

Paradigm Clash

UCT, 26 February 2015

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Study Method: Critical Ethnography in Zimbabwe and Zambia, 2000-2014

Data: Observations, Narratives, Literature, in situ

Biography: <http://www.vanstam.net/gertjan-van-stam>



Introduction

- Gertjan van Stam, gertjan@vanstam.net
- www.vanstam.net
- Lives in Harare and Masvingo, Zimbabwe, with Janneke van Dijk (MD), Merel van Stam, Beauty Mulobela, and Elmo van Stam
- 2000-2003: rural Zimbabwe, 2003-2012: rural Zambia
- Affiliated with
 - Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre (SIRDC), Harare, Zimbabwe, sirdc.ac.zw
 - Tilburg University, Netherlands, tilburguniversity.edu
 - Macha Works, Zambia, machaworks.org
 - IEEE, USA, ieee.org

IEEE TV, Tryengineering “Careers with Impact”: van Stam. USA: IEEE TV, 2010.





A Moral Guidance

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psalm 139:13-14)

He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. (Acts 17:26)

A matter of Perspective



Macha, Zambia





Curious about

Within the African, indigenous context, and the setting of Macha Works, how do narratives of engineering practitioners -- those that shape technology -- construe relationships with foreigners, how do they reference colonialism, and what happens at the node of interaction of these narratives that informs a narrative of the future?

What is Real?

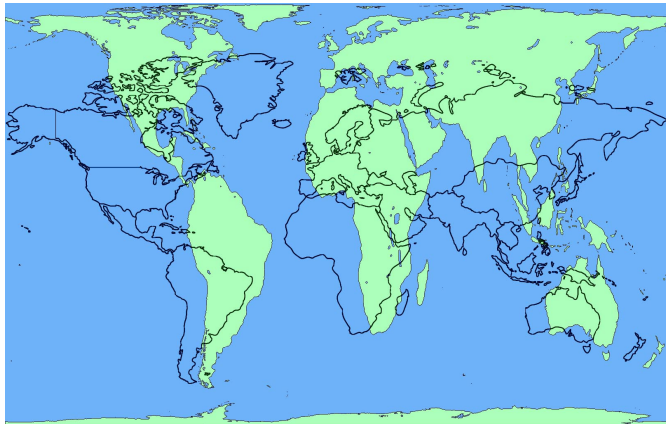
- Multiple realities
- Multiple memories
- Multiple perspectives
- Social Constructivism
 - humans generate *knowledge and meaning* from an *interaction* between their experiences and their ideas
- Hermeneutics
 - How *meaning* appears through the lenses of a certain discipline or from different contexts per time and place



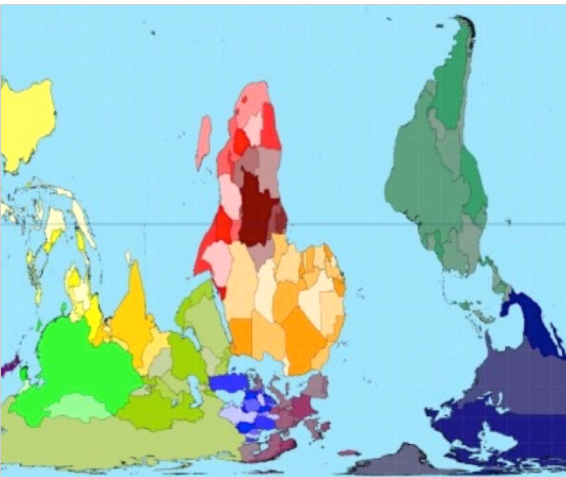
Framing



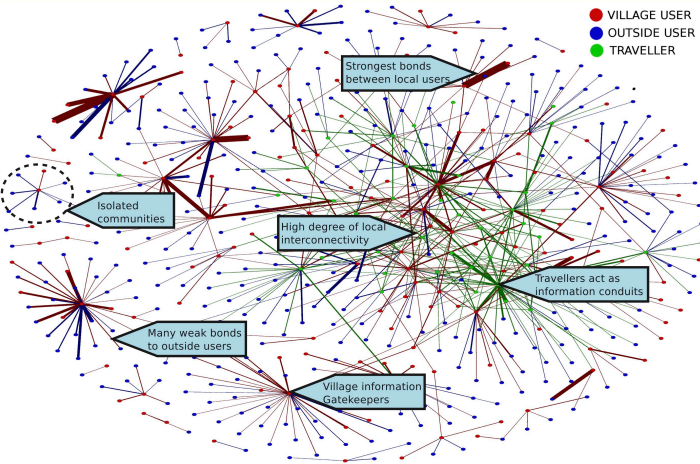
Endogenous or Exogenous Perspective?



Conditioned or Open Mind?



Local or Foreign Orientation?

