A dialogical approach to developing leaders in African food systems

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This report builds on and responds to Busiso Moyo's accompanying report in order to recommend possible principles and practices for the African Food Fellowship.

1) Engaging Afropolitanism (grappling with identity)

Themes that emerge prominently in Busiso's discussion with interviewees and in his report include those related to African identity and ongoing colonial legacies. These themes are important because they may influence the purpose, legitimacy, practices, and outcomes of the fellowship. This is especially so because the fellowship is largely funded and implemented by European organizations and individuals. It is possible that the fellowship may be seen by some as yet another colonial imposition. It is also tricky for me, as a white South African, to make decisive statements on this, given intersections between African identities, race, and colonial and apartheid histories.

Nevertheless, I suggest the fellowship can be guided by the notion of "Afropolitanism," based on the writings of prominent African authors including Achille Mbembe (2020, originally published in 2007). Mbembe argues that African identity and thought has largely been shaped by three "ossified" paradigms: anticolonial nationalism, Marxism, and pan-Africanism. These approaches fail to respond to two vital features of African history and contemporary experience, the first of which has to do with a "culture of mobility," through which African identity has been and is shaped by movement of diverse people of different races and cultures within and beyond, and into and out of, the continent.

> It is not simply that a part of African history lies somewhere else, outside Africa. It is also that a history of the rest of the world, of which we are inevitably the actors and guardians, is present on the continent. Our way of belonging to the world, of being in the world and inhabiting it, has always been marked by if not cultural mixing, then at least the interweaving of worlds, in a slow and sometimes incoherent dance with forms and signs that we have not been able to choose freely but which we have succeeded, as best we can, in domesticating and putting at our disposal (Mbembe, 2020, p. 59).

This "interweaving of the worlds" is not to deny the oppressive and exploitative character of many of the historical interactions between people on the continent and people from other parts of the world. But it seeks to move beyond defining African identity as somehow essentially tied to race or geography, or to opposition to some or other oppressive forces, and this allows for more intellectual freedom and practical agency. (Mbembe's notions of

"interweaving" and "domesticating" have links to other prominent postcolonial authors' arguments, such as Appiah's emphasis on "contamination" (Eze, 2014) or Bhabha's (1994) focus on "hybridity".)

The second concern that gives rise to the quest for an Afropolitan posture in Mbembe's analysis is what he calls the "nativist reflex."

> In its mild form, nativism appears as an ideology glorifying differences and diversity and fighting to safeguard customs and identities perceived as threatened. According to nativistic logic, identities and political struggles are founded on the basis of a distinction between those who are from here (autochthons) and those who came from outside (non-natives). Nativists forget that, in their stereotyped forms, the customs and traditions to which they claim to adhere were often invented not by the actual autochthons, but by missionaries and settlers (Mbembe, 2020, p. 60).

By recognising the interweaving of African identities and practices with the broader world, and by eschewing nativism, Afropolitanism fosters a posture of "broad-mindedness" that I suggest is an important underpinning of effective food system leadership and of the fellowship. It helps to develop a constructive effort in respecting and connecting both the local African context and its interface with the global world. It helps us:

> to think of African identities as both rooted in specific local geographies but also transcendental of them. To be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, languages and states. It is to embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity – to be of African and other worlds at the same time (Gikandi, 2010, p. 9).

In grappling with food system transformation, Afripolitanism helps us avoid essentializing either the problems or possible solutions as emanating from a particular source or providence. The local African context and the global setting are both implicated in the problems, and both are necessarily involved in developing innovative responses.

2) Countering epistemic colonialism through dialogue (grappling with knowledge)[1]

As mentioned, a posture of Afropolitanism is not to deny historical and ongoing colonial relationships between people in Africa and other parts of the world. Even if many formal and overt forms of colonialism have been dismantled, it is sometimes argued that a subtler but especially pernicious form of colonialism relates to what forms of knowledge are considered legitimate and relevant, with African and other indigenous forms of knowledge systematically denigrated with regard to the knowledge created and disseminated in the colonizing countries.

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[1] NB: In this section, I am adapting text from Hamann et al (2020).

