

# Reconstructing the Indigenous in African Management Research

## Implications for International Management Studies in a Globalized World

Terence Jackson

### 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 management 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 indigenesness and indigenous knowledge drawing on a range of disciplines 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.

**Keywords:** Indigenous management · Endogenous management · Sub-Saharan Africa · Informal economy · International and cross-cultural management

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## Introduction

A search on the term 'indigenous' of *Management International Review* produced 74 articles dating from 1985 to 2009. Of these 74 articles, the current author could find no explanation or definition of this term. Dunning (1993, p. 12) speaks of "analyzing the net benefits of MNE activity, as compared with that of *indigenous* or non-MNE firms", Gooderham et al. (1998, p.47) compares US HRM practices "...with those of *indigenous* firms...", Cantwell et al. (2004, p.59), in connection with the internationalization of R&D, speaks of "...*indigenous* technological capabilities..." and Husted and Allen (2009, p. 786) mention that "*Indigenous* expressions of CSR have a long history in Mexico..." (emphasis added). While Dunning describes indigenous by what it is not (i.e., non-MNE firms), mostly this word is used without explanation or definition, and certainly without any analysis. This term has been used extensively in international management and business studies, yet even where Stening and Skubik (2007, p. 115) states, in relation to ethics in international management research, that there are "moves to create *indigenous* theories and research instruments in management" there is no attempt to discuss what this concept actually means. There is a need to critically examine what *indigenous* actually means if indigenous management research is to move forward, and if indigenous approaches are indeed to be integrated into international management research.

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 countries, 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 and Adler 1991) can no longer be taken for granted. It is perhaps because of the view that indigenous knowledge is backward and not relevant to modern management (Marsden 1991) that its serious study 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'. There is a need to look beyond the oversimplifications that appear to pertain in the management 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, is mostly ignored by management scholars. Previous use of 'endogenous' in management research conveys a meaning of arising from within the society (Maruyama 1981) or organization (Schuler et al. 1993). This is proposed here as a cleaner concept that could be applied,

yet the current focus still remains on indigenous research as a challenging and important addition to management scholarship.

The second problem emerging 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'.) is the commoditization of 'indigenous' management concepts. Ubuntu has more recently been thus packaged to show its commercial usefulness to a Western management consumer context, giving rise to titles such as 'Building competitive advantage from ubuntu: management lessons from South Africa' (Mangaliso 2001) in Western management journals. This may not necessarily be regarded as negative, yet it may submerge some very real issues in developing a more informed and critical study of the nature and role of indigenous management thought. 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 a more critical international and cross-cultural management studies, taking sub-Saharan Africa as the primary and initial focus, and using the informal economy as an example: a part of the economy that accounts for a large percentage of GDP and employment throughout the world yet has been neglected by mainstream international management scholars; a part of the economy where rich data could be obtained to help understand indigenous management and how it could contribute to areas such as CSR, business ethics, human resource management and particularly those other areas related to inward investment to regions regarded, like sub-Saharan Africa, as 'developing', and also in understanding aspects related to trade between emerging economies such as China in its relations with African countries, and in enhancing the way cross-cultural management studies (post-Hofstede) could make a greater contribution to international business and management.

The objectives of the current work are therefore 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 indigenesness and indigenous knowledge, drawing from the wider social sciences and applying them to an international and cross-cultural

management studies 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 endeavor.

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 indigenusness and indigenous knowledge, working towards developing a dynamic conceptual framework that incorporates many of these concepts. This is an urgent and necessary exercise given the paucity of conceptualization in international management studies pointed to above. Concepts and methodologies in indigenous research are then examined in order to develop a research agenda for international management 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, and the areas it could help to elucidate.

### **(Re)conceptualizing the Indigenous in Management Research**

Where definitions are offered in management studies, such as Panda and Gupta's (2007) "'indigenous' means cultural appropriate", they appear not to be helpful. There is a lack of reference to the wider social science and humanities literature within which such conceptualization and definitions have taken place over several decades. As an applied social science management studies should not ignore these developments in the wider social sciences, yet often this cross-fertilization across disciplines does not happen. Definitions and conceptualizations of 'indigenusness' and 'indigenous knowledge' provide a starting place here. Table 1 systematizes some of these different definitions.

