects with the community with the focus on democratic institutional building and economic empowerment of the community to reduce the risk of conflict in and with the community towards lasting peace. All stakeholders should join forces to empower the local community to prevent or resolve disputes in an endogenous, innovative and peaceful way before it escalates to the extent that it affects society as a whole.

State structures should recognise the contribution of local communities to good governance if allowed to apply customary processes to resolve disputes in a non-violent and legal way. Especially the early-warning capacity of local communities, their special understanding of causes and consequences of disputes and the most suitable way for resolving it before it escalates, presents a powerful tool for the promotion of democratic governance, service delivery, social coherence, socio-economic growth, transformation of society and sustainable peace.

## Endnotes

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- 15 Kwesi Kwaa Prah, 'Culture: The Missing Link in Development in Planning', in L. Keita (ed.) *Africa Philosophy and African Development: Theory and Practice*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 2011, pp. 160-165
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