Critics of such "epistemic colonialism" argue that knowledge created in the North is "largely represented as universal… [even though] the 'universal' is indeed specific" (Nkomo, 2011, p. 371). This is problematic for various reasons. For a start, imposing knowledge that is not contextually relevant or adapted likely creates unintended negative consequences. Such "knowledge transfer" thus risks creating more harm than good.

Secondly, such knowledge imposition replicates colonial patterns that disregard or trivialize knowledge and practices of the former colonies in the Global South: "the colonial meeting between Northern and Southern knowledge has created a naturalized view that useful, intelligible, and visible ways to manage an organization are necessarily found in the knowledge produced in the North" (Alcadipani et al., 2012, p. 133). This perpetuates "epistemic colonialism . . . [through which] knowledge is used as a form of control to hide the colonial condition" (Ibarra-Colado, 2006, p. 468).

There are possible risks that something like the African Food Fellowship may unwittingly and perhaps subtly perpetuate epistemic colonialism, by privileging particular forms of knowledge and denigrating others. An important response is for the fellowship programme to put special effort into identifying indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) that may be relevant in identifying both challenges in African food systems and innovative responses.

This requires special effort because IKS are not always easily accessible in both practical and intellectual terms. Practically speaking, IKS have for a long time experienced stigmatisation, so they are often somewhat hidden. Intellectually speaking, IKS sometimes involve ontological and epistemological characteristics that vary significantly from a "modern" worldview, so those socialised in the latter will need to put special effort into developing the "broad-mindedness" called for in Afropolitanism.

At the same time, there is a risk that IKS may themselves be privileged in unhelpful ways. This is the epistemological dimension of the "nativist reflex" described by Mbembe (2020). Put differently, an overly inward-looking approach may foster a romanticized or misplaced emphasis on indigeneity, and such essentialized notions of indigenous knowledge "can suggest stasis and romanticism, encouraging idealization and confirming prejudice" (Alcadipani et al., 2012, p. 133). For example, the dangers of contrasting indigenous knowledge in opposition to "Western" or "scientific" knowledge were demonstrated in the "devastating mistake" (Connell, 2014, p. 212) of denying scientific explanations and treatment of HIV/ AIDS by South Africa's government under former President Thabo Mbeki.

There is thus an important challenge for the fellowship programme to foreground and celebrate IKS, but at the same time not to romanticize IKS or to unduly contrast IKS and "Western" forms of science. Relatedly, there is much scope to celebrate and foster IKS as

form of science in their own right, for example by recognizing IKS' emphasis on experimentation and continuous renewal (Millar, 2014).[2] In my view, this challenge requires an explicit and continuously reinvigorated commitment to dialogue between diverse perspectives and knowledge systems. Such dialogue is not merely a means to an end, for example to respect diverse perspectives. I suggest that dialogue offers an overarching purpose and organizing principle for the fellowship. To elaborate, I quote in some length two paragraphs from our recent paper in *Organization Theory* (Hamann et al., 2020, p. 15):

> Dialogical engagement is focused not primarily in advancing a particular position, but on the intersubjective relationship (Buber, 1958): how can we meet as person to person, subject to subject, rather than as subject to object? To better understand dialogue in practice, we draw on Freire's (2005) notion of praxis – the participatory, dialogic interplay of action and reflection in the pursuit of social transformation. Dialogic agency in this tradition is not enacted through interest- or knowledge-based contests. In fact, it problematizes the notion of sectarian interests and superior knowledge by not taking the seemingly clear delineation between self and other for granted (see also Khan & Naguib, 2019). Rather than championing specific theories or beliefs, participants in dialogue work to reflect upon and suspend their own assumptions in order to co-create new ways of seeing and new expressions of meaning (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1958).

> Part of dialogue's generative power for our purposes is thus its ability to disturb taken-for-granted categories and to suggest new combinations (Isaacs, 1999). Dialogue disrupts the categories by revealing that social experience is both infinitely variegated (thus resistant to categorical reduction) and also unitary in that foundational interests related to human dignity and freedom are presumed to be universal goods, applicable to everyone (Freire, 2005)… Consequently, the capacity to deconstruct and then recombine elements of knowledge across diverse contexts is strengthened in a bricolage process: "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 2005, p. 72).

