

Constructions of Indigenous African Leadership: A social,  
anthropological and discursive exploration of two regions

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## **Dedication**

In recognition of the enormous sacrifice of my family I dedicate this project to my children: Liz, Ed and Clinton and to my dear wife Patricia. You have endured so much and paid the price of long absences, financial constraints, and the many innumerable difficulties we faced throughout the duration of this PhD research. You felt the pain the most, the prize is yours.

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## ***Abstract***

This thesis deploys a transdisciplinary approach that complementarily combines organisational and social anthropological research lenses to explore constructions of indigenous African leadership with a focus in two regions in west and central Africa. The thesis engages with the complex social construction processes of leadership within an indigenous African cultural and traditional council institution and within the more formal local government councils. Empirical data was generated through unstructured interviewing, group discussion, and fieldnotes of lived experience and daily interaction with the local people. Empirical evidence uncovered the prevalence of conviviality, humanity, community inter-dependence and spirituality as the dominant and underpinning characteristics in the discourse and practice of leadership within indigenous cultural and traditional councils. The research uncovers a firm assumption of ancestral and godly intervention in leadership practices based on hegemonic historical belief systems encoded in historical mythologies and stories. These cultural hegemonies are replicated in cultic rituals, sacrificial repertoires and convivially celebrated in folklore. Furthermore, meanings and understandings of leadership are known, encapsulated and portrayed by from the natural ecology with trees, animals and ornaments emerging as embodiments of leadership. Additionally, there is a strong assumption that leadership is virtually enabled and directed by non-human forces such as ancestors and gods, giving rise to the dominance of the notion of leadership as metaphysical and transcendental.

Within the more formal local government councils a complex cohabitation and interweaving of the local socio-cultural and traditional perceptions of leadership and Western ideology and practices is evident. The unfolding practice and narrative evolve an esplanade of constant confrontation, multifarious tension and emerging challenge between both influences. This leads to a dramaturgical concomitancy of hybridity, mutation and multiple configurations of approaches and practices influenced by a range factors. The thesis contributes knowledge into the areas of: African leadership Studies (ALS), critical leadership studies (CLS) and leadership studies more generally. In particular it advances the non-human dimension, unearths the rituals and symbols and unravels the prevailing metaphysical and transcendental thinking in the discourse and practice of leadership in context.

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## List of abbreviations

1. AAU: Association of African Universities
2. AU: African Union
3. BERA: British Educational Research Association
4. BSA: British Social Association
5. IAL: Indigenous African Leadership
6. ICC: Indigenous Community Council
7. LGC: Local Government Council
8. MINATD: Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development
9. SRA: Social Research Association
- 10.UNCAC: United Nation Convention Against Corruption
- 11.UNECA: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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## Chapter one: Introduction

### 1.1 Background and rationale

This thesis explores constructions of leadership in an indigenous African community context against a backdrop of a dearth of empirical research in the African context (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Muchiri 2011; Nkomo, 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2011). So far scholars and writers appraising leadership in the African continent have described the performances of African leaders in private, public and political organisations as: 'disastrous' 'tragic' 'poor' and 'mediocre' (see e.g. Haruna, 2009; Inyang, 2009; Ochola, 2007; Obiakor, 2004; Rotberg, 2004; Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe, 2011). In spite of this rather abysmal analysis, research into leadership in the African context<sup>1</sup> has remained scarce, fairly limited in scope and empirically weak (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Jackson, 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2011; Zoogah, 2008). Initial efforts in theorising leadership in the African context led to dichotomous comparisons between what is generally perceived as Western concepts and practices, perceived as Afro-centric. Popular comparisons advanced by such writers without empirical evidence include binaries such as: 'humanistic' versus 'instrumentalist'; collectivist versus 'individualistic', 'first world' versus 'third world' and 'civilised' versus 'primitive' (Jackson, 2004; Inyang, 2009; Nkomo, 2006).

Beyond the above comparisons, some writers have assumed that African leadership practices generally demonstrate authoritative, paternalistic, conservative, and change resistant tendencies (Blunt and Jones, 1997). In more recent times a wave of cross cultural research has posited that African leadership practice is a hybrid amalgam constituted of Western ideologies and practices and African cultural and traditional customs. Another group of writers employing generalisable statistical methods based on an essentialist ontology have pointed to the prevalence of high power distance between leaders and followers and humane consideration as key hallmarks of African leadership preferences (Hofstede, 1985; House et al., 2004). Similarly, the notion of African leaders and managers exhibiting the ability to manage

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to context throughout this thesis as both the physical environment and social system in which individuals act in circumstances which might directly affect or influence individual behaviour. This include laws, regulations, culture, politics, unions, industries or nationality that can lead to the production of individual interpretations or other external events - Frank Hamilton and Cynthia J. Bean (2005) The importance of context, beliefs and values in leadership development, Journal compilation: Oxford

diversity in a sociable way has been advanced as an important trade mark of leadership in Africa (Jackson, 2004). Adding to these views, several other connotations mainly based on leadership in the political arena and in formal Western-styled organisations located in urban areas in Africa have been proposed as representative of leadership practice in the African continent. However, more recent empirical work has argued that extant constructions have little or no relationship with the fundamentals of indigenous African cultures and traditions (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2011; Kamoche, 2010; Khoza, 2011).

