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Reconstructing the Indigenous in African Management Research: Implications for International Management Studies in a Globalized World

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Abstract

- The primary aim of this article is to help lay the foundations for mainstreaming indigenous research within international and cross-cultural management studies, taking sub-Saharan Africa as the primary and initial focus, and using the informal economy as an example.

- It sets out to critically examine the concept of *indigenous*, looking at how concepts and scholarship have been shaped by global dynamics, and the implications for developing empirical research. It then discusses a research agenda and methods for undertaking indigenous management research, going on to discuss the importance of this to the further development of international and cross-cultural management within a global and changing context.

- Its contribution to scholarship is a more systematic re-examining of the concepts of indigenousness and indigenous knowledge and what these concepts mean to undertaking management research that more thoroughly reflect global realities, while evaluating indigenous research methods that could be used effectively and appropriately in this endeavour.

Introduction

The need to study indigenousness and indigenous knowledge is growing in importance within international and cross-cultural management (Jack and Westwood, 2009), as emerging economies such as China and India come to the fore; as counties, societies and organizations within the South increasingly find a voice on the world stage; and, as regions such as sub-Saharan Africa become more integrated into a changing global economy (Carmody, 2011) The global ascendancy and dominance following the second world war of Western and specifically US management (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991) can no longer be taken for granted. It is perhaps because of the view of indigenous knowledge as backward and not relevant to modern management (Marsden, 1991) that it has been previously neglected in the management literature. Yet as it emerges as a legitimate area of study, there are two main problems that appear to be surfacing in the embryonic literature.

The first of these problems that the current work seeks to address is the paucity of conceptualization of the 'indigenous'. It is difficult to find specific definitions and conceptualizations in the management literature. There is a need to look beyond the oversimplifications that appear to pertain in this literature in order to develop working definitions of both indigenousness (what it means to be 'indigenous', and the focus of our enquiries) and indigenous knowledge (as distinct from any other type of knowledge). For example, by exploring the wider social science literature, it may be possible to conclude that much of the current interest in 'indigenous' management may not be focused on the indigenous at all, but on what may be regarded as 'endogenous'. This term, to put it one way, does not appear to carry the baggage that the term indigenous does. This baggage, implying a rootedness in colonial relations, which is discussed in more detail below, appears to be mostly ignored by management scholars. Previous use of 'endogenous' in management research appears only to convey a meaning of arising from within the society (Maruyama, 1981) or organization (Schuler, Dowling & de Cieri, 1993). In the current work, this is

proposed as a cleaner concept that could be applied, yet the focus here still remains on indigenous research as a challenging and important addition to management scholarship.

Connected with this first problem is a second that has emerged over the last few years, originally with an upsurge in interest in China in the 1990s, and particularly with the appropriated concept of *guanxi* (for example Tsang, 1998, asking in the title of his article: 'Can guanxi be a source of sustained competitive advantage for doing business in China.'). This is an issue of the commoditization of 'indigenous' management concepts. More recently a concept to be repackaged in order to show that it may be appropriate and (commercially) useful to a Western management consumer context is that of *ubuntu*. Hence titles such as 'Building competitive advantage from ubuntu: management lessons from South Africa' (Mangaliso, 2001) have emerged in Western management journals. This may not necessarily be regarded as negative, as this trend serves to highlight the need to study such concepts. However, it may submerge some very real issues in developing a more informed study of the nature and role of indigenous thought, particularly in a more critical appraisal of this area. It may serve to disguise the dynamic nature of the indigenous within a global and changing world arena.

The assumption that premises the current work is that 'indigenous' knowledge is not an artefact to be preserved (Briggs and Sharp, 2004), nor one that can easily be packaged for Western consumption (Briggs, 2005). Rather it is part of a dynamic within a cultural interface that constantly produces new knowledge and social forms (Jackson, 2011b), albeit through geopolitical power dynamics that have a profound effect on this production. The primary aim of this article is to help lay the foundations for mainstreaming indigenous research within international and cross-cultural management studies, taking sub-Saharan Africa as the primary and initial focus, and using the informal economy as an example.

The objectives of the current work are to:

1. Critically examine the concepts of indigenous management and organization, with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa, but within a global context, examining how concepts and scholarship in this area have been shaped by global dynamics, and the implications for developing empirical research.

2. Develop a research agenda, critical methodology and research tools for undertaking indigenous research within international and cross-cultural management studies.

3. Discuss the importance of this work to the further development of international and cross-cultural management within a global and changing context.

The contribution to scholarship that the current work hopes to make is a more systematic re-examining of the concepts of indigenousness and indigenous knowledge and what these concepts mean to undertaking an approach in international and cross-cultural management that is more globally aware and produces more socially meaningful results; to begin to reshape and more thoroughly develop indigenous management research to reflect these global realities; and, to evaluate indigenous research methods that could be used effectively and appropriately in this endeavour.

This article is structured as follows. In order to begin to critically reconceptualize the indigenous in management research a literature review examines and systematizes definitions and concept of indigenousness and indigenous knowledge, working towards developing a dynamic conceptual framework that incorporates many of these concepts. Concepts and methodologies in indigenous research are then examined in order to develop a research agenda for management and organizational studies, and to develop appropriate research tools. The way forward for international and cross-cultural management, in the context of this emerging scholarship is then interrogated, pointing to the future of indigenous management research.

(Re)conceptualizing the Indigenous in Management Research

Despite the increasing calls in international management studies for the undertaking and integrating of more indigenous research (Tsui, 2004; Panda and Gupta, 2007), there appears to be little attempt at conceptualizing and defining what 'indigenous' actually means: what or who is indigenous? As a subject of study, and perhaps as an emerging area in international management studies, this is somewhat surprising, as it is often difficult to discern exactly what or who we are studying. Where definitions are offered, such as Panda and Gupta's (2007) ''"indigenous" means cultural appropriate', they appear not helpful. Often, within the management literature, there appears to be a lack of reference to the wider social science and humanities literature within which such conceptualization and definitions have taken place over several decades. Definitions and conceptualizations of 'indigenousness' and 'indigenous knowledge' provide a starting place here. Table 1 attempts to distil the literature, by pointing to different definitions, while not claiming to be exhaustive.