There is thus the opportunity for the fellowship to foster this kind of dialogical interaction between different forms of knowledge, focused on addressing food system challenges. There is also the opportunity for the fellowship to develop leaders' capabilities to facilitate such dialogue in their own domains.

In this dialogue between IKS and "Western" academic knowledge, there will be synergies and tensions. Obviously, the synergies will be easier to grapple with, but even so they will need to be foregrounded and discussed. For example, the growing emphasis on systems thinking in science and management, while important, is not novel. Over millennia, Indigenous cultures around the world have developed and implemented sophisticated forms of systems thinking that recognised their communities' interdependence with the

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[2] I am grateful to Birgit Boogaard for highlighting this insight in response to a previous version of this document, and for suggesting the Millar reference.

natural systems, in which they live. For a brief overview of this connection in the Australian context, see Common Ground (n.d.). There is significant potential for the African Food Fellowship to help articulate such synergies between food system thinking and African IKS.

The tensions are more challenging to grapple with. Where there are clear tensions or even contradictions between prescriptions for action based on IKS and those based on academic knowledge (as in the example of HIV/Aids in South Africa mentioned above), these need to be foregrounded and discussed in the spirit of open-minded dialogue outlined above. This will be especially challenging – but perhaps also especially rewarding – when such dialogue grapples with deeply rooted epistemological and ontological beliefs.[3] For example, in many African contexts, IKS are closely linked to a belief in, and communication with, ancestors. In this belief system, ancestors are agentic actors who need to be involved in dialogue and decision making. Those whose belief systems are firmly rooted in a materialist ontology and positivist epistemology will likely find such premises challenging to engage with.

3) Fostering inclusion in African food systems (grappling with power and fairness)

The first two recommendations above have highlighted the need for the fellowship to grapple proactively with issues of identity and knowledge, both of which are part of a broader decolonising ambition. The third point focuses on power and inclusion. It is clear that most Africans are systematically excluded from meaningfully influencing, participating in, or benefiting from global food systems. Africa's role in global food production, processing, and trade largely perpetuates the economic systems established during formal colonialism. That is, African countries mostly produce and export commodities, while value-adding processing activities are mostly undertaken in Northern countries, and these processed foods are then imported back into African countries. This is detrimental for African economies, and it also has negative effects for the wages and livelihood security of people working in African food systems, as well as people's food security in Africa, more generally.

This has numerous implications for the fellowship, though I will highlight two. First, the unequal participation of most Africans in global food systems will need explicit attention in the fellowship programme. An important objective of the fellowship and the capabilities it seeks to build in participants will need to be about directly addressing this global, exclusive system. This involves, among other things, enabling food system leaders to ideate, fund, implement, and continuously improve value-adding activities in food value chains; to facilitate and increase especially intra-African trade in agricultural and food products; and so on.

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[3] I am again grateful to Birgit Boogaard for her encouragement on this point.

Second, the fellowship will need to grapple explicitly with the role of powerful actors in global and African food systems, whose interventions in African food systems may intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate the exclusion of many Africans from participating in or benefiting from African food systems. For example, some corporations and governments from outside Africa have been purchasing or leasing large tracts of land in Africa for commodity production. Even if there may be macro-economic benefits from such transactions, they pose a number of threats. They perpetuate the use of African land for commodity production for export and thus hinder the above-mentioned development of value-add activities. They also create a more specific risk for those people who lose access to the sold or leased land. Because of limited statehood in many African contexts, these locals are unlikely to be properly compensated for their losses, and their livelihoods are likely compromised. The fairness (or difference) principle requires that the fellowship pays special attention to those who are already vulnerable (Rawls, 1971), so any proposed interventions that further risk compromising the livelihoods of the poor need to be countered.

