Value, values and valuations:

Beyond the African debt cancellation paradigm

A recalculated global debt exchange

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The West may be behind on debt/equity swaps with Africa. But this is obfuscated by the pervasiveness of the western paradigm of counting only what can be counted. Africa may even be willing to offer the West a degree of debt relief, in exchange for a quid pro quo. And Africa may be willing to offer favourable trade terms.

Paradigms, as patterns of thought, are the very ways in which meaning is constructed. To paraphrase from Heidegger, we do not have paradigms; paradigms have us. They present our particular and discrete lenses of perspective. They constitute, quite literally, a 'looking through' onto reality, while simultaneously constructing it. In the hands of intellectual laziness, paradigms offer rapid and simple taxonomies – classifications and categories for the simplification of binary and 'for-or-against' type arguments. Paradigms are, furthermore, inescapable, and no attempted contribution to thinking can fully claim a status of being paradigm-free. One classic conundrum is that any assertion, any assumed observation of perceived reality, may belie an underlying inclination. For the futurist, for example, both pessimism and optimism constitute dangerous forms of intellectual bias. Yet the humble observer must nevertheless endeavour to observe with relentless curiosity. In witnessing and recording a reading of the complex landscape of international financial imbalances, then, it may be reasonable to ponder the paradigmatic origins of perspectives on the method and level to which Africa is valued in global terms. Paradigms of value as a construct are at the heart of the dilemma. The phenomenon of debt appears to set a baseline in the negative: those with debt are the indebted. The natural consequence is to interrogate the legitimacy of the way in which the traditional West evaluates Africa and the extent to which the resulting perspectives of value are equitable.

Africa plays a curious and complex role in the global financial system. In the full gamut of multilateral institutions, intergovernmental agreements and financial treaties, sentiment on Africa waxes and wanes, but multilateral financial relations with Africa are yet to mature beyond ad hoc, even random, participation. And the home of one out of every six people on the planet has certainly not reached equal partner status. For reasons historical and structural, adverse perceptions of Africa's financial status and global value endure. But the dilemmas are not simply perceptual. They are, more probably, deeply paradigmatic. And that paradigm is predominantly axiological in nature: in the international financial mental model of value, a rapid reframing for the revaluation of Africa has now become essential for global rebalance.

A history of debt and indebtedness

Africa does, indisputably, have debt, and its indebtedness is hardly a recent discovery. The issue was already under significant scrutiny in 1970's. And not a great deal has improved. Public debt in sub-Saharan Africa has doubled to 50% of gross domestic product since 2008, the International Monetary Fund estimates. But a deeper investigation reveals potentially irresponsible lending in the global financial system, and pervasive moral hazard by some of the influential actors.

The international community has indeed taken a number of bold steps toward debt reduction. Perhaps the most notable example is that The World Bank, in partnership with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the international community, has worked with developing countries to decrease their debt burdens. This has taken 2 forms in the main:

1. 1996 saw a concerted effort on the reduction of multi- and bilateral debt with the introduction of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. A second phase of debt relief was initiated in 2006, known as the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). These measures effected around $99bn in debt relief.

2. Commercial debt was the target in 1989, with the Debt Reduction Facility (DRF) for the 22 World Bank International Development Association (IDA) countries, extinguishing about US$10.3 billion of the external commercial debt principal, in addition to more than US$3.5 billion of associated interest arrears and penalties.

Despite these measures, Brookings argued recently that the widening of the primary balance (the difference between the real interest rate and the real growth rate) contributed to the fact that debt dynamics have become adverse for much of Africa. "Since 2012" they argue, "the subcontinent has not had primary surpluses, the only other way besides growth to reduce domestic public debt. Real interest rates are expected to remain higher than growth rates for a majority of African economies. In 2016, the subcontinent experienced negative per capita growth for the first time since 1999, and growth in 2017 was anaemic."

While the accuracy of the Brookings reporting is praiseworthy, its paradigmatic embeddedness should not be ignored, arguing as it does, e.g., that a primary surplus is the only mechanism for domestic public debt reduction.