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Table 1 about here

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Indigenousness: what does it mean to be indigenous?

Panda and Gupta (2007) offer one of the few definitions from the management literature suggesting that indigenous equals cultural appropriateness (Table 1). What emerges from most of the other definitions, drawn variously from sociology (Dei, 2000), law and legal studies (Weissner, 1999, and Kingsbury, 1998), political organization (UN 2010), education (Smith, 1999), anthropology (Neizen, 2004), and social work (Marais and Marais, 2007) is that indigenousness is not merely a function of localness (Dei, 2000, comes closest to this): that a conceptualization of indigenousness exists as a function of its relatedness to a global dynamic. In many ways that is also a function of who is telling the story: who is conceptualizing indigenousness and for what purpose, as will be seen later in connection with

conceptualizations of indigenous knowledge and indigenous research. Hence Wiessner (1999) sees indigenousness as a function of marginalization. Indigenous people are seen as part of a globalized world through their exclusion from it, and perhaps a victim of globalization, their identity needing to be preserved despite their subjugation. This is the point of Kingsbury's (1998) legal definition of what constitutes indigenousness. If indigenous groups are to claim legal protection in international law from exclusion and dispossession, there needs to be a way of legally defining whether they actually constitute an indigenous group. Similar is the UN's (2010) definition of what constitutes indigenous communities as a function of a political identity, with a determination to preserve their own cultural, social and legal systems.

Hence indigenousness is seen throughout these conceptualizations as a function of wider global processes, in Smith's (1999) terms as a product of colonization, and in Neizen's (2004) concept as a buffer against the ecological damage of global industrialization. The idea of indigenous people living in harmony with nature is also reflected in Dei's (2000) concept that indigenousness is also a function of collective and common values about communal solidarity and relationship to nature and the environment.

These concepts appear far removed from those discussed in the management literature by researchers such as Tsui (2004) and Panda and Gupta (2007) where 'indigenousness' appears to equate with that which is local (or possibly what might be conceived as 'endogenous': a word that captures better the focus of study, within a particular country such as China in the case of Tsui's discussion). In additional to what is local and culturally appropriate (perhaps as a function of place: see Table 1), a concept of indigenousness should assume a relationship, or what Jackson (2011b) has called a cultural interface. This is premised on a colonial relationship (Dei, 2000), where indigenous people have become marginalized (Wiessner, 1999), have a weak voice within a global discourse and have little agency in affecting the way they are researched (Smith, 1999, and discussed in more detail under), and in the way they can influence policy decisions that may result from that research.

What, therefore, is a legitimate subject for indigenous management research? What constitutes 'indigenous' in the management and organization arena? This can be illustrated using the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Although Jackson (2004) hypothesized 'African'[1] management and organization in the form of an ideal type that reflected such values as humanism and communalism, he found it difficult (in a fifteen country study) to identify an 'African' organization or management within the commercial or public sector organizations he investigated. Following Dia (1996) he discussed the disconnection between colonial institutions (Jackson, 2004), including the Western firm (Jackson et al, 2008), and local communities.

As colonial impositions, formal sector organizations were clearly at variance to local values and practices, and he spoke of a number of respondents stating that when going to work in the morning they stepped outside their culture, and when going back home in the evening they stepped back inside their culture. In later research in the local NGO and CBO sector in South Africa he suggested that these organizations may be closer to local African communities (Jackson and Haines, 2007) and therefore more reflective of 'African' values and practices.

Yet a significant part of the total economy of sub-Saharan Africa, the informal sector, is conspicuously missing from the management literature on Africa, and indeed from Jackson's (2004) work referred to above. This sector, which has parallels in many other areas of the world such as Latin America, South East Asia and South Asia, might usefully be studied as a site of indigenousness and indigenous management and organization.

Verick (2006) estimates the average size of the informal economy as a percentage of gross national income (GNI) in sub-Saharan Africa as 42.3 per cent. He estimates that as a percentage of the labour market in sub-Saharan Africa the informal sector represents about three-quarters of non-agricultural employment, and approximately 72 per cent of total

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[1] Jackson (2004) did not use the term 'indigenous' but referred rather to 'African Renaissance' management systems, with the point that it is difficult to turn the clock back to pre-colonial times. Rather, a re-emergence and interest in re-inventing traditions was more in line with the conceptualization of 'African' here.

employment in sub-Saharan Africa (78 per cent if South Africa is excluded). Chen (2001) reports that 93 per cent of new jobs created in Africa during the 1990s were in the informal sector, with Becker/SIDA (2004) pointing out that the informal economy appears to be expanding and permanent. More recently Adams/World Bank (2008) reflects this, pointing to a trend towards people entering the informal sector as a deliberate career choice. Certainly this sector is responsible for extensive skills development and training with Liimatainen/ILO (2002) estimating as many as 70 per cent of urban informal workers in Africa being trained within the traditional apprenticeship system. These apprenticeships consist of private contractual arrangements between an apprentice, or parent, and master crafts person who agrees to provide practical on-job training.

Many aspects of the informal economy represented in the literature mirror those characteristics of indigenousness (identified above and summarized in Table 1) as follows. The informal economy is normally depicted as distinct from while standing in relation to the formal economy. According to Potts (2009) policy often sees the informal sector as backward, needing to be brought into the formal sector, or removed completely. It is also marginalized from, while representing an alternative to mainstream (read imposed (post)colonial) society. World Bank/IMF imposed SAPs, economic liberalization, and a retreat of the state appear to have left huge gaps to be filled by local initiatives as well as survival strategies as suggested by Cheru (2002), in areas including shelter, employment, law and order, transportation, refuse collection, trade and household credit supply. Cheru (2002) claims that the informal sector 'constitutes a dynamic and enduring force that has shaped African cities' (Cheru, 2002: 48). He also suggests that the informal economy represents '..an alternative society, with parallel social and religious institutions alongside the official ones (p. 48-9). As such it represents '..a node of resistance and defiance against state domination' (Cheru, 2002: 49). Not only may it therefore represent a form of political and social identity, for example through defending traditional modes of production and commerce as well as skills development such as traditional apprenticeships, there have been numerous attempts to define in legal terms what constitutes the informal economy, and some even contest its existence:

most African countries define this sector differently leaving comparisons among the countries problematic (Adams/World Bank, 2008).