Relatedly, while fostering a critical posture towards the state, corporations, and other powerful actors, this will need to be carefully done. For a start, even though an adversarial "activist" approach to food systems transformation may be appropriate and effective for some actors, it is not necessarily so for other actors. Many social innovators are working within state organisations or corporations, or they are working (or may endeavour to work) in collaboration with the state of corporations. Part of the AFF's mission, therefore, may be the need to foster an ability and willingness to engage in "critical cooperation" with powerful actors (Covey & Brown, 2001; Hamann & Acutt, 2003).

Additionally, the AFF will need to take into consideration that a critical posture towards state and corporate actors creates varying levels of risk in different contexts.[4] In the Netherlands, for example, and in some African countries, where the constitutional civil and political rights are enshrined and enforced, a critical activist form of engagement does not create significant personal risks. But this is not the case in all countries. The AFF will need to be careful about encouraging critical statements or other such forms of activism in those countries, where individuals may become exposed to threats or violence.

4) Harnessing the diversity of perspectives on African food systems

Another important theme that emerged in Busiso's interviews and report surrounds the diversity of perspectives on the problems we face in African food systems, as well as the

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[4] I am grateful to Birgit Boogaard for encouraging consideration of such risks.

possible responses and required interventions. This diversity is of course not specific to the African context; it has been described in other, globally oriented analyses of the social-political dimensions of food system transformation (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). But it is important for the fellowship to develop some or other posture in responding to this diversity of paradigms; and furthermore, the prevalent paradigms in the African context have their own flavours.

Holt Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) identify two "food regimes:" the corporate food regime has a neoliberal and a reformist branch, whereas food movements have progressive and radical wings. In the African context, these different approaches to food system transformation furthermore overlap with different orientations relative to African identities and knowledge, as briefly outlined above. However, to simplify this complexity for our current purposes, we may identify two overarching approaches, which were also evident in our interviews and also in our team discussions. These approaches are aligned to the two ways in which I suggested the fellowship can address inclusion and power in the point above. (There are also similar characterisations of different approaches to social entrepreneurship, for example (Sutter et al., 2019).

The first seeks to achieve food system transformations by fostering organisational or technological innovations, for example by adapting technologies to local contexts, or by developing new business models or supply chain arrangements. Such innovations would be premised on the dialogical approach recommended above, wherein both IKS and academic knowledge – and especially their interactions – can give rise to such technological or organisational innovations. Such innovation can help produce more food more efficiently, enhance the proportion of value-added activities in African countries (with local and macro-economic benefits), create decent jobs and more resilient livelihoods, and so on.

The second approach is more political in nature. It emphasises the imbalance in power and growing corporatisation of food systems as a primary reason for the social and environmental problems in these systems. The resulting prescription is to engage in social movement organising, government advocacy, and related strategies to counter the role of corporations in food systems, and to foster greater "food sovereignty," i.e., more community-level control of food production, distribution, and consumption.

Of course, these approaches are not necessarily exclusive of each other. Some innovation-focused actors are fostering entrepreneurial options to oppose corporate inefficiencies and greed; while some social movement actors seek innovation in fostering local food sovereignty (e.g., seed banks, community markets, etc.). It will be valuable for the fellowship to include at least some fellows who are targeting this overlap or synergy between technical, organizational, and political dimensions of food system transformation.

And it will be important for the fellowship programme to include some emphasis on such opportunities.

At the same time, there will be fellowship candidates that are more clearly focused on either organizational / technical innovation or social-political advocacy. My suggestion is that discussions and social innovation in and through the cohort would benefit from having a diversity and cross-section of these overarching perspectives. Of course, this diversity may well lead to tensions and vigorous contestation between members of the cohort. But this kind of challenging interaction is a skill that should be fostered among the participants, and it will be important for the fellowship facilitators to build their capabilities in supporting a generative and "safe space" for such rigorous discussion (for an analysis of the benefits of such tensions in social innovation, see Powell et al., 2018).

5) Selecting fellows as a dynamic and inclusive cohort

The above points suggest a number of implications for the selection process of fellows. The overarching implication is that fellows should not just be selected on an individual basis, but as constituent participants in a dynamic cohort. In other words, it is not just the individual learning process that a fellow goes through in the fellowship that matters, but as important are the social interactions and generative conversations among fellows in both formal and informal settings.