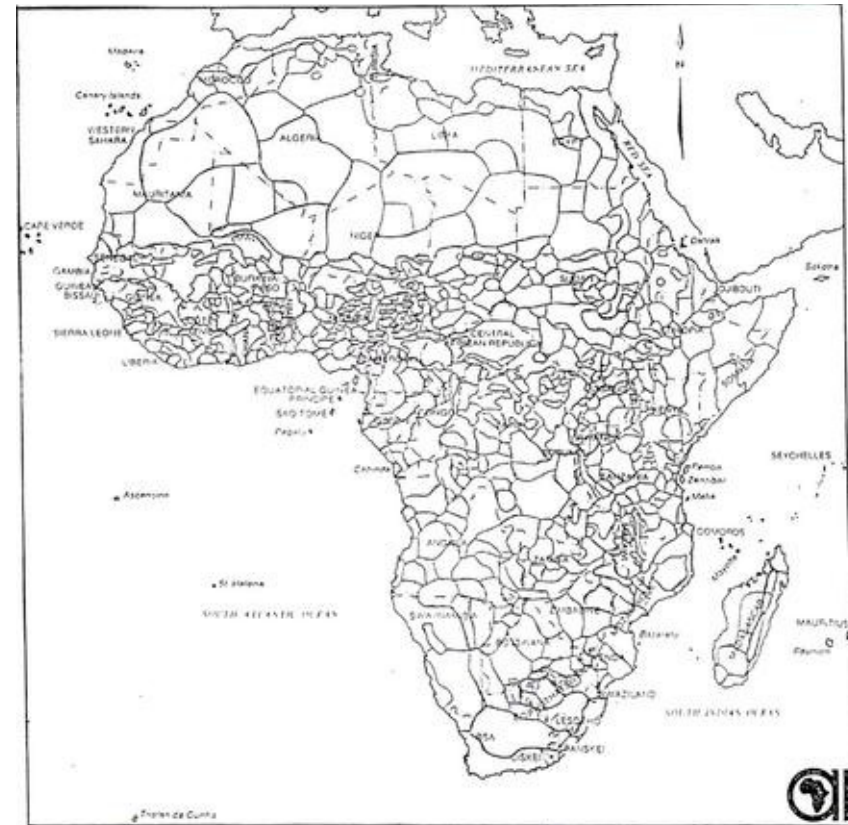


Local or Foreign Conversation?



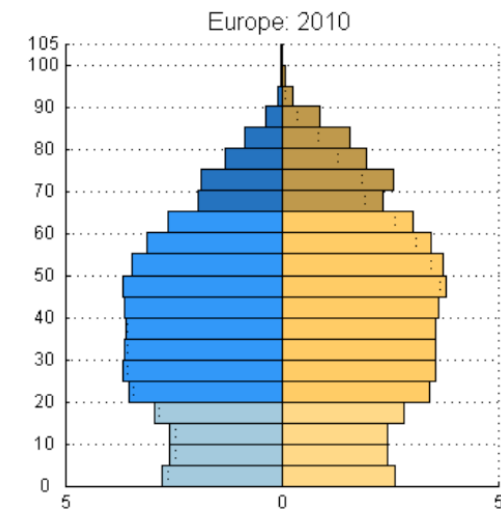
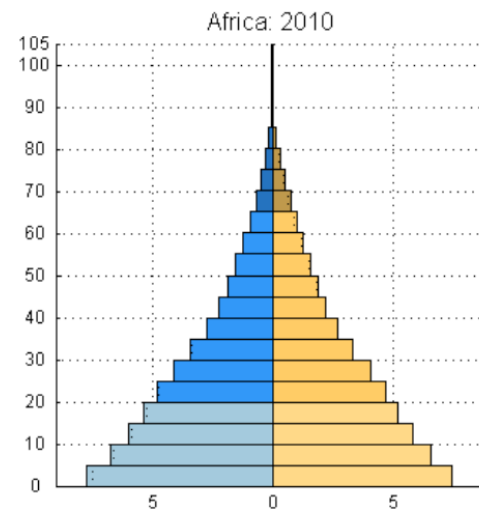
“Africa”

- Boundaries set in Berlin: ‘Scramble for Africa’
- Profiled by outsiders
- Cradle of Mankind
- Multi-Ethnic
- Multi-Cultural
- Majority not-urban
- Abundant Resources



MAP 2: SUPERIMPOSED ETHNIC MAP OF AFRICA
(Source: Africa Institute and De Blij, 1977: 102)