#### **Indigenusness: What Does it Mean to Be Indigenous?**

Panda and Gupta's (2007) definition has been shown in Table 1, yet what emerges from most of the other definitions, drawn variously from sociology (Dei 2000), law and legal studies (Weissner 1999; Kingsbury 1998), political organization (UN Definition cited in Escárcega 2010), education (Smith 1999), anthropology (Neizen 2004), and social work (Marais and Marais 2007) is that indigenusness is not merely a function of localness (Dei 2000, comes closest to this). Indigenusness 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 indigenusness and for what purpose, as will be seen later in connection with conceptualizations of indigenous knowledge and indigenous research. Hence Weissner (1999) sees indigenusness as a function of marginalization. Indigenous people are seen as part of a globalized world through their exclusion from it, their identity needing to be preserved despite their subjugation. This is the point of Kingsbury's (1998) legal definition. If indigenous groups are to claim legal protection in international law from exclusion and dispossession, there needs to be a way of legally defining them as an indigenous group. Similar is the UN's (2010)

**Table 1:** Definitions and concepts of indigeness, indigenous knowledge and indigenous research

Concept	Definition/description	Author	Function/nature of concept
<i>Indigeness</i> (What is, or who are indigenous peoples, institutions or societies? What does it mean to be indigenous? What is indigenous identity?)	<p>“Indigeness’ may be defined as knowledge consciousness arising locally and in association with the long-term occupancy of place” (p. 72)</p> <p>And,</p> <p>“...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)</p> <p>“...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”</p> <p><i>Essential requirements:</i> self-identification; historical experience; long connection with the region; wish to retain distinct identity.</p> <p><i>Strong Indicia:</i> non-dominance; close cultural affinity with a particular area; historical continuity.</p> <p><i>Other relevant indicia:</i> socio-economic differences; socio-cultural differences; perceived indigeness</p> <p>“Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which having a <i>historical continuity</i> with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, <i>consider themselves distinct</i> from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories or parts of them. They form at present <i>non-dominant sectors</i> of society and are <i>determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity</i>, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems” (p. 3)</p> <p>“...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)</p>	<p>Dei (2000)</p> <p>Wissenschaft (1999)</p> <p>Kingsbury (1998)</p> <p>UN Definition cited in Escárrega (2010)</p> <p>Smith (1999)</p>	<p>As a function of place, and colonial power relationships</p> <p>As a function of a collective/common values</p> <p>As a function of marginalization</p> <p>As a function of establishing a legal identity</p> <p>As a function of political identity</p> <p>As a function of power and colonization</p>

**Table 1:** (continued)

Concept	Definition/description	Author	Function/nature of concept
	<p>“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 people and communities directly endangered by it” (p. 70)</p> <p>“Indigenous means culturally appropriate” (p. 209)</p>	Neizen (2004)	As a function of ecological circumstances
	<p>“... 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)</p>	Panda and Gupta (2007)	As a function of cultural appropriateness (in management studies)
<p><i>Indigenous knowledge</i> (What constitutes indigenous knowledge and values?)</p>	<p>“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)</p> <p>“... 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)</p> <p>“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)</p>	Marais and Marais (2007) Dei et al. (2000), Introduction Dei (1993)	As a function of distinctiveness from the dominant culture A knowledge in distinction to colonial (and scientific) knowledge
	<p>“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)</p>	Smith (1999)	

**Table 1:** (continued)

Concept	Definition/description	Author	Function/nature of concept
	<p>“...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)</p>	Warren (1991)	As a resource or commodity (for development decision makers)
	<p>“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)</p>	Marsden (1991)	As control
	<p>“... 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)</p>	Briggs (2005)	Institutionalization of indigenous knowledge leading to over-romanticization, and its appropriation
And:	<p>“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)</p>	And:	“Perhaps emanating from its romanticization, there has