Part of the responsibility for reckless lending must rest with the lender. If the borrower, in this case Africa, genuinely represents an intolerable risk profile, one may inquire with some validity as to the reasons for the granting of high-risk loans in the first instance. Was it a misplaced sense of rescuer syndrome? Or perhaps an admission of colonial guilt? Regardless of the motivation, the consequences have been less than sterling. Given the salient characteristic of currency volatility in much of Africa, for example, lending in foreign currency, typically USD, may be viewed as yet another example of irresponsible lending on the part of supra-national lenders.

Admittedly, history is more of a dance than a monologue, and Africa has certainly played its own part in its financial woes. In the evolutionary arch of nations, Africa's socio-political instabilities are more recent than most. Dictators did emerge. Civil wars were fought. And deals were made, often at the expense of long-term social and ecological well-being. Even foreign aid was misapplied. Perhaps the event that most captured the attention and imagination of the world was Live Aid. Despite the noble intentions, the Wall Street Journal reported, tragically, that funds raised by the 1985 international concert may have been used to support an increasingly brutal civil war in Ethiopia.

Even local lenders, operating in sovereign currency, may have been complicit in the insidious destruction of Africa's balance sheet. In the recent volatile history of many African nations, several local banks hosted accounts and facilitated trades on behalf of warlords and dictators. Such financial infrastructure, through banks, insurance and investment companies, allowed for multi-decadal scarring of the African populace, their economies and their ecologies.

With a spectrum of local and international actors at varying levels of directness and malicious intent complicit in the sculpting of Africa's financial status, shared responsibility for the generation of workable alternatives is no longer optional. Paradigms are wickedly self-perpetuating. For Africa, If the only way out leads back into debt, a dramatic debt spiral may be reasonably anticipated.

Swaps and deals

Yet, says the African Development Bank President, the problem is not the level of debt, but the type and terms. "Debt is not a problem", he recently told Bloomberg. "it's very bad debt that's a problem."

Thus, while the trend appears negative, the metrics and methods of assessment may need to be more complex in order for Africa to participate on an equal footing on the global financial stage. Consider, for example, that the Debt-to-GDP ratio (noted at over 50% for Africa above) for both the USA and the UK is now at more than 100%. Even Germany is set to jump to around 75% in 2020. Towards the end of the scale are European countries like Greece at around 187%. This exposes the use of GDP and its correlated ratios for the crude averages they are and the limited insight they offer, not only for individual wellbeing but also for sovereign quality and qualities.

The *prima facie* evidence suggests a pervasively misguided but intractably negative risk profile of African countries. And the suspicions of its accuracy appear to be growing in volume and quality. There has been increasing critique of the precision of rating agencies, not only for Africa but even for developed economies – with the Global Financial Crisis acting as a valuable test case. The conundrum has led to creative manoeuvring on all sides. In order to relieve their debt burden, African countries have not exclusively left the problem to the West to resolve. In order to generate liquidity, many have issued Eurobonds. African countries have sought to finance long-term infrastructure projects by issuing bonds on the foreign soils of their erstwhile colonial masters. But due to adverse credit ratings, African Eurobonds have had to be offered at rates highly attractive to investors, but, counterintuitively, with malignant implications for African liquidity in the longer term. The negative consequences are further aggravated by asynchronous terms in investment and project maturity – bond obligations for African countries often mature well before the long-term projects come to fruition. Thus, paradoxically, despite the attractiveness of African Eurobonds to international investors, they may prove lethal to African debt levels over the longer term. Evidence of their overwhelming attractiveness may be gleaned from the fact that African Eurobonds are often oversubscribed, with Ghana as a salient recent example.

Thus, there appears to be a clear mismatch between the actual sovereign risk profile of many African nations, national Debt-to-GDP-ratios, ratings agency status, investment yield and term. Forex volatility and a misalignment between short-term maturity dates and long-term infrastructure projects further exacerbate the dilemma.

