"UBUNTU" AND THE 'PROSPERITY ROAD': FROM THEORY TO THRIVING COMMUNITIES

"Names and terms are critical in conveying and branding a complex message."

UBUNTU

Since I began working in Africa, the word *Ubuntu* appeared, reappeared, and crossed my path many times.

It didn't take much for me to fall in love with the Ubuntu philosophical concept.

If you don't know this term, keep reading; you will surely love it.

Ubuntu:

Its Source: From the traditional African philosophy, particularly in the Nguni Bantu languages of Southern Africa, including Zulu and Xhosa.

Axiom: People need other people to thrive; hence, their prosperity depends on that of the collective to which they belong.

Emphasis: On the collective well-being of the community over individual pursuits.

Concept: A person's humanity is tied to their relationships with others and ability to act for the greater good of their community.

Values: Humanity, compassion, community, empathy, solidarity, mutual respect, etc.

Purpose: Ubuntu encapsulates and contextualizes a set of dedicated values, ideas, and behaviors that are beneficial for sustaining a thriving and prosperous community.

Underline: The importance of harmony and cooperation within communities, fostering a sense of belonging, togetherness, and interconnectedness among individuals.

Meaning: Translated as "*I am because we are*" or "*Humanity towards others*". There are other translations in this spirit.

Way of Applying: The term doesn't mention or relate to a type of mechanism, economic approach, organizational setting, or other practical applying related issues.

Overall, the "Ubuntu" philosophy represents a profound understanding of human nature and relationships, emphasizing the importance of community, empathy, and interconnectedness in fostering a more humane and compassionate world.

Ubuntu is an authentic, ancient, timeless, remarkable, and significant concept, offering benefits when embraced today.

It is, therefore, in place and proper to ask -

- As of today, does Ubuntu have any role in turning impoverished rural communities into thriving ones?
- If yes, how and where do we see Ubuntu applied?
- Are there equivalent terms/concepts to Ubuntu?

THE CONTEXT AND INTERLINK

Values are the cornerstones of any thriving human society.

But this does not mean that all values are good and correct for building a modern, prosperous society.

Would we, for example, like to see a society that promotes values of 'racial/gender superiority,' 'blood revenge', and 'an eye for an eye'?

In previous columns, we saw a group of related values that hold the secret of success in building a prosperous, thriving society.

This family of values includes those that glue us together and encourage us to cooperate, integrate, and work for a shared vision and future.

If we needed one word or term to describe this family of values and the purpose it aims to achieve, then *Ubuntu* is that word.

It is convenient to have a term that is commonly known and used to represent what we want to achieve, a word that many people agree with its message – ***Ubuntu***.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

At this stage, a legitimate question would be: If African farmers believe in Ubuntu, why don't they and their communities experience prosperity?

To answer this, we must ask three questions regarding Ubuntu: Why, What, How.

WHY to practice Ubuntu? To foster interconnectedness, compassion, and collective well-being within communities.

WHAT is Ubuntu? A philosophy emphasizing humanity, empathy, and mutual support for a thriving society.

HOW to practice Ubuntu? Ubuntu doesn't relate to the question of how to practice it. It lacks a guidebook (manual) on how to practice it, i.e., mechanism, organizational structure, economic practice, etc.

That shouldn't be a surprise, as most collections of values, principles, and virtues lack a mechanism to implement them, for it's not their purpose.

For example, The Ten Commandments, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Eightfold Path in Buddhism, The Seven Virtues, and The Twenty-One Precepts of the Samurai.

Unlike Ubuntu, our interest is to achieve the goal we set at the onset of our journey - **to improve the livelihood of impoverished farmers in rural communities.**

From our goal perspective, Ubuntu is interesting as it presents a direct link between

(a) the state of the individual, e.g., a farmer, and

(b) the state of the community.

Simply put, "*I am because we are*" - if my community is poor, I will be too, and vice versa; if my community thrives, so will I.

Ubuntu's message to the world is: Practice my values, and you (i.e., a group and individuals) will enjoy prosperity and happiness.