In shaping such a dynamic cohort, the above-mentioned synergies and tensions may be useful, given that different fellow candidates may bring different emphases into the cohort and it would probably be useful to have a generative mix of perspectives. Figure 1 provides a "two-by-two" mapping of these possible emphases. Some candidates may be more innovation-focused, while others are more advocacy-focused, and then there will be those who combine those ambitions (i.e., near the centre of the y-axis). Some candidates will focus more on IKS and others on (global) science, and some will seek a combination of these (i.e., near the centre of the x-axis). As a rough rule-of-thumb, it may benefit the cohort effect in the fellowship, if about half of all participants are nearer the centre of the figure, i.e., in the darker shaded circle, and then the other half can exhibit stronger expressions of one or both of the dimensions (i.e., in the lighter shaded circle).
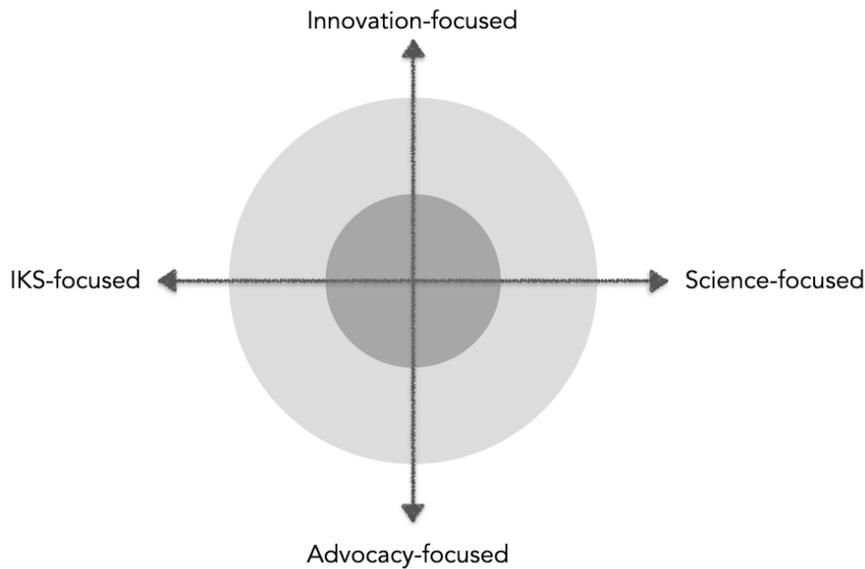
Figure 1: A heuristic model in support of the fellow selection process

A second suggestion on fellow selection relates to how people come to be defined as being a (potential) leader in the food system. In other words, where do we draw the boundary of the food system? My suggestion is to extend this boundary in two specific areas (though there may also be others).

First, there are diverse actors in the finance and investment sectors that would not normally see themselves as "food system leaders," but they nevertheless play vital roles in that system. Analysts and managers in banks decide what kind of projects to support with loans or investment funding, and they also play a prominent role in shaping and monitoring such projects. There is also a potentially significant role for venture capital investors. Including such "food system leaders" in the fellowship could help harness such actors' influence in African food system transformation, and it would also be valuable in supporting discussions and network building within the cohort.

Second, we need a strategic definition of state actors that ought to be involved in the fellowship. In many African settings, there is a fairly narrow understanding of food systems and the role of the state in food system transformation. For example, in South Africa, a more proactive role for the state was for many years hampered by the assumption that food security was primarily a matter of agricultural production, and a result of this was that the government's food security mandate was relegated to a low-influence office in the Department of Agriculture. This has shifted in recent years at national, provincial, and local levels (and the Southern Africa Food Lab has worked hard in support of this). For instance, the Western Cape Provincial Government now has a dedicated programme on nutrition in the Office of the Premier, and City of Cape Town officials are integrating food system

considerations in their development planning processes. In other words, senior policy makers and planners are establishing a role for themselves in food system transformation, even if they did not traditionally see themselves as food system actors. We should try to include such government actors in the fellowship, in my view.