This has sent African nations in search of other sources of collateral. In commercial terms, when a debtor is unable to honour repayments in cash, other terms or forms of settlements are investigated. In the case of Africa, a degree of such surety has been found in nature. The idea of debt swaps for nature has been in existence since at least 1984, when Thomas Lovejoy of the World Wildlife Fund proposed it. One of the first formal examples of such a conservation payment in kind occurred in the case of Bolivia in 1987, when Conservation International purchased the government debt and swapped the face value for an environmental protection programme.

Such programmes offer indisputable benefits to developing economies, including

- much needed liquidity,
- protection of credit records by avoiding sovereign loan defaults (in the short to medium term),
- incentives, governed by international law, for the protection of vast expanses of natural resources.

The benefits do not only accrue to the geographical locations of the remaining patches of nature. The West clearly perceives value. Such value may be defined in five types:

1. co-existence value, i.e. just knowing that biodiversity continues to exist has a psychological and socio-environmental value
2. political value, i.e. political parties who seek to acquire power on the 'green ticket' value the opportunity to demonstrate their policy proposals
3. bequest value, i.e. the knowledge that future generations may inherit ecological assets

4. option value, i.e. a type of call option which may allow the creditor access to the future use of natural resources even if that potential use is currently unclear
5. hygiene value, i.e. western nations benefit from the maintenance and mitigation effects of the remaining ecological assets as compensation for the ecological damage produced by the West.

Admittedly, African countries would also benefit indirectly from the types of value above, but the inherent contradictions cannot be ignored and there are unavoidable paradigmatic flaws. Sadly, there are several examples of where African leaders have not served the longer-term interests of their people with distinction. This may be due to a lack of deal-making competence, a naïve trust in *bona fides* or simply short-term greed. One example of such weak deal-making may be found in the Lancaster House agreement. At Lancaster House in 1979, the UK's Lord Carrington assured Mugabe that funds would be made available for the expropriation of land from white farmers. The UK did eventually pay £44m in aid, but this was the only money of the promised hundreds of millions ever to materialise. One dilemma for the longer-term, was that the only agreement on paper was a commitment from the Zimbabwean government not to alienate land from white farmers, and that is what remained enforceable. Mugabe did become a dictator, but the reneging on the agreement by the UK led to untold harm for Zimbabwe and damaged trust in land rights for decades. History, however, is written by the victors, and on a UK government website, the agreement is hailed as a great success. Could a combination of fulfilment on such agreements, with interest, added to levies for damages caused by the verbal contract breach, act as repayment of some of Africa's debt?

Rocks and hard places

For many developing economies, environmental protection programmes mean more than simply abdicating from degradational practices. Many African economies are, disturbingly, structured *for* environmental damage, with certain kinds of mining, coal, oil and deforestation as the most obvious examples. In order to honour debt-for-nature swaps, many African countries would pay an enormous opportunity cost by voting *against* the economic benefits of their current structure in the more immediate term. That cost has clear political implications for incumbent governments. But even if noble leaders could rise – a test that would be strangely harsher for Africa than for many countries in the West – the cost of restructuring economies would need extensive additional financing.

A less than virtuous cycle thus besets African nations, while the West practices a kind of environmental protection arbitrage: several western companies damage the environment in Africa, through apparently beneficial Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Rather than change their own devastating carbon-compounding habits, western governments, through international NGO's and investment banks, offer debt-for-nature swaps to African nations in apparent *bona fides*. The net effect is a false choice: many African countries would have to reinvent their economies to honour the terms of the swap. So, in an attempt to avoid defaulting on high interest loans, African governments raise money on the international capital markets, often through Eurobonds. The combinational conundrum of poorly-judged credit ratings vis-a-vis Debt-to-GDP ratios, ratings agency status and the yield and term discrepancies of their bonds allow investors to exploit the murkiness. Thus, African governments have to service their bond obligations at rates that further exacerbate their indebtedness in the long-term. A downward debt spiral is the natural consequence. With the debtor country under capital constraints, the next 'benevolent' short- to medium term FDI from an international western investor appears just too tempting to resist. A favourable deal with long-term tax incentives and minimal but essential short-term benefit is signed. Rinse and repeat.