In sum, indigenousness appears to be a function of place and context, of collective and common values (Dei, 2000) and often seen as part of ecological circumstance (social cohesion and harmony with nature) connected to place or localization (Neizen, 2004). Yet more significantly this is seen in contradistinction to colonial or global powers and a resistance to these powers (Neizen, 2004; Dei, 2000). This puts indigenous people in a marginal situation (Wiessner, 1999) from which they have a weak voice in the total global discourse (Smith, 1999), and from which there is a need to identify them both legally (Kingsbury, 1998) and politically (UN, 2010) in order to assert their right to be identified as 'indigenous'. These aspects appear to be mirrored in the informal sector, which may represent a useful site for investigating indigenous management and organization. The relational and dynamic aspect of this is now further explored in connection with concepts of indigenous knowledge, and again applied to the informal sector of sub-Saharan Africa's economies.

Indigenous knowledge: what constitutes indigenous knowledge and values?

One of Marsden's (1991: 31) usages of the term 'indigenous' is that of 'insider knowledge': local approaches to management that reflect knowledge of the local context and local communities. In pragmatic terms he describes this as a knowledge of the 'local' by local people 'who know what will and will not work'. The problem of conceptualizing indigenousness as a function of place, and of reflecting common values associated with social cohesion and harmony with nature, is the danger of presenting a static view. Indigenous research, and the subject of this research is hampered by change, perhaps more so in the field of management where the increasing and changing nature of internationalization of business and organization leads to a dynamic interaction between local and global influences and processes. This makes a local and static view problematic.

This apparent static view, seen above in concepts of indigenous as a function of place (e.g. Dei, 2000) is reflected widely in concepts of 'indigenous knowledge' (see Table 1). Hence Dei and associates (Hall, Dei, & Rosenberg, 2000; Dei, 1993) see indigenous knowledge(s) as a function of place, but see it in distinction to colonial and 'scientific' knowledge. It is seen as static, and in some ways a pure form of knowledge as a result of '..indigenous peoples' direct experience of the workings of nature and its relationship with the social world' and unadulterated by colonization and globalization. Smith (1999) also appears to conceptualize indigenous knowledge in this sense (Table 1). Seen in this light, it is open to the type of commoditisation apparent in the World Bank's concept of indigenous knowledge, as something that can be used as a '..resource to facilitate the development process in cost-effective...ways' (Warren, 1991:1), and perhaps in the field of management in the packaging of concepts such as *guanxi* and *ubuntu*, as was alluded to above.

Briggs' (2005) conceptualization of indigenous knowledge, which has been quoted at length in Table 1, appears as a critique of such objectification and commoditisation, providing a view of what 'indigenous knowledge' has become. A side effect of this commoditisation and appropriation by, for example the international development industry, is its romanticization. This in itself sees indigenous knowledge '...as being static and timeless, somehow frozen in time' (Briggs, 2005: 108).

This regard for 'indigenous knowledge', as a romanticization, appears not to be the case when looking at the informal economy in sub-Saharan Africa. In large part the other side of the coin appears to prevail: it is disparaged as being outmoded and reflects many of the Western assumptions of 'Africa' generally (in Ahluwalia, 2001, sense of it being a pejorative Western construct). Thus Adams/World Bank (2008: 13) asserts that 'Master craft persons .... do not provide theoretical knowledge alongside practical experience, and more often than not, teach out-dated technologies'. Barasa and Kaabwe (2001) point to the representation of the informal sector as a dumping ground for academic rejects, and therefore held in low esteem by governments, policy makers and the formal sector. Yet their findings in Kenya suggest

that though education levels are generally lower, that in most cases (77 per cent) those who left school and went into the informal sector had attained the necessary qualification to progress to the next level of education if they so wished. Also in view of the significant contributions the informal sector makes to the training of skilled artisans, this representation appears to hamper support and funding for this sector on its own terms. It is likely that knowledge developed in the informal sector is not seen as economically of value to the formal commercial sector, and not easily bundled as a commodity for consumption by consultants and their clients.

Yet there is another aspect of indigenous knowledge: once researched it can be used '...in a top down manner' (Briggs, 2005: 109) as a means of control. This is taken up by Marsden (1991: 37), when he says: 'Knowledge is a key asset in securing control and thus any discussions about it must necessarily recognize the political dimensions of its use.' (see Table 1). From this point of view, researching and objectifying indigenous knowledge in the informal sector, in order to wield more control over it (a policy objective by many Africa governments: Potts, 2008), may well be an attractive proposition worth funding by government agencies. This issue of control (and resistance to it) is later taken up in connection with a discussion of indigenous research. Before moving onto this, it is first necessary to begin to move away from the static view of indigenousness and indigenous knowledge suggested by some of the concepts already discussed, and to start to build a more dynamic view.