**Table 1:** (continued)

Concept	Definition/description	Author	Function/nature of concept
	<p>emerged a representation of indigenous knowledge as being static and timeless, somehow frozen in time". (p. 108)</p> <p>And:</p> <p>"...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)</p>	Tsui (2004)	Context specific
<p><i>Indigenous research</i> (What is indigenous research?)</p>	<p>"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)</p> <p>"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 positivist, 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 situations and is reflected on by research/researchers at the location most relevant to that being gazed on, the indigenous experience". (p. 894)</p> <p>"...a highly political activity.... and can be seen as a threatening activity". (p. 140)</p> <p>"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)</p>	Evans et al. (2009)	Framed by and for indigenous people
		Smith (1999) Porsanger (2004)	A political activity As power and control

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 indigenouness 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 indigenouness is also a function of collective and common values about communal solidarity and relationship to nature and the environment (and therefore of interest to international management scholars concerned with CSR issues).

These concepts appear far removed from those discussed in the management literature by researchers such as Tsui (2004) and Panda and Gupta (2007) where 'indigenouness' appears to equate with that which is local. In addition to what is local and culturally appropriate (perhaps as a function of place: see Table 1), a concept of indigenouness 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 in the way they can influence business decisions that may result from that research such as in CSR practices of international companies that affect local communities and HRM practices that affect the nature of local employment.

Hence, what may be termed 'endogenous' knowledge and more appropriate to what has been referred to in the management literature as 'indigenous' does not take cognizance of the political nature of a dominant global management discourse that marginalizes indigenous voices. To adequately research indigenous management, scholars have to find a way to cut through the political nature of such marginalization, provide a way of enabling indigenous managers to express themselves in areas such as CSR and environment issues, HRM and local staffing, and the way MNEs develop local organizations to better fit local environments, and ensure they have sufficient agency to affect the research and what it will be used for. By its nature, indigenous research is overtly political while endogenous research appears apolitical. The conservative nature of extant international management scholarship may steer scholars away from indigenous research. Yet this would miss a great opportunity to learn from indigenous knowledge in the wider global context.

What, therefore, is a legitimate subject for indigenous management research? What constitutes 'indigenous' in the management arena? This can be illustrated using the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Although Jackson (2004) hypothesized 'African'<sup>1</sup> 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 appeared at variance to local values and practices, and he spoke of a number of respondents in business and public sector organizations 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:

clearly at variance to local ‘indigenous’ values or institutions. In later research he suggested that community-based organizations and NGOs growing out of local communities may be closer to African values and practices (Jackson and Haines 2007).

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, may provide a more useful site of indigenusness and indigenous management and organization, whereas formal organizations in the commercial and public sectors may not directly reflect such ‘indigenusness’.

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%, representing approximately 72% of total employment. It is responsible for extensive skills development and training with Liimatainen/ILO (2002) estimating as many as 70% of urban informal workers in Africa being trained within the traditional apprenticeship system. With the informal economy also representing some 38% of official GNI in transitional countries and 18% in OECD countries (Schneider 2002) this is a large part of the world economy for international management scholars to ignore. A concomitant of this neglect is the lack of tools and concepts to research this area, as well as a gap in knowledge that could be useful in further understanding management within the total global economy.

Many aspects of the informal economy represented in the literature mirror those characteristics of indigenusness (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. As the informal sector is often seen as backward and needing to be brought into the formal sector (Potts 2008), it is also marginalized from, while representing an alternative to mainstream business and society. World Bank/IMF imposed structural adjustment programs (SAPs), economic liberalization, and a retreat of the state appear to have left huge gaps to be filled by local and community-based business initiatives in areas including housing, employment, law and order, transportation, refuse collection, trade and household credit supply (Cheru 2002), with the informal sector constituting “...a dynamic and enduring force that has shaped African cities’ and representing “...an alternative society, with parallel social and religious institutions alongside the official ones’ and “...a node of resistance and defiance against state domination” (Cheru 2002, pp. 48–49). As such it plays a role in defending traditional modes of production and commerce as well as skills development such as in traditional apprenticeships (Adams 2008).