Hidden value

It may be reasonable for any debtor under such circumstances to cast the net even more widely for alternative sources of collateral. One difficulty is the perception and measurement of value. Debt-for-nature swaps remain in their infancy, and core competencies of environmentalists and financiers show rare examples of overlap. At the risk of a gross generalisation (and there are notable exceptions), valuation methodology appears to present one of the fault lines: financiers tend to count the countable and legally, contractually-binding, while environmentalists ascribe an intrinsic value to nature and expect a yet-uncodified socio-ecological value system, for which recording in a spreadsheet remains elusive. But perhaps such metric elusiveness must remain. Patently not everything of value can be priced.

It may be argued with some justification that proponents of both paradigms may benefit from insights in the other. Financiers are frequently seen by environmentalists as less willing to entertain inherent value, but one may also argue that those who agitate for conservation in Africa and elsewhere may improve their own ability to 'speak finance'. An interesting example is the 'value' of the Sahara Desert. Environmentalists

may value it for its beauty, for the interesting yet less easily observable wildlife and for the intrinsic value it has for local communities. Financiers may be able to entertain such forms of appreciation, but may be tempted to disregard it as a heap of sand; of little to no commercial value. But a more holistic perspective shows that even environmentalism may be guilty of a Euro-centric paradigm: colonisation also colonises the mind of the coloniser. Would either financier or environmentalist be aware or care, for example, that the Sahara is responsible for providing much of the oxygen on the planet? A more systemic ecological insight, revealed by Nasa satellite, demonstrates that the sand from the Sahara acts as fertiliser for the rainforests of South America. Through large-scale and continuous winds, dust rich in iron and phosphorus is carried across the Atlantic and deposited in the Amazon. Is the Sahara ever recorded as an asset, and what would be the collateral value of such an earth-essential asset in debt-for-nature swaps? The West often uses the Sahara as little more than a crude geographical indicator, referring, for example, to Sub-Saharan Africa. This is not the first time that the Sahara Desert has captured the imagination. In 1877 Donald Mackenzie, a Scottish entrepreneur proposed the connection of the Sahara with the Atlantic by turning the El Djouf basin of the Sahara Desert into an inland sea. The eventual decline by the French government to fund the projects emerged fortuitous given the finding of its monumental global ecological impact.

If knowledge is a prerequisite of value, perceptions of Africa by the West remain opaque. One example of such ignorance is that Africa is often referred to in the company of other countries. Even at a more macro-perspective, Africa is frequently referred to as part of the Global South. This is despite that fact that 32 of the 54 countries on the continent are situated primarily in the Northern Hemisphere. African debt, therefore, may not only be collateralised by apparent pristine green spaces and the cessation of nature encroachment, but also by the global role its geography plays in sustaining the planet. It is difficult to value what is not understood.

In the interest of mutual empathetic consideration, Africa should take equal responsibility for higher levels of comprehension of the so-called West. As one important step, the concept of 'the West' must be understood in more granular terms. Just as Africa is patently not a country, the West is similarly non-monolithic. In fact, divisions in western paradigms abound, for which current levels of global protest present accessible evidence. Although all countries in Africa have been colonised, not all countries in the West have colonised Africa. In the minds of many Afro-analysts, the West appears to resemble less of a geographic determinant and more of a conceptual counterpoint to all matters African. A more nuanced appreciation and robust understanding of the West may therefore also enhance the validity of arguments on perceptions of African value.