Finally (and most importantly), it is apparent that potential fellowship candidates may come from very different economic contexts. Some will be in formal employment and relatively munificent contexts, while others are struggling to attract resources. The fellowship selection process should make sure that access is enabled especially for the latter. This has inherent fairness motivations, but it is also very important for the generative and dynamic potential of the cohort. Inclusion and fairness are vital ambitions in any food system transformation in Africa. The fellowship cohort will be in a much better position to grapple with these objectives if there are a good number of fellows from less munificent contexts. (For an analysis of both the benefits and challenges associated with such an inclusionary approach in collaborative approaches to food system transformation, see Drimie and colleagues (2018).)

6) Building leaders' capabilities with the above principles in mind

An obvious ambition of the fellowship is to build fellows' capabilities to enhance their leadership in African food system transformation. A focus on capabilities may be based not just on a common-sense understanding of the fellowship as a training programme (at least in part), but as a systemic intervention in a capabilities-based view of social-economic development (Ansari et al., 2012; Sen, 1999). Given the principles outlined above, we may suggest the following capabilities that – premised on the Afropolitan principle – connect global and more Africa-specific considerations, as outlined in Table 1, below.

Table 1: An overview of seven suggested capabilities to be fostered among AFF fellows

	Capability	Guiding question	Rationale	Possible frameworks or tools, or pedagogical implications	Africa-specific dimensions
1)	**Problem articulation**	What is the specific challenge or opportunity in the food system that I am focusing on?	Food system actors are often grappling with a diverse array of challenges, and they struggle to articulate a clear focus – and this hampers system analysis and communication with others	Fellows may benefit from learning the basics of how journalists describe a situation using the "five Ws": who, what, when, where and why.[5] They may also benefit from going through a structured process of collecting, synthesising, and displaying information related to their challenge / opportunity, e.g., through media analysis, interviews, focus groups, and discussion among fellows	Some actors seek to implement "solutions" that have been developed outside Africa, and such approaches are often ill-suited to local contexts; alternatively, some actors may over-emphasise African particularity, and thus fail to consider the international experience
2)	**System analysis: Diagnosis**	How do I understand and explain the systemic underpinnings of my focal challenge or opportunity?	System analysis helps fellows consider and communicate the various factors and dynamics that influence the focal challenge / opportunity	There are many resources, guides, videos and so on about systems analysis. An overview of some of them is provided in Box 1 below.	System analysis focuses on cause-and-effect relationships that are often based on assumptions or theories in mainstream science, but IKS can offer important complementary or contradictory insights about natural and social systems and their interactions. Complementary insights can help strengthen the analysis, and contradictions need to be dialogically foregrounded and considered.
3)	**System analysis: Prescription**	How can I (or my group / organization) make effective and efficient interventions for food system transformation (bearing in	Systems analysis in the diagnosis phase can often be overwhelming because of the many factors and inter-relationships at play, and the	The reports and guides mentioned in Box 1 provide guidance both on diagnosis and prescription. Of particular relevance is Donna Meadows' article on "leverage points," and related	African contexts and specifically IKS give rise to particular opportunities and constraints in identifying and making use of "leverage points." Some of the most powerful leverage points relate to

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[5] E.g., see https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/sep/25/writing.journalism.news

Capability	Guiding question	Rationale	Possible frameworks or tools, or pedagogical implications	Africa-specific dimensions
	mind possible unintended consequences)?	resulting challenge of identifying feasible and effective action. Yet, systems analysis can also enable the identification of "leverage points" for feasible, effective, and efficient interventions.	frameworks, such as the "iceberg model." The Donna Meadows website includes helpful resources including the above-mentioned article,[6] as well as an illustrative video.[7] Our "onion model" for systems analysis and change recommends identifying the most pertinent "layer" for such interventions (Hamann et al., 2021).	"mental models." These need to be carefully explored and understood, and this is often challenging for people from different cultures and contexts. An exploration of relevant mental models thus ought to be an important aspect of the fellowship programme.
4) Reflexivity	How do I "show up" as an actor in the food system; i.e., what are my mental models and values in affecting systems transformation?	Any leadership intervention in the food system will be shaped by the mental models and values of the leader. It is important for a leader to develop a capability to purposefully and effectively foreground these models and values, so as to enable more effective communication and to avoid unintended consequences.	Reflexivity is a capability that is best fostered in group interactions. The process facilitator should enable participants to gently challenge each other, so that they become aware of their biases and how they "come across" to others. This can be complemented through various means, such as journaling, reflective essays, or even coaching.	Reflexivity is especially important in the context of historical and ongoing injustices, including colonialism and apartheid. But this also makes the fostering and exploration of reflexivity potentially fraught, and this raises the stakes and capability requirements of the facilitation team.
5) Organizing	How do I enable my organization to identify its priorities and achieve its objectives?	Fellows are likely to contribute to food system transformation through some or other group or organization, which may be an existing organization or a new venture. The effectiveness and efficiency of the fellows'	There are countless books and frameworks on organizational / business leadership, strategy, design, HR management, finance, and so on. A recommended book is Charles Handy's "Understanding Organizations" (2005).	There are ongoing debates about whether there are distinct African ways of organizing, and whether or how international approaches (such as Handy's book suggested on the left) can be applied or adapted for African contexts. Some of my colleagues that