Indigenusness therefore 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), including dominant modes of business, organizing and managing in a context of globalization. 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 Definition cited in Escárcega 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, where indigenous businesses have developed and prospered, and perhaps where lessons can be learned for the formal sector where indigenous knowledge, values and institutions may have been lost or submerged. The relational and dynamic aspect of this is now further explored in connection with concepts of indigenous knowledge, and again explored in connection with the informal sector of sub-Saharan Africa's economies.

### Indigenous Knowledge: What Constitutes Indigenous Knowledge and Values?

One of Marsden's (1991, p. 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 indigeness 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 making it difficult to envisage an integration of indigenous and global knowledge, and reflecting a view that either denies the value of indigenous management knowledge, or commoditizes it for easy packaging and using off-the-shelf in international management.

Briggs' (2005) conceptualization of indigenous knowledge, which has been quoted at length in Table 1, appears as a critique of such objectification and commoditization. Hence easily packaged management concepts such as *guanxi* or *ubuntu* see indigenous knowledge "...as being static and timeless, somehow frozen in time" (Briggs 2005, p. 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 pejorative assumptions of 'Africa' generally, as having nothing to contribute to the global discourse on business and management. So, in connection with traditional apprenticeships Adams (2008, p. 13) asserts that "Master craft persons... do not provide theoretical knowledge alongside practical experience, and more often than not, teach outdated 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 business leaders in the formal sector. Their findings in Kenya disabuse this representation. Yet in view of the significant contributions the informal sector makes to the training of skilled artisans, and the lack of research, this representation appears to hamper support and funding in such areas as business and management training for this sector on its own terms. A static view, and a derogator one, appears to hamper informed research of the informal economy as a site for indigenous knowledge. A dynamic concept needs to be developed to integrate indigenous management knowledge into the wider global discourse and practice of international management.

## Towards a Dynamic Concept

Many of the concepts and definitions relating to indigenouness set it in relation to colonialism or globalization: that it is a weak voice in relation to the globalization of business, often at variance to it, and sometimes in opposition to it. 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 and 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 and 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, more latterly in the way international management is conceptualized and researched (Jack and Westwood 2009; Jack et al. 2008). 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 (1978/1995), Spivak (1988) and Bhabha (1994) have provided the seminal works in the development of this theory.

Said (1978/1995) 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 (1978/1995) questioned whether the dominant knowledge produced in the West is in fact disinterested, being in alliance with imperial interests, and perhaps in the case of international management knowledge reflecting the interests of globalized business organizations.

Spivak (1988) questions the ability of 'the subaltern' (in the present context, indigenous person, or someone working in the informal economy) to 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), and indeed to affect research and contribute to international management that could be more appropriate to local peoples' lives. In parallel, this also appears to be the case with those working in the informal sector in being heard and influencing decisions which tends to work towards bringing the informal economy into the formal economy (Kenyon/World Bank 2007), rather than, for example, providing appropriate management and business education and training for those (often the majority) who work and operate in the informal economy, and making attempts to learn from the informal sector as a source of indigenous knowledge that can be fed into formal sector business and management practices.

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 indigenious knowledge as static. The concept of cultural crossvergence, developed in cross-cultural management studies (Ralston et al. 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 in international management studies, does not reflect the processes that need to be considered when researching indigenous knowledge in for example the informal economy.

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 and Westwood 2009 in critical international and cross-cultural management studies). The point being made here, is that no proper consideration can be made of indigenouness and indigenious 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 management discourse, and a lack of agency when it comes to influencing business and policy decisions that affect them (for example, the extent to which informal enterprises are encouraged or hindered, and the provision for training and business development) and the way management is done in a local-global context. That these aspects of indigenouness, 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 indigenious management research may be conceptualized and conducted, and how it may be integrated into mainstream international management.

Before moving on to an examination of indigenious management research, and following from the literature review above, it is incumbent upon the current author to arrive at a working definition and conceptualization of 'indigenious', 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 indigenious, as follows.

*Endogenous* refers to that which 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 et al. 1993) that come from outside the society being studied.

Such examples of endogenous characteristics may be *guanxi* or *ubuntu*. The foci of study would normally be countries (e.g., China) or parts of countries, but sometimes continents (e.g., Africa), that are regarded as emerging or developing, but not excluding First World countries. It reflects an apolitical use, and judging from the above literature review, should be a substitute for the extant use of 'indigenious' in the management literature, a term that clearly has political connotations.