But Africa has other, less easily quantifiable assets, too. Not least of these is its human capital. According to UNESCO, “the share of Africa’s youth in the world is forecasted to increase to 42% by 2030 and is expected to continue to grow throughout the remainder of the 21st century, more than doubling from current levels by 2055.” That means that more than 4 out of every ten young people (under 35) will be African by 2030, and more than half by the middle of the century. Together with its ecological riches, the enormous value of its human capital must surely be one of the most valuable assets available to the future of the planet. And even the most spreadsheet-minded economist recognises the value of such a demographic contour. Described by UNICEF as the African demographic dividend, it presents a demographic profile that is the envy of much of the economies of the West. Even for the most commercially-minded, in a world governed by great uncertainty, this human capital resource offers a secure future market of gargantuan proportions.

A counter-argument may suggest that Africa’s future demographic dispensation simply represents more debt; that it is an additional weight on an already-crouching social profile. In financial terms, one may describe it (rather than as a dividend) as a demographic dilutive capital raise, i.e. that every current citizen will simply have less of a share of Africa’s future wealth due to the staggering growth in its population. But that suggests a devaluation of all future Africans. And it ignores how such elevated fertility rates came into existence. The judgemental and dismissive nature of such an argument also disregards the opportunities for the education and empowerment of women. A description of the demographic dividend is not a proposal for population growth. It is a recognition of an African reality and an invitation for meaningful value creation in Africa’s future. Consider, for example, the implications for the future of the planet if a considerably larger percentage of its population has a more appreciative paradigm of nature.

Nor is scale its only virtue. African human capital in the diaspora offers some of the most talented global citizens at the service of western economies, with Elon Musk a notable (and admittedly outlying) example. Far from being a burden on their new homes, members of the African diaspora contribute actively to their destination economies. And their income levels comfortably exceed their expenditure. This is evidenced by the fact that remittances from the diaspora have now exceeded levels of international aid from western economies to Africa. A World Bank analysis showed “that migrants from Africa are the top contributor of foreign inflows to the continent, reaching a record $46 billion in 2018, far more than the $27 billion dollars that were received in foreign aid in the same year.” The diaspora, then, instead of simply enjoying their western lifestyles, continues to invest in the future of Africa. This behaviour by the diaspora reveals an investment disposition towards Africa which western financial institutions may do well to investigate.

Africa’s human capital also contributes to corporate equity valuations in the West. Such value appreciation occurs through the provision of a labour market to companies which are operating in Africa, but are listed on securities exchanges abroad. Profits and dividends naturally accrue to western shareholders of those offshore listings, thus contributing to the vibrancy of foreign capital markets. In addition to its human capital it is, paradoxically, Africa's ecological assets that fund such profits as natural resources in Africa often pay the ecological price of western globalisation.

What is more, former colonial trade routes continue to exist in modern, globalised value chains. This is facilitated by African countries that continue to share a common language with their former colonisers, in addition to the existence of formal preferential agreements in favour of western nations. Consider, for example, that only around 16% of the total GDP of Africa is intra-Africa trade. This will be ameliorated by the African Free Trade Agreement, which will establish the largest free trade area in the world – a most attractive proposition for investors in the next several decades worth over $3.4 trillion.

Commodities and labour are by no means the sole output of Africa's human capital. It also displays high levels of creative output – and has done so for centuries. But the ownership and valuation of its creative and artistic productive output remains a contentious issue for many Africans. Thousands of pieces of African art and artefacts continue to be held in vast quantities by former colonisers. A challenging report has called for their return. In addition, from a valuation perspective, perhaps a simple invoice should be sent from African nations for the illegal borrowing and exhibition of those art pieces for over a century. It may offer some collateral for a favourable loan, allowing Africa to retain its sovereignty over its natural creative and ecological assets.

The deeper the investigation, the more salient the wealth of Africa becomes. The examples are transparently available to all who are willing to recognise them. The WEF, for example, has reported that Africa has 65% of the world's remaining arable land. With food security and an exploding global population, coupled with the need to reinvent agriculture in the interest of planetary sustainability, the value of this asset is beyond measure. And the scale and value of what lies below that African soil is simply staggering. According to The UN Environment Programme, Africa holds "some 30 per cent of the world's mineral reserves, 8 per cent of the world's natural gas, 12 per cent of the world's oil reserves; the continent has 40 per cent of the world's gold and up to 90 per cent of its chromium and platinum." With sustainability applications of some of these minerals, such as the use of platinum in fuel cells, strategic and balanced global finance of their exploitation will become increasingly critical for global financial wellbeing. Once again, the observation of Africa's mineral profile does not constitute a proposal. It certainly does indicate the dominant and paradoxical paradigm of the traditional western investor for the selective attractiveness of Africa: seductive for her unrealised mining treasures, yet objectionable for her financial risk profile.