Large and Many



Up to 2050: 2 bln African births

- ▶ under-18 swell to 1 billion
- ▶ 40% of all children in Africa

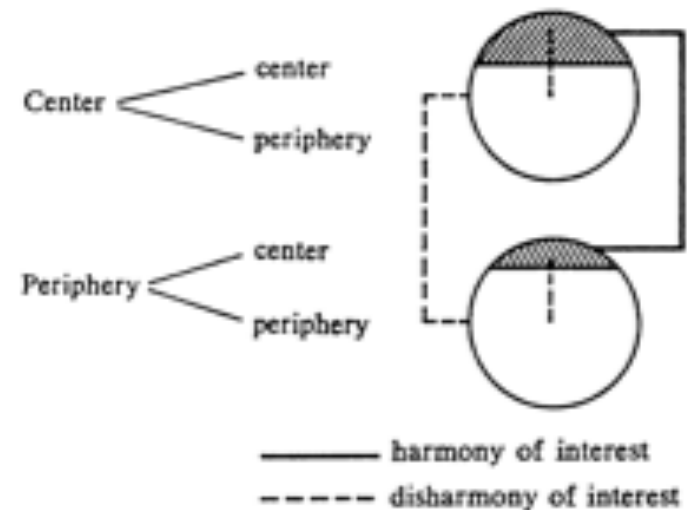
Orientalism, Imperialism, Colonialism

- Orientalism
 - Commodifying *the other*, often through academic inquiry confounded by essentialism/utilitarianism
 - 1st, 2nd and 3rd world: Africa being ‘the other of the other’
- Imperialism
 - A dominance relation between collectives
 - Economic, political, military, communication, cultural, etc
- Colonialism
 - Practice of domination: subjugation of a people to another
 - Affects all areas of life, both for colonized and colonizers

Imperialism (Galtungstyle)

Imperialism: ‘a dominance relation between collectives, particularly between nations’

- Economic Imperialism
- Political Imperialism
- Military Imperialism
- Communication Imperialism
- Cultural Imperialism
- Linguistic Imperialism



J. Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," J. Peace Res., vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 81–117, 1971.

Contemporary Coloniality

- Embedded colonial practices
- Dualism (e.g. *them* and *us*)
- White-Savior syndrome
- “Bringing Civilization”
- Negate multi-Consciousness
- Negate Embodied/Oral Knowledge
- Non-alignment affects agency





Comment is free

The age of loneliness is killing us

For the most social of creatures, the mammalian bee, there's no such thing now as society. This will be our downfall



George Monbiot

The Guardian, Tuesday 14 October 2014 19.49 BST

[Jump to comments \(1557\)](#)

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Challenges

- Relationships based upon (positivistic) calculation crowds-out relationship based upon humaneness
- Superiority thinking crowds-out relating
- Value of religion negated
 - The Moral Nature of the Universe virtually denied
 - Religious foundations weakened

Concepts and Theories

- Paradigm (Kuhn)
- Imperialism (Galtung)
- Colonialism (Ndlovu)
- Coloniality (Grosfoguel)
- Orientalism (Said)
- Framing (Snow)
- Social Constructivism (van Dongen)
- Identity (Verhaeghe)
- Thinking (Kahneman)
- Power (Argyris)
- Reflexivity (Burawoy)
- Memory (Rothberg)
- Design (Bidwell)
- African Science (Chimakonam)
- Phenomenology
- Hermeneutics
- Etc



The Big 5

Indications towards an African identity and communal values

- *Ubuntu*
- *Oratio*
- *Relatio*
- *Dominatio*
- *Animatio*

G. van Stam, "Thoughts on African Content and Implementation Strategies involved in ICT Access in (rural) Africa," in HSRC, Seminar Series, 2014..



Understanding Constraints

- Knowledge Imperialism
 - Ontological setting (default: the West)
 - Positionality of Epistemology (default: the West)
 - Context of Knowledge (default: the West)
- Descriptions or representations that erode the chosen self-representation of the other
- New colonial embodiment of imperialism, e.g.
 - Cyberspace
 - Graphocentric seceding voice, body and community
- (Digital) bubbles intervening 'rhythm of life' and limiting oral and aural imaginations
- Commodification and Neo-Liberal believe system

N. J. Bidwell, "Moving the centre to design social media in rural Africa,"
Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Communication, 2014.



Imperialism Lurks

- Presentation of (underrepresented) local views invokes dualism and orientalism
- Triple consciousness (Africa, Europe, Theistic): from which paradigm is one referring, which one is being addressed, how and when?
- Local communication involves bidirectional/interactive orality and embodied knowledge: how to translate reality in academic English *text* that de-constructs and de-contextualises reality and connects (implicitly) to a Western epistemological location that is foreign to the local, African reality
- Demand for 'value-independence'/numbers (eh, alignment with Western values) omits local knowledge enshrined in local morality and believe systems
- Research and presentation 'knowledge' can be (or lead to) acts of appropriation
- Knowledge imperialism in establish (Western) academia demands referencing to extant (Western) texts/framing
- Local contribution hampered by (Individualistic) Intellectual Property rights arrangements





Opportunities

- ***Market-creating innovations*** that transform current services so radically that they create a new class of users and market expressions
- Give Voice to African Expressions
 - Context Diversity and Communityship
 - Local and Global links, bolstering Agency
 - Africans lead on African issues, the African way
 - Westerner lead on Western issues, the Western way
 - Interaction through Community Engagement, Workforce Development and Thought Leadership
 - Equality and Respect



Enkosi!

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