*Indigenious* refers to the on-going 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 defense of these against encroachment from global or national control.

Such examples of indigenous characteristics may be derived from local credit unions, traditional apprenticeships and craft knowledge arising; and community-based organizations (CBO) arising in local communities. The Foci of study could be the ‘sites’ of indigenous knowledge such as the informal sector in sub-Saharan African countries as discussed, or organizational and institutional forms arising out of local communities such as CBOs and NGOs, as well as credit unions. Jackson (2004) identified, for example, Afriland First Bank in the formal commercial sector of Cameroon as an ‘African’ organization, and could be thought of as a site of indigenous management. Similarly Mutabazi’s (2002) case of a factory set up near Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo based on African principles may also be so regarded. Yet examples in the literature are few. As a process of hybrid knowledge production, involving power relations between global and local, ‘indigenous’ as distinct from endogenous, clearly has a political aspect that should be understood by management scholars.

## Indigenous Research

### Concepts of Indigenous Research

What indigenous research actually constitutes is again problematic, as there appears to be few definitions and explicit concepts even in the wider 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 indigenouness, and the role of that research itself. In management research Marsden (1991, p.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” (Table 1). For those, such as Porsanger (2004, p. 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, p.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, p. 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, p. 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, p.37). The use that the product of international management research is going to be put to by MNEs competing in Africa with local companies, was an issue put to Jackson (2004) by local managers in Kenya being interviewed, where there was a concern that this knowledge could be used by foreign MNEs to better control markets and to better compete with local firms.

In this way *research about indigenous peoples and knowledge* is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (Smith 1999, p.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”. This is an issue that appears pertinent in Africa, and should be understood by management researchers.

Smith (1999, p.173) appears then to be 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? These are questions that should be carried over into international management research.

### Developing a Research Agenda in International Management

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 inform international managers for their own purposes including control) and an agenda that reflects *resistance* (done by indigenous people, for their own purposes, which may ultimately affect the type of policy and business environment within which they operate, and may provide challenges to accepted ways of managing local people and resources by, for example, MNEs), 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 indigenous knowledge is represented in the outcomes of research, and integrated into international management scholarship.

Postcolonial Theory points to these representations in terms of the power relations existing at global and local levels. Hence Mohan (2002, p. 157) remarks that “[p]ostcolonial studies alert 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’ color how we see, and research, and manage people and organizations in ‘developing’ countries, but that ‘the other’ adopts and internalizes such representations (Said 1978/1995). This leads to a wholesale adoption of Western education, knowledge and technology, together with the disparaging of local management approaches and

solutions, and perhaps even research methods and agendas (Jackson 2004, pointed this out in connection with the prevalence of Western curricula of MBA courses in Anglo-phone African countries, and to the deference to Western researchers given by African researchers). This follows Spivak's (1988) assertion that local people ('the subaltern') have lost their authentic voice. This has implications for the way management scholars research these 'subjects', in the projection of Western representations of 'the other', and the way these (negative) 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, in the current example, by informal sector organizations in Africa; and, the way that space is represented by, for example, management researchers.

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'. For example Jackson (2004) identified at least three types of cultural-historical influences on management in Africa: *postcolonial*, or the remains of colonial management imported into Africa and institutional arrangements imposed on local communities; *post-instrumental* or Western influences from MNEs often seen by the West as a solution to the inefficiencies of 'African' management; and, *Africa renaissance* or nascent local management knowledge such as ubuntu in South Africa. In addition, all African countries are multi-cultural with, for example, over 250 separate ethno-linguistic groups in Cameroon and eleven official languages in South Africa. With intermarriage, increased urbanization and cosmopolitanization it is difficult to speak of a discrete 'culture' (Jackson 2004).

Although the informal sector has in some ways followed its own trajectory (Cheru 2002), interactions with the formal economy (Brown 1995) 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 in management research? Table 2 attempts to distil some of the methods that may be used.