Towards a dynamic concept

Many of the concepts and definitions relating to indigenousness set it in relation to colonialism or globalization. This is the conceptual baggage that comes with the idea of 'indigenous' referred to above. This is the reason why a less contentious concept, such as 'endogenous' may reflect better the ideas being discussed in some of the writings on 'indigenous' management (such as Tsui, 2004; Xu & Yang; 2009; Jackson, et al, 2008). As a result of this connection with colonialism and now post-colonialism and globalization, it is

difficult to disconnect a discussion of indigenous people, practices and knowledge from Postcolonial Theory. This appears prominent in some of the broader literature summarized in Table 1, in the specific literature on indigenous research (Smith, 1999) and in the more critical international and cross-cultural management literature that is beginning to deal with indigenous management (Jack & Westwood, 2009). The problem of representation of the informal economy in Africa alluded to above (Potts, 2008), and mirroring this, the issue of the way indigenous knowledge and practices (and 'Africa') have been represented in a pejorative way (Marsden, 1991) is an issue that Postcolonial Theory addresses in terms of the power relations existing at global and local levels. These relations shape the way that activity and knowledge generated for example in the informal economy is seen by both those with power and those without. The latter adopts the view of the former. Said (1978), Spivak (1988) and Bhabha (1994) have provided the seminal works in the development of this theory.

Said (1978) focused on 'orientalism' or the power relations between colonizer and colonized and the representation of the 'East' by the West in both derogatory terms (e.g. regarding traditional apprenticeship as providing outmoded knowledge and skills: Liimatainen/ILO, 2002) and exotic terms (as may be seen above as part of packaging and commoditizing 'indigenous' knowledge). Said (1978) questioned whether the dominant knowledge produced in the West is in fact disinterested, being in alliance with imperial interests.

Spivak (1988) focused more on the gendered nature of this relationship and the way postcolonial discourse has essentialized notions of identity (representing 'the other' by, for example categories of gender or race, but in terms of the present discussion raising the binary notions of indigenous as opposed to Western, scientific knowledge). She questions the ability of 'the subaltern' (in the present context, indigenous person, or someone working in the informal economy) to then speak of themselves in any authentic terms, pointing to their lack of agency, yet seeing this as a space for resistance. It is a major concern in the general literature explored above that indigenous people lack agency in their ability to be heard and affect global discourse (Briggs, 2005). In parallel, this also appears to be the case with those

working in the informal sector in being heard and influencing policy which tends to work towards bringing the informal economy into the formal economy (Kenyon/World Bank, 2007).

Bhabha (1978) focuses on the hybrid nature of the 'Third Space' culturally created by global power dynamics, through attempts of the colonizers to make the colonized mimic them, and through the resistance of the colonized. This is why it is difficult to conceptualize the indigenous and indigenous knowledge as static. The concept of cultural crossvergence, developed in cross-cultural management studies (Ralston, Gaicalone & Terpstra, 1994; Priem et al, 2000), overlaps with Bhabha's (1978) ideas of mimicry and the creation of cultural Third Spaces, yet without integrating concepts of power relations, imposition of institutions and knowledge, and resistance. For this reason crossvergence, on its own as a concept, does not reflect the processes that need to be considered when researching indigenous knowledge in for example the informal economy. However, it does present a theory that suggests that 'culture' does not exist outside of a process (it is not static), and any concept that suggests indigenousness knowledge or practices are static and not constantly changing and adapting has to be challenged.

Space does not allow for a detailed and more nuanced discussion of Postcolonial Theory in the current work, nor is it appropriate to repeat many of the excellent texts in this area (e.g. Ahluwalia, 2001 in the African context, and Jack & Westwood, 2009 in critical international and cross-cultural management studies).The point being made here, is that no proper consideration can be made of indigenousness and indigenous knowledge without including a concept of an ongoing interaction between local and global influences, involving both control and resistance, whereby the subject of our study is marginalized with a weak voice in terms of the total global discourse, and a lack of agency when it comes to influencing policy outcomes that affect them. That these aspects of indigenousness, from the reviewed literature, are paralleled with those often marginalized people working in the informal economy in sub-

Saharan Africa and elsewhere, provides in the current text examples of the way indigenous management research may be conceptualized and conducted.

Before moving on to an examination of indigenous management research, and following from the literature review above, it is incumbent upon the current text to arrive at a working definition and conceptualization of 'indigenous', as well as distinguishing this from what has been alluded to as 'endogenous'. The latter has been proposed as a more apt descriptor of some of the work in management studies that claims to focus on the indigenous, as follows.

Endogenous refers to that which by and large comes from within a given society (Maruyama, 1981), and refers to the specific characteristics, values, ideas, knowledge, institutions and practices that pertain within a society. It is normally distinguished from *exogenous* aspects (e.g. Schuler, Dowling and de Cieri, 1993) that come from outside the society being studied.

Such examples of endogenous characteristics may be *guanxi* or *ubuntu*. Foci of study: normally countries (e.g. China) or parts of countries, but sometime continents (e.g. Africa), that are normally regarded as emerging or developing, but not excluding First World countries.

Indigenous refers to the ongoing product of a relationship between geopolitical control and local resistance, of marginalization of a society or people with common interests, values, knowledge, institutions and practices, and defence of these against encroachment from global or national control.

Such examples of indigenous characteristic may be local credit unions, traditional apprenticeships and craft knowledge arising, community based organizations (CBO) arising in local communities to support women living with HIV/AIDS. Foci of study: informal sector in sub-Saharan African countries; local CBO/NGO sector managing health and community support in South African townships.

Indigenous Research

Concepts of indigenous research

What indigenous research actually constitutes is again problematic, as there appears to be few definitions and explicit concepts in the literature of what it is. Some representative definitions are given in Table 1. Tsui's (2004) concept is now well cited in the sparse international and cross-cultural management literature that deals with indigenous research. This places it as a function of local context, drawing on local constructs, yet one may assume, undertaken largely for the consumption of a Western audience. This view takes out the wider global context. It perhaps assumes it, but does not critique the nature and role of the subject of indigenous research, mainly indigenous knowledge and the nature of indigenousness, and the role of that research itself. In management research Marsden (1991:36) notes that the '...issue is finding the mechanisms that can produce a neater fit between those doing the managing and those being managed.' Hence the'..encouragement of indigenous management ....may be seen as a way of securing greater control by external agencies.' (p.36: see Table 1). For those, such as Portanger (2004: 108) who sees that 'any research is indissolubly related to power and control..' may see that indigenous research should not only be about '..using local language, local subjects, and locally meaningful constructs..' (Tsui, 2004: 501) but also that 'for indigenous peoples, this means being able to make decisions about the research agenda and methodologies for themselves without outside influence' (Porsanger, 2004: 108).