Wait, but millions of African farmers are familiar with and feel connected to Ubuntu philosophy, yet poverty remains vast in Africa.

How could that be, and what can we do to change that reality?

To answer this, we will look at other Ubuntu-like concepts or philosophies, i.e., socialism and communism.

Like Ubuntu, those social models emphasize the importance of the community for the individual good and concern for Social Justice.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels gave way to the new concepts of socialism and communism and a better understanding of capitalism when, in 1848, they presented their famous book, *The Communist Manifesto.*

At that time, most humanities suffered from poverty, and people were excited by Marx and Engels's novel ideas.

However, how to apply those novel philosophies remained open to interpretation since Marx and Engels didn't explicitly say how those ideas should be implemented and practiced.

In the early 20th century, numerous leaders attempted to apply those philosophies, doing it the way they (personally) interpreted them, with some notable cases being Russia and the USSR, Cuba, Eastern EU countries, and North Korea.

As we know, those attempts damaged those nations' social and economic, causing social destruction, poverty, and much human suffering.

In the second half of the 20th century, some countries adopted some of the values presented by Marx and Engels, as seen in the Northern European countries where a "soft" socialist governance was implemented.

And, in a small corner of the Middle East, in the early 20th century, a small group of young people implemented the same basic ideas shared by Marx and Engels but in a somewhat different way (i.e., Kibbutz and Moshav), which turned out to work like a charm – under the harsh conditions of Israel in the early 20th century.

What can we learn from this?

To have a prosperous, thriving community, a community must go through the five stages of the *Prosperity Road*:

- **Fundamental:** Shared fundamental values that encourage and enable human prosperity, e.g., cooperation, community, empathy, integration, mutual respect, etc.
- **Orientation:** Set the Vision and the Goals according to the problem we wish to overcome and what we want to achieve.
- **Philosophy:** Binding the Fundamentals and Orientations under one roof, called Philosophy, e.g., Ubuntu, Socialism, and Communism.
- **Practicum:** Designing a mechanism that turns a respected philosophy into a practical, effective working organization that fulfills its mission as intended.
- **Machine:** Apply and practice the organizational machine daily, ensuring it produces the desired results set by its founding philosophy and according to its values and goals.

Can you now point out why Ubuntu didn't and couldn't turn millions of impoverished African farmers from poverty to prosperity?

FROM "USELESS" PHILOSOPHIES TO PROSPERITY

Without the social invention of the Kibbutz and Moshav, the Israeli agro sector would resemble that of developing countries, impoverished and lagging.

Look again at the five stages of the *Prosperity Road,* separating values from sustainable economic prosperity.

The Israeli pioneers had to go through those five stages, including inventing novel forms of agro-oriented organizations, before reaching the prosperous Kibbutz and Moshav we got to know.

The Kibbutz and Moshav *Prosperity Road* looked like this:

- **Fundamental:** Shared fundamental values - cooperation, equality (including gender equality), and self-management (responsibility which goes with authorization)
- **Orientation:** Vision and goals – returning to the Promised Land and farming its land (i.e., termed in Hebrew, Shivat Zion), and on top of it, establishing a new type of society where everyone is equal and free from exploitation.
- **Philosophy:** A mix of Socialism and Communism, with adjustments to local constraints.
- **Practicum:** Tested in real life -Kibbutz/Group Dgania.
- **Machine:** The Kibbutz model was copied from Dgania and used to establish hundreds of Kibbutzs across Israel. Although each Kibbutz does things somewhat differently, overall, all Kibbutzs prosper and thrive.

One should realize that the process that gave birth to the Kibbutz and Moshav began about 50 years earlier.

For many years, the Israeli farmers were "stuck" at the Philosophy stage, not knowing how to turn it into a sustainable economic "machine" that could help them fulfill their dreams.

It took 50 years to get to the Practicum stage in Dgania (1910), where only 12 people participated in its establishment.

However, less than a year later, everybody understood that Dgania was an economic and social success and began learning its model to apply it elsewhere. By 1939, the Kibbutzs' population reached 25,000 people (out of 500,000 population).