In both instances this involves the researchers' reflexivity (Özkazanç-Pan 2008) in understanding the historical and geopolitical context of their work (for the management researcher in Africa, understanding the historical context of colonialism and the modern context of globalization), but also involves (in the case being offered as an example of a site for indigenous knowledge) the informal sector organization's workers'/managers'/entrepreneurs' capabilities in resisting representations of the informal sector by the more powerful, including researchers. This first issue is addressed in Table 2 by reflexive praxis and multi-layered reflexivity. In both cases there is an assumption that the research process is a sharing one, and that indigenous researchers will have an equal role to play. Yet it also involves overcoming the weak nature of the agency of those in the informal sector in

**Table 2:** Methods in indigenous research

Area	Methodology	Method	Further information
Researchers' reflexivity	<i>Reflexive praxis</i> (from Waghid (2001)) <i>Multi-layered reflexivity</i>	For example: Telling autobiographic stories about self (the researcher) and among selves (researchers)  Including: <i>Transparent, self-reflexivity</i> 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; <i>Inter-personal reflexivity</i> 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, <i>Collective reflexivity and catalytic validity</i> 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 <i>authenticity</i> below)	Nursey-Bray and Haugstetter (2011) Nicholls (2009)
Co-creating the research agenda	<i>Participatory action research</i> (e.g., Bartlett et al. 2007)	Through: <i>Conversational interviews</i> whereby researcher and participants co-create <i>what</i> is said and <i>how</i> things are said during the interviews, and participants have a high degree of control over the stories that are performed; <i>Portrait vignettes</i> whereby stories from interviews are presented enabling community members to have a voice in the research, by refining and developing them; <i>Authenticity</i> : 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 et al. (2011)
Understanding the geopolitical (local-global) network	<i>Social network analysis</i> (e.g., Galaskiewicz and 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 (2012b)
How the indigenous (as 'the other') is represented	<i>Postcolonial studies &amp; whiteness studies</i>	<i>Critical re-reading</i> of (western) dominant accounts of, e.g., the informal sector through (but not exclusively) postcolonial theory (see also whiteness studies and cultural invisibility: McDermott and Samson, 2005)	Smith (1999)

**Table 2:** (continued)

Area	Methodology	Method	Further information
How the indigenous represent themselves	<i>Decolonizing methodologies</i>	<i>Representing</i> 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)
	<i>Visual ethnography</i> (e.g., Pink 2001)	<i>Participatory video-making</i> and <i>photovoice</i> : As a counter to prevailing global representations of for example Africa through media and international develop, and low levels of literacy where local participants are given cameras 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 et al. 1996)	Moletsane et al. (2009)
Where we go from here	<i>Decolonizing methodologies</i>	<i>Envisioning</i> : 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	<i>Decolonizing methodologies</i>	<i>Reframing</i> : 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 <i>Creating</i> collective solutions; offering something to the outside world: e.g., what can the formal economy learn from the informal economy? <i>Democratizing and networking</i> : 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 <i>social network analysis</i> above) <i>Negotiating</i> : 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)

contributing to such representations, including the nature and product of research. Hence participatory action research is suggested (Table 2), where for example in conversational interviews researcher and participant co-create the product of the interview and participants exercise a high degree of control over what the research is actually creating. 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. Table 2 also therefore proposes social network research as a way of analyzing where management and organizations being studied are situated as an interface of numerous influences, mapping their many connections with different institutions, leaders and policy bodies for example; examining the power relations with each and the Third Spaces (Bhabha 1994) this creates. For example, attitudes expressed by those that have a policy role regarding the informal sector, such as Adams' (2008) perceptions of traditional apprenticeships reinforcing outmoded technologies, are significant and may have a profound effect on the local business environment. 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. These different identified influences (individuals or corporate bodies) can also be brought into the research as stakeholders.

If the above addresses the issue of what shapes the subject of our study, and what are the different influences on indigenous knowledge, for example of the informal sector, the major concern that many of the methods suggested in Table 2 address is 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, and the resources in the formal commercial sectors, which in areas such as mining and oil exploration have largely over-ridden the interests and views of local communities (e.g., Hendry 2000, on the much-discussed case of Shell in Nigeria). Hence methods, such as a critical re-reading of dominant (Western) accounts of the informal sector, which draw on Postcolonial Theory, and interestingly 'whiteness studies' in the United States which examines the apparent invisibility of American culture (Jackson 2012a) should be a prerequisite to empirical research (Table 2). Yet the problem of representation involves both the researcher and the researched.