There may therefore be a difference between (1) *research about indigenous peoples and knowledge* and (2) *indigenous research for and by indigenous peoples* .Because of the nature of indigenous research, for example presented by Porsanger (2004), it could be perceived as '...a highly political activity...and can be seen as a threatening activity'(Smith, 1999: 104). This may be because 'knowledge is a key asset in securing control and thus any discussion about it must necessarily recognize the political dimensions of its use (Marsden, 1991:37).

In this way *research about indigenous peoples and knowledge* is 'inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism' (Smith, 1999:1), where, for indigenous people the '..collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized.' (pp.1-2).

Smith (1999: 173) appears then to by marrying up *indigenous research for and by indigenous peoples*, and *research about indigenous peoples and knowledge* when she talks about doing research in '..the cross-cultural context', outlining the types of questions that need to be answered such as: Who defines the research problem? For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so? What knowledge will the community gain from this study? What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study? To whom is the researcher accountable?

Developing a research agenda in management and organization

Thus there appears to be a distinction between a research agenda that reflects *control* (done by outside researchers on indigenous people for purposes that reflect the need to understand and ultimately to affect policy) and an agenda that reflects *resistance* (done by indigenous people, for their own purposes, which may ultimately affect policy decisions about them), with Smith (1999) suggesting that these two agendas may be brought together in cross-cultural research. These different agendas will ultimately reflect the way research is undertaken, and the way the indigenous and indigenous knowledge is represented in the outcomes of research. Postcolonial Theory points to these representations in terms of the power relations existing at global and local levels, which shape the way that such as the informal economy is seen by both those with power and those without. Any scholarly study that involves concepts of 'the other' is a product of an international dynamic including geopolitical power relations as was alluded to above.

Hence Mohan (2002: 157) remarks that 'Postcolonial studies alerts us to the epistemic violence of Eurocentric discourses of the non-West and the possibilities of recovering the voices of the marginalized'. The informal economy is a case in point, and seen by Lindell (2010) as tantamount to marginalization, often through poverty rather than through choice, which is, as was discussed above, often seen through a negative lens. Postcolonial theory suggests that not only the West's representations of 'the other' colour how we see, and research, and manage people and organizations in 'developing' countries, but that 'the other' adopts and internalizes such representations (Said, 1978). This leads to a wholesale adoption of Western education, knowledge and technology, together with the disparaging of local approaches and solutions, and perhaps even research methods and agendas. This prompts Spivak (1988)to assert that local people ('the subaltern') have lost their authentic voice. This has implications for the way scholars research these 'subjects', in the projection of Western representations of 'the other', and the way these representations are reflected back to Western researchers.

This then presents a two-fold issue that has implications for the way we conceptualize indigenous research: the nature of the cultural space which is occupied by, for example, informal sector organizations; and, the way that space is represented.

As a result of the interaction of different cultural influences, typically 'Western' and 'African' in a geopolitical context of colonialism and post-colonialism, it is difficult to speak about 'a culture'. It may be possible to identify cultural influences in a specific socio-cultural space, but not of an 'authentic' or 'indigenous' culture. It is possible to conceptualize such a hybrid cultural space as a social interface (Long, 1989, 2001; Bartsch, Hein and Kohlmorgen; 2007; Jackson and Aycan, 2006) or 'Third Space' (Bhabha, 1994) in Postcolonial Theory. These theoretical approaches enable us to provide a more critical appraisal of the more familiar concept of cultural crossvergence (Ralston, Gaicalone &Terpstra, 1994; Priem et al, 2000) in cross-cultural management studies where little is said about the geopolitical processes that give rise to a hybrid cultural space as was discussed above. In Bhabha's (1994) term the

colonized 'mimic' the colonizers. This enables the colonizers to control the unfamiliar, and for example, to gain acceptance of knowledge transferred in from the West. Yet also in Bhabha's, (1994) concept of mimicry there is an element of resistance. This process of imposition and resistance leads to hybrid cultures, resulting in a cultural 'Third Space' (Bhabha, 1994). From studies such as those by Jackson (2004), it appears that organizations in the formal sector in sub-Saharan Africa have mostly adopted managerial and technical knowledge from the West where 'resistance' has been less than (it could be proposed) in the informal economy.

The informal sector has in some ways followed its own trajectory, although modernizing trajectories have from time to time been proposed. In some cases these have become part of national policy towards the informal economy (Potts, 2009) and in assumptions about 'outdated technologies' in skills development (Adams/World Bank, 2008). Indeed, the interactions that the informal economy has with the formal economy (Barratt Brown, 1995) as discussed above, is likely to provide cross-fertilization, although (one could propose) the direction of knowledge transfer is likely to be from formal to informal. For example as Barasa and Kaabwe (2001) suggest in the context of Kenya, the informal sector is looked down on as employment for the under-educated.

This then raises two interrelated issues in developing a research agenda and in devising appropriate methods to research the indigenous: (1) how is it possible to marry up the two apparently opposing research agendas of *control* and *resistance*? and (2) given the geopolitical force of the dominant representation of the indigenous (paralleled in the current example by the informal economy), how is it possible to give voice to the weaker representation of the indigenous by the indigenous? Table 2 attempts to distil some of the methods that may be used.

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Table 2 about here

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In both instances this involves the researchers' reflexivity (Özkazanç-Pan, 2008) in understanding the historical and geopolitical context of their work, but also involves, in the case being offered as an example, the informal sector organization's workers'/managers'/entrepreneurs' capabilities in resisting representations of the informal sector by the more powerful, including researchers.