Whilst many connotations and at times conjuring perceptions have been advanced as explored above, researchers have not really engaged with the very foundations of African leadership culture and its traditions from the very roots of indigenous communities. To this extent very little is known about ways in which indigenous African tribes and communities undertake such functions as: indigenous African sense of organising, local institutions and foundations of leadership thinking. Similarly, not much is known about what leadership might mean to the local people and in the local languages of prototypical indigenous communities and regions that continue to practice authentic cultural and traditional approaches to leadership.

Based on this limited knowledge, this thesis would argue that whilst previous studies have no doubt contributed some important foundational knowledge into leadership learning in the African context, more work is required to better inform the context. Pertinent concerns include questions about some of the methods of inquiry adopted and the often preferred context of exploration which is often in organisations and participants in urban cities in Africa. Also worrying is the tendency to generalise findings from one region as representative of all of Africa. Such generalisations are not only deceptive but are also misleading considering the African continent comprises 43 countries exhibiting quite different cultures, languages and constituting contrasting demographic and social formations (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Kamoche, 2010, Walumbwa et al., 2011). This short-coming in the way leadership has been researched provides legitimate grounds to academically, intellectually and conceptually challenge some of the extant findings and conclusions advanced as encapsulating leadership in the African context. Thus, it is thought within this study that a focus within indigenous African localities and communities could illuminate

new insight into leadership that is not general but specific to the communities of focus. If this study is conducted credibly and dependably it could expand our understanding of the phenomenon of leadership beyond the current Western and Anglo-centric dominated perceptions and theories in contemporary leadership studies. A possible outcome would be to present and theories an alternative non-Western constructions and ways of thinking about leadership, thus, partly addressing the rather excessive and contested Western dominated perceptions of the field of leadership (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Jepson, 2010; Steyaert, 2013).

The present study departs from the lack of focus, weak and at times no empirical evidence that has virtually characterised an overwhelming majority of writings about leadership in the African context as elucidated above. To this extent, the research that informs this thesis empirically explores leadership with a focus in two indigenous regions in west and central Africa for a number of reasons. First, the majority of African populations live in rural indigenous tribal areas (UNECA, 2014) where such indigenous<sup>2</sup> leadership practices are mostly exhibited (Berman, 2015). Second, Africans often maintain very strong cultural affinity with their tribes of origin and thus constantly return to their tribal areas after service in other parts of the country. Hence, the African is commonly identified in relation to the natural tribe of origins such as Ibo, Bayang, Yoruba, Zulu, Kikuyu, etc. Third, indigenous African perceptions, practices institutions remain largely unresearched due to the difficult terrain in which they are found, plagued by poor roads, bridges and other transportation and communication infrastructure. Fourth, it has been argued that the African continent – particularly sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is in many ways different from Europe and the North America. Hence, it is contended that Western perceptions of leadership may not resonate with the African context (Asafa, 2015; Blunt and Jones, 1997; Inyang, 2008; Jackson, 2004; Kuada, 1994;).

A more theoretical reason relates to the emergent argument mainly by critical scholars that culture and context influence behaviour and construction of reality (Collinson, 2011; Ford, 2010; Hofstede, 2003). It has also been argued that the way

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<sup>2</sup> The word indigenous is used here to mean groups of people who live in the natural and particular place or natives of a tribe or set of tribes that has maintained its language, customs and traditions without significant change over many generations such as the indigenous peoples of Siberia (oxforddictionary.com)

we frame reality and program our representation and conceptualisation of phenomena depends to a large extent on our families of origin, our mental cultural programming and the socio-cultural environment in which we evolve (Goffman, 1981; Hall, 1997; Ford 2010; Hofstede, 2003). To this extent, it is believed that a focus within communities that practice indigenous African leadership is more likely provide the best opportunities to capture discourses and practices akin to the histories and traditions of the local people as passed down from previous generations.

### *Rationale for the study*

The rationale for this study is its determination to partly address the problem of a dearth of research into leadership in the African context. A further rationale is in response to the increasing demand for Africa to reinvent itself by re-surfacing indigenous African knowledge as a means of solving African problems. Scores of African intellectuals have in more recent time reflected on the need for Africans to be inspired by indigenous cultures and ways of organising, planning and governing. Through such Afro-centric thinking, it has been suggested that it may be gainful for Africa to source for solutions to its problems from within Africa rather than from the West as has been the practice since colonisation (Magidimisha and Chipungu, 2015). This thinking has been echoed in speeches to the African diaspora by such African megaphones (politicians and elites) including Thabo Mbeki; a former South African President. In one of his numerous speeches in this regard he stated when addressing the Association of African Universities (AAU) conference in 2005 Mbeki declaring:

*“Education has an important role to play in the economic, cultural and political renaissance of our continent and in the drive for the development of indigenous knowledge systems. This implies that all educational curricula should have Africa as their focus, and as a result be indigenous in its grounding and orientation. To address this state of affairs we need a distinctly African knowledge system”* (Mbeki, 2005, cited in Kondlo et al., 2014:93).