Methods of representation, in circumstances of possible limited literacy, and lack of access to an international audience from within the informal sector should be considered. Hence Smith (1999) suggests such 'decolonizing methodologies' as telling stories, visual

imaging and film making by indigenous people. Visual ethnography methods could be used, such as the pioneering work of Moletsane et al. (2009) which explores female community representations by providing cameras to local women participants, enabling them to represent themselves and their communities through visual imagery. These methods represent an attempt to challenge accepted images of, for example, poverty in Africa, and the backwardness of Africa's informal economy. Yet Smith (1999) goes further in proposing methods such as 'envisioning' to suggest possibly trajectories in terms of what directions and goals research could help with, and 'reframing' in suggesting how change may be made by redefining directions and means as previously defined by government bodies or business leaders in the formal economy and reinterpreting them. This would presuppose, as above, extending participation in the research process, as well as goal-setting through negotiation in a spirit of mutual respects (Table 2).

The research methods described in Table 2 are not intended to be exhaustive, nor to provide a detailed description within the confines of limited space. Nor do they purport to exclude more established methods such as questionnaire surveys. For example the Delphi approach for seeking expert input using an iterative feedback technique in building questionnaire items described by Noorderhaven and Tidjani (2001) in their cross-cultural management research in Africa may be useful in integrating indigenous knowledge(s) and interests into management surveys. Yet those proposed in Table 2 are with the direct purpose in mind of giving greater representation to indigenous voices and are drawn from the wider social science literature on indigeness, and as yet are under-used in international and cross-cultural management research. They specifically address the need to marry up the two apparently opposing research agendas of control and resistance and to give voice to the weaker representation of the indigenous by the indigenous in management research as discussed above.

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 leadership among those organizations and businesses that come into contact with the informal sector, 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 indigeness 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, pp. 230–233) 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, p. 255) points to ‘invented traditions’ serving the purpose of the nationalist leaders who mostly had been educated in Western schools and universities. ‘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. In the African case, therefore, the intricacies of not only different cultural and institutional influences on management, but also of invented ‘indigenesness’, provides a complex arena in which to discern the indigenous influences that could form an important aspect in international management scholarship, and inform international management practice.

### **Whither Indigenous Research in International and Cross-cultural Management**

Welge and Holtbrügge (1999, p. 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 inner world (the world of recognized identities and firmly established relationships) and outer world... But precisely these prerequisites for possibly exact delineations between inner and outer world... 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 perceptual 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 et al. 2006; Tsui et al. 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), although little of this emerging literature mentions Africa. This is surprising as any management researcher working in sub-Saharan Africa will know that geopolitical and local power dynamics as well as complex cultural diversity and interaction are manifest. Critical issues in international management as diverse as employment of local staffs, particularly in view of often difficult labor relations (Wood 2011), and CSR especially with regard to often problematic management of community relations (Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah 2011), the nature of business organizations in Africa, their local embeddedness, and their orientation to local markets are all issues that have not been adequately scrutinized through a critical examination of indigenous knowledge and its integration into management decision making, other than a cursory consideration of well-packaged formulas such as Ubuntu, and least of all through the types of indigenous research methods proposed above that are designed to give greater agency to indigenous voices. In this respect extant international

and cross-cultural management scholarship has not served well international and local managers, staffs and local communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

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 dominated 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 indigenism and indigenous knowledge that has for many years been concerned with debating and clarifying conceptualizations of the indigenous. It is a necessary prerequisite of studying indigenous knowledge that management scholars should also go through this process of critically examining what they are looking at.

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, and between India 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? Here is not the place to delve further into these questions that are beginning to be examined in other texts (Jackson 2012b). Yet, again, understanding issues of what indigenous means is a prerequisite to international management scholars examining the implications of these emerging dynamics.

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.

## Endnote

- 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.

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