The Israeli farmers of the early 20th century were fortunate to successfully translate ideas, dreams, and social philosophies into vibrant, flourishing communities, exemplified by the Kibbutz and Moshav.

Without organized efforts to turn Ubuntu into an economically and socially functioning organization, an effective business machine, African farmers remained with old, ineffective farming models, hence remaining in poverty.

The roadmap to transforming rural communities' poverty into prosperity is by taking the *Prosperity Road* and filling it up according to our vision and dreams.

Here is an example of how such *Prosperity Road* could look like if we follow the Ubuntu philosophy –

- **Fundamental:** Humanity, compassion, community, empathy, solidarity.
- **Orientation:** Creating a society that values human dignity, fosters strong communities, promotes social harmony, addresses inequality and injustice, cultivates empathy and compassion, and celebrates diversity.
- **Philosophy:** Ubuntu: Interconnectedness, compassion, community; "I am because we are".

- **Practicum:** Fuzzing the Ubuntu *Why* and *What* with the Kibbutz *How*, and then tailor-made it per program.
- **Machine:** After testing, running, and improvements, implementing the model on a large scale.

The more I studied and delved into Ubuntu, the more I saw how similar its ideas were to those of the Kibbutz and Moshav.
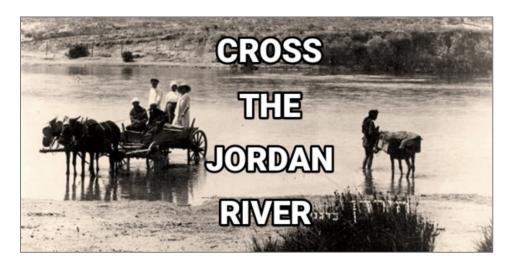
It gives hope that we can use it in conjunction with the Kibbutz or Moshav organization, economic, and social models, and after conducting necessary adjustments, bring prosperity and happiness to impoverished African rural communities.

The same concept applies to other countries; if they have Ubuntu-like local philosophy, we can transplant it into the model and swiftly move from the *Philosophy* to the *Machine* stage.

One hundred and fifteen years ago, in 1910, only 12 people crossed the Jordan River and established a permanent rural community named Dgania.

Doing so, they began what I call the Practicum stage of the Kibbutz concept, which, faster than anyone thought, became a Kibbutz movement that changed Israel forever and hence the history of the world since then.

It's time we cross the Jordan River again.

Agree / Disagree?

Share your opinion with me.

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Here are four ways you can work with me to help your rural communities step forward to shift from poverty into ongoing prosperity:

* Consultancy on rural communities' lifestyles Why, What, and How, e.g., Kibbutz and Moshav.

* Local & national programs related to agro-produce export - [Dream Valley](#) global vertical value and supply chain business model and concept connects (a) input suppliers with farmers in developing economies and (b) those farmers with consumers in premium markets.

* Crop protection: [Biofeed](#), an eco-friendly **zero-spray control and protocol** solution, is most suitable for developing countries.

* IBMA Conference - To learn, share, and practice novel business models: **the [IBMA 2024 conference](#)** theme is "*Reshaping Agribusiness Models for Building Prosperous Rural Communities*." Register now.

TAKEAWAY MESSAGES

➢ **A PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT A MECHANISM** to practice is inspiring but not transformative.

➢ **THE KIBBUTZ HISTORY TEACHES US** how to turn a social philosophy into effective organizational models.

➢ **COMBINING LOCAL SOCIAL PHILOSOPHIES** with the effective organizational model of the Kibbutz is a game changer.

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More on the October 7th genocide in South Israel:

[Humanity is one organism](#)

[Videos - The October 7 genocide](#)

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If you read this column all the way to here and enjoyed it, please share it with friends and Subscribe.

"Change begins with a decision that the existing reality is a choice and not a decree of fate."

See you soon,

Nimrod

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P.S.

If you missed it, here is a link to last week's blog, "*The Impoverished Rural Community That Changed Its Nation's History*".

P.P.S.

Dream Valley is a field-proven disruptive business model based on the successful Israeli Model.

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*This article addresses general phenomena. The mention of a country/continent is used for illustration purposes only.