It also involves overcoming the weak nature of the agency of those in the informal sector in contributing to such representations, including the nature and product of research. Clearly, research which does not directly involve the active participation, including formulation of the research project, of indigenous actors, in this case from the informal economy, is flawed. One of the biggest problems for Western researchers doing research with partners in Africa is often deference to the 'superior knowledge' of the Western researcher, even by professional and academic colleagues (Jackson, 2004). It is incumbent on the researcher to develop, in partnership, participatory methods that clearly identify the power dynamics within the research process and attempt to control for these. Knowledge comes from somewhere (Flyvbjerg, 2001) it is not impartial, and this needs to be understood, discussed, assimilated and incorporated into the process. In so doing the interests of each party to the research should be interrogated in terms of how this affects the nature of the research and its outcomes, and how are possible conflicts of interests to be dealt with in the research process.

Of major concern should be how to counter the representations of the 'third world' made by researchers and media in the 'first world', given the huge resources of the international development industry, for example, in projecting Africa as backward and in need of Western help and knowledge. Methods of representation, in circumstances of possible limited literacy, and lack of access to an international audience from within the informal sector should be

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considered. Visual methods could be used, such as the pioneering work of Moletsane et al (2009) which explores female representations of poverty and HIV by providing cameras to local women participants, enabling them to represent themselves and their community through visual imagery.

As these power dynamics are acted out within a cultural interface as discussed above (Bhabha's, 1994,Third Space) so it is important for research to focus on the nature of this interface. It is therefore a matter of not just involving workers/organizations from the informal sector under study in the current example, but also those institutions/organizations/individuals that come into contact with or influence such workers, either directly or indirectly: customers, suppliers, government officials/organizations, national and international member organizations, NGOs and lobby groups of which there are now many and growing, national and international policy makers such as funders, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies and supranational policy leaders such as ILO and World Bank.For example, attitudes expressed by those that have a policy role regarding the informal sector, such as Adams/World Bank's (2008) perceptions of traditional apprenticeships reinforcing outmoded technologies, are significant. Such connections of policy bodies and others can be mapped out by researchers, with policy and perceptions emanating from different parties being critically reappraised as a prelude to devising research questions, identifying subjects/participants in research, and finding sources of data.

The use to which the research is going to be put is of course an important issue, and establishing the means and methods of articulation and reporting of research may also be fundamental. The way research is reported, and what is reported is part of this geopolitical dynamic that should be understood, and dealt with within the research partnership. Academic reporting in Western scientific journals serves only one set of (very narrow) interests. How should the results of research be reported to and by indigenous actors, for example in the informal economy, and to what use should be serious questions. The agency of local participants should be an ultimate consideration in terms of what can now be done with the

product of the research, how it can influence policy and how it can extend and strengthen the power of participants in the informal economy within the sphere of influence.

From much of the above discussion, particularly around understanding the cultural Third Space and the influences at this interface, it can be seen that indigenousness and indigenous knowledge is very much a spatial issue: only being understandable in geopolitical context. Yet it is also very much a temporal issue in that it is part of a dynamic involving pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial processes. Jackson (2011a: 230-33) has suggested the term *renaissance* as useful in understanding this temporal aspect in terms of: 'where we were, and who we were'; 'the dynamics that got us here'; and, 'what we are to become'. He warns of the difficulties of going back to pre-colonial times, yet this may be a useful starting point (see for example Ayittey, 1991), as colonialism has tended to distort tradition by, for example, inventing 'tribes' that were not there (see Thomson, 2000, on the Yoruba of Nigeria) and inventing chiefs who were not leaders (see Ayittey, 1991 on the Ga of Ghana) in order to control. Yet even after independence Jackson (2011a: 255) points to 'invented traditions' serving the purpose of the nationalist leaders who mostly had been educated in Western schools and universities, such as Ghandi's denial of the caste system. What we are to become, appears to be a legitimate area of inquiry, within an idea of the indigenous as, for example, the African Renaissance.

Whither Indigenous Research and the Development of International and Cross-cultural Management

Welge & Holtbrugge (1999: 317), over a decade ago, in the context of a postmodern analysis pointed to the difficulty with the contingency approach in international management studies which they asserted '... starts with the proposition that contours and borderlines of a given culture (country, corporation) can be clearly delineated and divided into innerworld (the world of recognized identities and firmly established relationships) and outerworld. ..... But

precisely these prerequisites for possibly exact delineations between inner- and outerworld .... are increasingly less fulfilled through the suspension of spatial borders and the individualization of references. Empirical studies based on contingency theory thus increasingly lead to concepts of reality, which less reflect the object under research but rather the perceptional framework of the researcher.' This has been little heeded in the mainstream trajectory of international and cross-cultural management studies since then (see recent reviews of this area such as Kirkman, Lowe & Gibson, 2006; and, Tsui, Nifadkar & Ou, 2007), which have largely been concerned with delineating 'cultures' and comparing these often as cross-country studies. More recently this has come under scrutiny, largely through critical management scholarship, and often taking a stance from postcolonialism (such as, Frenkel, 2008; Özkazanç-Pan, 2008), and more latterly voicing the importance of research on indigenous management (Jack and Westwood, 2009).

Postcolonial Theory places the focus of any study of 'the other' on geopolitical relations and dynamics, rather than simply locally contextualizing studies of the indigenous. Where this has been taken up in the literature, this has tended to shift the paradigm away from its positivist domain that has tended to dominate in international and cross-cultural management studies. Taking a view from somewhere, in effect recognizing social science in its political mode, is still uncomfortable for many scholars who are now beginning to focus on indigenous management and organization. A critical focus on the nature of indigenous research as both control and resistance is important to the future development of international and cross-cultural management studies. The product of that research in terms of how 'culture' or 'indigenous knowledge' is packaged, and the agenda for its subsequent use has also got salient implications for this area of study. That management studies, as an applied social science, is trailing behind other areas of the social science, is evident by a review of the broader literature on indigenousness and indigenous knowledge that has for many years been concerned with debating and clarifying conceptualizations of the indigenous.