And Africa's own financial system is equally poised for unicorn status. According to BiztechAfrica, "mobile financial services have grown faster in Africa than anywhere else in the world." Naturally infrastructure development remains a niggle in the mind of traditional investors. But a strategic interrogation always looks for the benefit in the asymmetry. As an example, a 2020 report by Oslo-based Arcane Research suggested that it may be exactly the challenges of inconsistent infrastructure, currency volatility and high interest rates that make Africa "a fertile ground for an alternative to germinate." Cryptocurrencies are positioned to become the ideal antidote to these challenges." the report said.

Alternative suitors: Bullish bears, tigers and pandas

As the full consequence of unfavourable financial arrangements with the West start to show their limitations, it is worth observing Africa's dramatically expanding gaze for credit. With its new-found confidence, Africa has already started to look beyond its traditional financial hunting grounds, and the new foreign grounds have looked back with great appetite.

In February 2020, India's foreign secretary announced the country is opening 18 new embassies in Africa. It is noteworthy that over two-thirds of its Lines of Credit (LoC's) in the past decade have been extended to nations in Africa. Mr Shringla went on to say that "Currently 189 projects in 42 African countries, valued at $114bn are being implemented under Indian LoC's."

And with Russia's expansionist foreign policies, a Financial Times headline in 2019 read "Russia turns on the charm at first Africa summit." The summit had a distinct character: low on concrete deals, but high on conviviality and strong on strategic signalling. Russia wooed African nations with offers of nuclear plants, fighter jets and missile defence systems.

China moved on formalisation of Chino-African relations in 2018 with the Declaration of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. The summit endorsed the vision of a shared "future for mankind", thus echoing the African paradigm of communalism. Other paradigmatic alignments are also detectable in the respective philosophical histories of the two regions. China's investment in Africa is already well under way, and the terms are quite distinct from typical traditional FDI. For one thing, investment maturity horizons far exceed the short-term gains sought by Eurobond investors.

Perception shifts on value are thus already in motion, but their origins are non-traditional. International debt cessions may be on the cards for many African nations as they attempt to shift unfavourable debt obligations.

African paradigms of value

Paradigms can be silent assassins of reason. And even pure reason itself, defined in a narrow cartesian paradigm, is a necessary, but certainly not sufficient dimension of discernment. In the western global financial axiology, *value* is all too frequently mistakenly conflated with *values*. In repositioning the value and potential of Africa, caution should be taken not to fall prey to the same sterile notions of value as those under scrutiny. The method and scope of the critique on myopic methods of valuation must not, itself, be similarly blinkered. This would suggest a form of internalised intellectual oppression in the very voice which calls for liberation.

In the paradigms of many first nations, value is more closely associated with (perhaps surprisingly) its Latin etymological roots: *valēre*, meaning to be strong, to be worth or indeed, symbolically, worthy. In the African paradigm, such worthiness has both a temporal and spiritual quality. It is temporal in nature because of the respected wisdom of the ancients and the deep sense of connectedness with ancestors. African art and artefacts, then, are viewed, as is often the case with first nations, as both gifts and symbols of the ancestors - evidence of historic worthiness and an expression of faith in continued well-being. It is at once symbolic of heritage and confirmational evidence of social bonds through time. This temporal connectedness extends to a spiritual bond with ancestors. And this profound sense of connection also encompasses all forms of ecological assets and their perceived value. The land, rivers, hills and mountains, together with the animals and plants that co-habit the natural spaces with humans, are imbued with a sense of the sacred. They are observed with veneration and treated as ancestral bequests that establish an inviolable connection between members of the community and their past, present and future. By stark contrast, the western secular individualist paradigm of divided, competing ownership and purely financial valuation models can fall foreign on the African ear. The implications for governance may be significant. Transparency in the African context, for example, means a declaration not only of what is materially observable, but also of that which is intangible and the bonds that connect people with nature and each other. For the West, then, to interpret the Africa Demographic Dividend as a mere burden, is to suggest a curse of future generations, for whom current Africans will be ancestors. Africa as a rich store of what it means to be human cannot be overstated, or indeed overvalued.