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[6] https://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/
[7] https://donellameadows.org/a-visual-approach-to-leverage-points/

Capability	Guiding question	Rationale	Possible frameworks or tools, or pedagogical implications	Africa-specific dimensions
		interventions will depend on the capabilities of the organization – so, much depends on the leader's ability to build these organizational capabilities.		have written on these themes include Kenneth Amaeshi and Stella Nkomo (e.g., Jackson et al., 2008; Nkomo, 2011).
6) Relating	How do I build trusting and reciprocal relationships with and between diverse actors in the system?	A powerful dimension of food system transformation involves changes in actors' relationships, including the number of relational links, the types of links (i.e., across different kinds of actors), and the quality of relationship (including aspects such as trust and reciprocity). Fellows should come to recognise the important role of relating and practice themselves in creating and nurturing diverse relationships.	The role of relationships in system transformation is a significant theme in many of the resources mentioned elsewhere in this table and in Box 1. Additionally, see "The relational work of systems change."[8] Pedagogically speaking, the fellowship cohort is an important platform for fellows to learn more about their existing relational capabilities, and to expand and enhance these capabilities. The fellowship facilitators can include diverse exercises and games to support this process.	African philosophy and organizing practices commonly emphasise the importance of relationships to people's identity and social existence. In southern Africa, the notion of "ubuntu" prioritizes authentic relating as a defining element not only of the good life but what it means to be human. Mbiti (1969, pp. 108–109) summarized this as follows: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." Ubuntu has been described as "an interactive ethic in which our humanity is shaped by our interaction with others as co-dependent beings" (Letseka, 2012, p. 48). It profoundly shapes the expectations, implicitly or explicitly, of social interactions in Nguni or Sotho speaking communities, and this extends to community members' expectations regarding their interactions with others. AFF fellows can be supported in strengthening

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[8] https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_relational_work_of_systems_change#

Capability	Guiding question	Rationale	Possible frameworks or tools, or pedagogical implications	Africa-specific dimensions
				these cultural beliefs and practices in service of food system transformation.
7) Facilitating	How do I design and facilitate collaborative processes for innovation?	We have learnt that a particularly important opportunity for food system transformation is in the organization of collaborative processes (sometimes known as "change labs" or "innovation labs" or the like). AFF fellows can become impactful change agents by understanding the potential of such processes, participating committedly in them, and / or hosting or facilitating such processes.	There are many resources on change lab processes. One of the important books on this is Otto Scharmer's "Theory U" (2009). We have worked with Reos Partners in such processes, and they have a video on a workshop explaining this approach.[9] I can also recommend Frances Westley's and Sam Laban's "Social Innovation Lab Guide."[10] Pedagogically speaking, over and above dedicated sessions on these themes, I have found it useful to use the key phases and practices of innovation labs in the actual learning processes, e.g.., in the design of modules or of group projects. This means that participants go through the visceral experience of participating in an innovation lab process, which is an important platform for them to facilitate such processes later on. Fellows should also be given an opportunity to practice facilitating group processes during the fellowship.	Building on the text in the above cell, there is a rich tradition of inclusionary, collaborative, and consensus-seeking decision-making processes in many African countries (e.g., see Watson, 2006). The fellowship has an important opportunity to bring these more to the fore and to create fruitful combinations with our emerging understanding of innovation labs and related processes. On the specific importance of inclusionary efforts in such innovation lab processes in an African context, see Drimie and colleagues (2018).