The conservative nature of management studies is also evident by its latterly taking up the debate on postcolonialism as a major theory on the way the world has been shaped over the last few centuries. Yet postcoloniality is time-limited in the sense that geopolitical dynamics are rapidly shifting towards the South, changing our understanding of geopolitics that has been based on North-South or East-West relations. How should we now begin to understand, for example, the relationship between China and Africa? How does this shift our understanding of postcolonial relationships? How does this affect our theories of the indigenous juxtaposed to the colonial and the global?

It is not just the small questions of how we should understand *ubuntu* or *guanxi*, and how can these be used effectively in managing internationally; it is larger questions that international and cross-cultural management studies should be interrogating. It is only through seeing the world in this geopolitical context that research and knowledge creation in areas such as indigenous management and organization can be better understood.

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Table 1. Definitions and concepts of indigenousness, indigenous knowledge and indigenous research

Concept:	Definition/description	Author:	Function/nature of concept:
Indigenousness (What is, or who are indigenous peoples, institutions or societies? What does it mean to be indigenous? What is indigenous identity?)	'Indigenousness' may be defined as knowledge consciousness arising locally and in association with the long-term occupancy of place' (p.72) And, '..the indigenous African sense of being human speaks about compassion, hospitality, generosity, and the wholeness of relationships... African humanness as a value system speaks to the importance of relating to, rather than mastering, nature and the environment... indigenous social values privilege *communal solidarity*..' (p.74)	Dei (2000)	As a function of place, and colonial power relationships. As a function of a collective/common values
	'…indigenous people are best described as groups traditionally regarded, and self defined, as descendants of the original inhabitants of the lands…These people are and desire to be culturally, socially and/or economically distinct from the dominant groups in society, at whose hands they have suffered, in past or present, a pervasive pattern of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion, and dispossession.'	Wiessner, (1999).	As a function of marginalization.
	Essential requirements: self-identification; historical experience; long connection with the region; wish to retain distinct identity. *Strong Indicia*: non-dominance; close cultural affinity with a particular area; historical continuity. *Other relevant indicia*: socio-economic differences; socio-cultural differences; perceived indigenousness.	Kingsbury (1998)	As a function of establishing a legal identity
	'Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which having a *historical continuity* with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, *consider themselves distinct* from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories or parts of them. They form at present *non-dominant sectors* of society and are *determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity*, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems' (p.3)	UN (2010)	As a function of political identity
	'..the world's indigenous populations...share experiences as peoples who have been subjected to colonization of their lands and cultures, and denial of sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate the determine the shape and quality of their lives, even after it has formally pulled out' (p. 7)	Smith (1999)	As a function of power and colonization.
	'Indigenous peoples...collectively represent a corrective to the environment and social abuses of modernity; and indigenous identity tells us as much about widely held concerns over the global impact of reckless industrialization as it does about the	Neizen (2004)	As a function of ecological circumstances

	people and communities directly endangered by it' (p. 70)		
	''Indigenous' means 'culturally appropriate'' (p. 209)	Panda & Gupta (2007)	As a function of cultural appropriateness (in management studies)
	..indigenous people are regarded as people with a social or cultural identity distinct from the dominant or mainstream society, which makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the processes of development. (p. 810)	Marais and Marais (2007)	As a function of distinctiveness from the dominant culture
Indigenous Knowledge (What constitutes indigenous knowledge and values?)	We conceptualize 'indigenous knowledge' as a body of knowledge associated with the long term occupancy of a certain place. This knowledge refers to traditional norms and social values, as well as to mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate the people's way of living and making sense of the world' (p.6)	Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg (Eds.) (2000), Introduction	A knowledge in distinction to colonial (and scientific) knowledge
	'..indigenous knowledges differ from conventional knowledges because of an absence of colonial and imperial imposition..It [indigenous knowledge] includes the cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and worldviews of local peoples as distinguished from Western scientific knowledge. Such local knowledge is the product of indigenous peoples' direct experience of the workings of nature and its relationship with the social world. It is also a holistic and inclusive form of knowledge.' (p. 105)	Dei, G. (1993)	
	'Indigenous peoples have philosophies which connect humans to the environment and to each other and which generate principles for living a life which is sustainable, respectful and possible'. (p.105)	Smith 1999	
	'..indigenous knowledge is an important natural resource that can facilitate the development process in cost-effective, participatory, and sustainable ways ...... Indigenous knowledge (IK) is local knowledge-knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. Such knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, in many societies by word of mouth. Indigenous knowledge has value not only for the culture in which it evolves, but also for scientists and planners striving to improve conditions in rural localities.' (p. 1)	Warren/World Bank (1991)	As a resource or commodity (for development decision makers)
	'If indigenous management is about utilizing local, folk or vernacular knowledge and organizational methods, in the service of more appropriate development strategies, then it is important to investigate how that knowledge is gained and interpreted, what that knowledge is and how it might be most effectively used. Knowledge is a key asset in securing control and thus any discussions about it must necessarily recognize the political dimensions of its use.' (p.37)	Marsden (1991)	As control

