Building Wellbeing Economies in Africa
WE-Africa Lab

Economic instability, social inequality, poverty and depletion of energy make it necessary to call into question the conventional development paradigm based on the exploitation of nature, continuous production and consumption, social exclusion and privatization of common resources. In 2015, the international community agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a vision for global progress in the 21st century. This framework urges nations to find new paths towards sustainable development – ways beyond narrowly defined economic growth.

"Our aspirations reflect our desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons."

Agenda 2063; The Africa We Want

Africa presently sits at a crossroads. Its societies are ready to embark on a new developmental trajectory. Yet, there are limited innovations, experiences and practices that can be used to lead this transition. This represents an emerging opportunity for Africans to develop conceptual frameworks and meta-narratives that reflect the kinds of development goals, partnerships and forms of social reciprocity that African societies need as they move further into the 21st century.

In order to address today's complex and interrelated challenges, Africa needs a strong movement of progressive scholars and activists, development practitioners and community leaders, policy makers and business people that are genuinely dedicated to exploring, promoting and practising alternative ways of achieving wellbeing for all.

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The action-research network WE-Africa, the Global Leadership Academy and the African Centre for a Green Economy are launching a Leadership and Innovation Lab that brings together thought leaders and change agents from all sectors of society to co-create ideas and transformative actions for a wellbeing economy. Over the course of one year, the Lab will stimulate critical thinking and innovative practices for the achievement of social, political and economic transformation in Africa.

The WE-Africa Lab will provide a space of inquiry and experimentation around the following core objectives:

Fostering individual and collective leadership. Dynamic and complex realities call for collective leadership focusing on enabling collaboration, rather than heroic leadership pushing for unilateral decisions.

Encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration. The Lab will provide an opportunity to develop and consolidate links between a diverse group of people, committed to a profound social, political and economic transition in Africa.

Developing transformative action. The Lab will provide an experimental space that merges research and practice with a view to generating innovations for a wellbeing economy. Transformative actions may be small-scale or span across countries and partners.

Supporting a continental network of change makers. Through its research-action orientation, the Lab will contribute to the development of a continent-wide network of change agents. The Lab will strengthen the WE-Africa network, an alliance spanning the continent and involving more than 50 change leaders, which will guarantee the sustainability and long-term efficacy of the Lab.

Impacting global discourses on development. Ideas, findings, recommendations and transformative actions that emerge during the Lab process will be fed into relevant networks to impact the global debate on development in the 21st century.

Our approach

The WE-Africa Lab uses a unique combination of deep dialogue on content challenges, leadership development and change facilitation. The process makes space for new perspectives, enabling profound reflection, experiential learning, and tangible action to empower participants to advance their work and that of their home organisations significantly.

The Lab will combine two regional gatherings, local dialogues and online exchanges in a one-year process. During these gatherings, participants will:
• explore alternative development paradigms,
• reflect collectively on how the untapped potential of knowledge diversity and intellectual capital can be a source of innovation and
• design collaborative transformative actions.

Between the two gatherings, participants organise dialogues in their home contexts to share the ideas developed in the Lab with local and national stakeholders, bring their voices into the conversation and develop new perspectives on familiar systems.

Moderated peer online conversations and facilitated reflection sessions will enable participants to review lessons learnt and share experiences with the regional Lab group. Throughout the Lab, inputs by leading alternative thinkers and practitioners will inspire new thinking. During the final gathering, in October 2017, the transformative actions will be presented to African policy makers, leaders from business and civil society, the general public and the media.

Participants

The WE-Africa Lab brings together up to 25 participants from various African countries. Participants will come from different backgrounds and sectors. They may be academics, business leaders, social innovators, policymakers, artists, journalists or other. Common to all is that they espouse the mission of the WE-Africa network (www.we-africa.org) and are deeply committed to the economic and societal transformation of the continent. If you are interested in participating, please request our participant information sheet (see below for contact details).

Dates and Locations

Locations and dates for the two regional gatherings are:

Cape Town, South Africa: 13 – 17 November 2016
Pretoria, South Africa (tbc): 29 October – 2 November 2017

The local dialogues will be self-organised by Lab participants.

The convening organizations
WE-Africa Network

WE-Africa is an alliance of likeminded scholars and practitioners who share a common concern about the current socio-economic conditions in which we live and are willing to work together to promote a transition to a wellbeing-based economy for Africa. It is an action-research network, which aims to consolidate evidence for change while focusing on building a new economy and promoting alternative development policies. The nexus between research and action is a crucial component of WE-Africa's work.

The Global Leadership Academy

The Global Leadership Academy addresses global issues and works with its international partners to provide reflective dialogue spaces ('Leadership and Innovation Labs'). Based on new perspectives and insights, leaders and change agents from the fields of policy-making, business, academia and civil society develop innovative approaches and solutions to problems in their areas of influence. Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Global Leadership Academy is a central component in GIZ's range of services for international human capacity development.

African Centre for a Green Economy

The African Centre for a Green Economy (Africege) is a think tank and innovation hub supporting the transition to a new economy. Through engaging with policymakers, business leaders and academia, Africege seeks to inspire a generation of change makers to help Africa transition to a new and just economy that promotes human wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Further partners

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