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[9] https://vimeo.com/31034297

[10] https://uwaterloo.ca/waterloo-institute-for-social-innovation-and-resilience/sites/ca.waterloo-institute-for-social-innovation-and-resilience/files/uploads/files/10_silabguide_final.pdf

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Box 1: An overview of reports, guides, and other resources on systems analysis

There are many resources, guides, videos and so on about systems mapping available online.[11] Useful articles or reports on systems thinking, generally speaking (i.e., beyond food systems), include Seelos and Mair (2018), Kania and colleagues (2018), and Omidyar Group (2017).

Then there are a number of useful reports or guides focused on food systems, including the following:
- The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) has created a useful overview of diverse visualisations of food systems.[12]
- FAO has a "City Region Food System Programme," which includes a toolkit on how to, for example, "collect data on your city region food system." There are useful reports also on specific cities, in which such assessments have been done, such as Colombo, Lusaka, and Toronto.[13]
- ICLEI has published a "City Practitioners Handbook: Circular Food Systems." This provides guidance on how to implement a stakeholder engagement process and identifies specific actions and policy instruments that can be used to improve food system functioning. There are again useful examples of efforts in cities such as Quito and Baltimore.[14]
- UNEP and others have developed a "Collaborate Framework for Food Systems Transformation." Similar to the guides mentioned above, it recommends conducting "a holistic food systems assessment" and implementing "a multi-stakeholder process for dialogue and action."[15]

An important characteristic of the above guides is that they rely on diverse forms of "box-and-arrow" diagrams (especially causal-loop diagrams) to facilitate systems mapping Omidyar Group (2017), and such analysis approaches can quickly become quite overwhelming, and they also make it difficult to address temporal and spatial scales. They also commonly rely on significant time and resources for the required analyses. For these reasons, we have developed a simpler heuristic for food system mapping, referred to as an "onion model," in Hamann and colleagues (2021).
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7) Building networks and partnerships among fellows within and between countries

My final point is to highlight the significant opportunity for the AFF to build networks and partnerships among fellows within and between countries. The interactions between fellows during the fellowship already provide important opportunities for such relationships to emerge, and the pedagogical principles and practices suggested in Table 1 can further enhance these benefits.

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[11] Short articles or blogs include "5 Resources to Help You Think in Systems" (Embedding Project Blog); "Supporting Systems Thinking in Your Company" (Embedding Project Blog); and "The relational work of systems change" (*Stanford Social Innovation Review*). Online videos include "In a world of systems" (Donella Meadows Institute and others); "Systems-thinking: A Little Film About a Big Idea"; "Systems thinking: a cautionary tale (cats in Borneo)"; "An animated guide to changing systems" by Ashoka, in three parts; and "Introduction to System Dynamics: Overview" with John Sterman

[12] https://www.iisd.org/articles/visual-representations-food-systems

[13] http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/overview/crfs/en/

[14] https://circulars.iclei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ICLEI-Circulars-City- Practitioners-Handbook-Food.pdf

[15] https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/un-e_collaborative_framework_ for_food_systems_transformation_final.pdf

There may be additional, dedicated activities that the AFF may want to consider to further ensure that the links between fellows become a source of food system transformation. These might include regular (e.g., annual) meetings within each country and more occasional meetings that include fellows from across Africa. It may also include strategic use of the AFF website(s) to not only support fellows with knowledge resources, but also enable continued strengthening of fellows' relationships with each other (or we may explore the possibility of using an existing platform like LinkedIn for such purposes).

However, experience shows that it is often difficult to maintain networks for their own sake; i.e., networks tend to strengthen if they are a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves. One option might be to explore ways to energise national and pan-African networks of fellows by convening innovation labs focused on overarching food system challenges or opportunities that are relevant to a large proportion of fellows.

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