	'...whilst indigenous knowledge seems to reject western science's claims to universality and spatial transferability, at the same time its institutionalization casts it as an object that can be essentialized, archived and, indeed, itself transferred. Whether this is the case, or indeed whether the use of indigenous knowledge genuinely does offer a realistic and meaningful way forward for development planning and implementation, is highly contested.' (p.100) And: 'Because of its attractiveness as an alternative, indigenous development, there exists a real danger of over-valorizing and over-romanticizing indigenous knowledge in practice. In an important way, indigenous knowledge serves to empower local communities by valuing local knowledge and, for example, in supporting notions of the 'African renaissance'. ....However, ... such approaches may end up by romanticizing such communities. The difficulty, then, is that indigenous knowledge tends not to be problematized, but is seen as a 'given', almost a benign and consensual knowledge simply waiting to be tapped into.' (p. 107) And: 'Perhaps emanating from its romanticization, there has emerged a representation of indigenous knowledge as being static and timeless, somehow frozen in time.' (p.108) And: '..it is precisely the local embeddedness of indigenous knowledge that imbues it with relevance, applicability and even power. There is, therefore, the real danger that indigenous knowledge will lose its agency and efficacy if it becomes depersonalized and/or objectified, and is used in some sort of top-down manner. There are, therefore, real problems in applying indigenous knowledge ideas out of context. (p.109)	Briggs (2005)	Institutionalization of indigenous knowledge leading to over-romantization, and its appropriation
Indigenous Research (What is indigenous research?)	'Indigenous research is where '..the context is explicitly modeled in the study, either as an independent variable or as a moderator variable....... High quality indigenous research involves scientific studies of local phenomena using local language, local subjects, and locally meaningful constructs, with the aim to test or build theories that can explain and predict the specific phenomenon and related phenomena in the local social cultural context' (p. 501)	Tsui (2004)	Context specific
	IM [indigenous methodologies] can be summarized as research by and for indigenous peoples, using techniques and methods drawn from the traditions of those peoples. This set of approaches simply rejects research on indigenous communities that use exclusively positivistic, reductionist, and objectivist research rationales as irrelevant at best, colonialist most of the time, and demonstrably pernicious as a matter of course. Rather than nonindigenous peoples framing indigenous worldview from a distance, IM situates and is reflected on by research/researchers at the location most relevant to that being gazed on, the indigenous experience. (p. 894)	Evans et al (2009)	Framed by and for indigenous people.

'..a highly political activity.... and can be seen as a threatening activity.' (p. 140)	Smith (1999)	A political activity
'Any research is indissolubly related to power and control, and indigenous scholars take these issues seriously nowadays, making indigenous research part of the decolonization process, which implies an assignment to indigenous peoples of the right to self-determination, not only from a political or economical point of view, but also with respect to research (Smith 1999; Rigney 1999). For indigenous peoples, this means being able to make decisions about the research agenda and methodologies for themselves without any outside influence.' (p. 108)	Porsanger (2004)	As power and control

Table 2 Methods in Indigenous Research

Area	Methodology	Method	Further information
Researchers' reflexivity	*Reflexive praxis* (from Waghid, (2001)	For example: Telling autobiographic stories about self (the researcher) and among selves (researchers).	(Nursey-Bray and Haugstetter, 2011).
	Multi-layered reflexivity	Including: *Transparent, self-reflexivity* where the Western researcher identifies the hidden assumptions underpinning their research, and identifies the context of power and privilege in the research process and context; *Inter-personal reflexivity* which goes beyond individual researcher reflexivity to examine the ability to collaborate, rather than leading, delegating or controlling, including building relations and 'authentic rapport' in interviews rather than interrogational modes of interviewing; and, *Collective reflexivity and catalytic validity* which queries how the process of collaboration shaped the frames of inquiry, how participated and who did not, and the outcomes in terms of practical knowing and social change from the perspective of the community (see also *authenticity* below)	(Nicholls, 2009)
Co-creating the research agenda	*Participatory action research* (e.g. Bartlett et al 2007),	Through: *Conversational interviews* whereby researcher and participants co-create *what* is said and *how* things are said during the interviews, and participants have a high degree of control over the stories that are performed; *Portrait vignettes* whereby stories from interviews are presented enabling community members to have a voice in the research, by refining and developing them; *Authenticity*: different ways are explored in order to authenticate the research, largely through what it has achieved for the community co-researchers, such as social transformation	(Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier & Pheasant, 2011)
Understanding the geopolitical (local-global) network	*Social Network Analysis* (e.g. Galaskiewicz & Wasserman,1994)	Analysing the interface: mapping the numerous connections with, for example firms in the informal sector, in terms of policy makers, trade associations, governments, trade unions, international NGOs, investigating different perceptions, and ultimately bringing them together as stakeholders in the research	Jackson (in press)
How the indigenous (as 'the other') is represented	*Postcolonial Studies& Whiteness studies*	*Critical re-reading* of (Western) dominant accounts of, e.g. the informal sector through (but not exclusively) Postcolonial Theory (see also Whiteness studies and cultural invisibility: McDermott & Samson, 2005)	Smith (1999).
How the indigenous represent themselves	*Decolonizing methodologies*	*Representing* through, e.g. telling stories; visual images and film making; interviewing (how they would represent themselves to policy makers, governments, etc); re-telling the role of women (with a critical view of the way Western/colonial relations have disrupted traditional gender relations, and how women, and men, would represent gender relations and the significant role of women in the informal economy)	(Smith, 1999)
	Visual ethnography (e.g.Pink, 2001;	*Participatory video-making* and *Photovoice:* As a counter to prevailing global representations of for example Africa through media and international development, and low levels of literacy where local participants are given cameras	Moletsane, et al (2009)

		or video cameras to represent themselves. E.g. Moletsane et al (2009) enabled women living with HIV to represent themselves. Wang and associates pioneered 'photovoice' with women in communities in China with low literacy skills resulting in policy changes(e.g. Wang, Burris & Xiang, 1996)	
Where we go from here	*Decolonizing methodologies*	*Envisioning*: how things could be. Rising above current events and situation and dreaming a new dream and setting a new vision.	Smith (1999)
How we get there	*Decolonizing methodologies*	*Reframing*: how the perceptions of issues and problems often presented by governments or policy makers can be redefined or rethought, perhaps in a more positive light, e.g. the informal economy and its contributions can be reframed and (re)presented as a positive force contributed significantly to the economy *Creating* collective solutions; offering something to the outside world: e.g. what can the formal economy learn from the informal economy? *Democratizing and networking*: extending participation in the debate, for example on the informal economy and networking to enable this on a local, national and global level (links to *social network analysis* above). *Negotiating*: working towards long term goals, involving the creation of mutual respect. E.g. between the informal and formal sectors, and with governments and policy makers.	Smith (1999))