Options for pathways to alternative paradigms of value, values and valuations

It may be argued with a high degree of defensibility that paradigms and practical proposals are not naturally suited. Paradigms are not project plans. Observations of patterns of thought invite reflection on alternative desired futures, while proposals often call for short-term applications. Nevertheless, the logical consequence, even of mindsets, are not immune to starting points. Examples of such pathways may include:

- Redeeming history: A recognition by local and international financial actors of their historical role in shaping the status quo
- Noting agency: An acknowledgement by the international financial community that Africa has taken practical steps towards advancing its own economic well-being
- Guaranteeing collateral: access to automatic debt guarantee schemes of disaster risk finance for African nations prone to natural disasters due to climate change
- Reimagining governance: a rebalancing of governance obligations beyond internalising all benefit to include the costs of externalised harm (environmental and social), direct and indirect, by western investors
- Revaluation: challenge bourses to develop a socio-ecological adjusted enterprise valuation model for listed companies. Market capitalisation is a disingenuous, reductionist valuation methodology which inflates value artificially and undermines emerging economy valuations.
- Appreciation: in the context of Black Lives Matter, shifting the dialogue from Africa's population as a burden, to the exploration of acceleration strategies for well-being
- Ratings accuracy: an increased weighting of FDI and bond attractiveness levels in the determination of sovereign risk. Just as GDP is a crude average, sovereign risk ratings are often at odds with opportunities sensed by investors.
- Reinventing deal-making: a review of the fairness of loan and bond terms (for yield and maturity) and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems in deal design
- Risk-sharing: limiting Africa's exposure to currency volatility rather than perpetuating exploitation of the potential gains for the lender's exclusive balance sheet

To reiterate, the empractication (attempted immediate practical implementation) of paradigms presents a risk similar to the reversed entheorisation of practice: it seems disjointed until elegant praxis is found. The dilemma is clear: stay within the current paradigm and risk obsolescence. Or, step beyond the borders of the current paradigm and embark on what the poet Ferlinghetti would call 'constantly risking absurdity'. These early potential pathways present humble examples of initial transitional options. But to interpret Kuhn, when a tipping point of anomalies makes the old paradigm untenable, the search for a new paradigm is the only worthy alternative.

Conclusion

Current models of value and valuation will simply produce the current future. Innovative valuation methods are urgently required to describe Africa's balance sheet more accurately and more holistically. While some African leaders have admittedly favoured short-term, selfish benefit over longer-term public good, the West has, deliberately or inadvertently, applied a set of metrics that presents Africa as having taken up permanent residency on the brink of bankruptcy. The resulting perception is that Africa presents an unfavourable risk profile and that it must compensate western investors for assuming that risk. In reality, it may be argued with some conviction that Africa is subsidising enormously risky ecological behaviour by the West. The global financial system remains wickedly positivistic and only counts what has already been formalised, structured, contracted and quantified. The global benefit to ecological and social well-being offered by Africa remains largely undescribed, but even preliminary results suggest a healthy balance sheet, with vibrant levels of ecological and human capital. Africa does not need debt relief as much as it needs a revaluation. As the global books are rebalanced and critical actors in global finance adopt more discerning and appreciative paradigms, even without penalties, interest and arrears from the West in favour of Africa, the consequence may well be a holistic global debt exchange, and a surplus for Africa worthy of reinvestment.