Mbeki’s opinion above would seem to re-echo the views of numerous other African scholars. For instance, Festus Obiakor argued in support of Afro-centric leadership theorising and teaching saying:

*“Theories of effective African-centred leadership must be taught in African schools...Africans need African-centred leaders and not European-centred*

*leaders... African-centred education is the key to building patriotic African leadership” (Obiakor, 2005:417).*

Against this backdrop of increasing Africanisation (Ademola, 2005), this thesis undertakes research in west and central African regions with the goal of locating the African voice within leadership studies. It is hoped that the findings of this thesis could advance alternative ways of thinking about leadership and perhaps serve as a starting point for indigenous African leadership theorising, adding knowledge to extant writings and research. For instance the knowledge created within this thesis could help to develop such concepts as the Afro-centric leadership philosophy of Ubuntu that is often criticised as lacking empirical scrutiny and for not considering contemporary events in Africa’s recent history (Khoza, 2012). This knowledge could trigger further academic debates, discussions and reflections in the continuous process of knowledge creation. It is against this background that this thesis finds its rationale.

## **1.2 Aims, objectives and purpose**

The necessity and demand for effective, reliable and appreciative leadership in public, political and private organisations in the African context cannot be over emphasised. Already conundrums of ethical and moral questions have been jettisoned against the conduct of African political leaders. The prevalence of unfavourable behaviours such as tribalism and corrupt practices has been highlighted in leadership practice across Africa (Rotberg, 2004). However, there has been very little theorising and discussions as to the possible reasons why African leaders lead in particular ways. Efforts have been made to educate African leaders in government and private organisations to be schooled in Western leadership practices through various Western leadership development training programmes. However, most managers who take these training often find such teaching to be incommensurate with the African cultural and social work environment. Hence, after such training, they quickly resort to the more appropriate and locally convenient African cultural value systems that work well in the African cultural context (Kuada, 2010). For this reason, critics opposing the imposition of Western approaches to leadership in the African context have called for research that address issues of leadership that are specific to African context. As explained by John Kuada a leading African leadership scholar, the hope of dreaming an Afro-centric leadership ideology

is that such African-driven research endeavour stands a better chance to better theorise – in his words:

*“How Africans behave as leaders, why they behave the way they do, and the implications of such behaviours for organizational and national economic performance”* thus, possibly guiding: *“the choice of approaches that African leaders may adopt to achieve sustainable improvements in their behaviours”* (Kuada, 2010:10).

Against this backdrop of need, the main aim of this thesis was to partly address the important problem of the dearth of research into leadership in the African context. In pursuit of this wider aim the thesis sought to address a number of secondary aims including:

- To explore some of the key cultural and traditional leadership practices in the communities.
- To identify some of the factors that influence individual and collective practices of leadership in the local culturally founded community council organisation (ICCs) and within the more formal local government councils (LGCs).
- To explore some historical traditional accounts and cultural hegemonies that give rise to local indigenous meanings and narratives about the phenomenon of leadership in context.
- To compare and contrast leadership practices and discourses in the local indigenous context with contemporary accounts and theories of leadership in extant literature on leadership studies.

In order to gain this knowledge interviews, group discussions and observations were conducted based on a case study design and intended to explore rather than compare the two regions of focus in Africa. Data were collected and analysed from social anthropological and organisational perspectives and approaches as expanded in chapter four. The above aims and ensuing processes enabled the thesis to present new and unique insights into leadership in context. These approaches and aims were crafted in consideration of the overarching objective of the thesis which was mainly to gain a deeper and better understanding of leadership in a typical

indigenous African community and cultural context. Within this broad objective the specific objectives sought by the project included:

- a) To undertake empirical research that provides a non-Western construction and narrative of leadership in order to make sense of the dominant discourses around the subject of leadership in context.
- b) To develop a context-relevant explanatory theory of indigenous African leadership specific to the two regions of focus from a constructionist perspective, taking the local history, indigenous traditions and institutions and the socio-cultural environment into account.
- c) To appreciate some of the underpinning intricacies underlying leader-follower or leader-community relationships as well as the power dynamics at play in the various operating council settings and in the wider indigenous community.
- d) To appreciate some of the changes taking place within the communities, factors that influence them and some of the dilemmas faced by indigenous African communities.
- f) To empower, liberate and advance the voices of the erstwhile marginalised and 'voiceless' indigenous people so they too could be heard, known and acknowledged.

### **1.3 Research motivation**

The genesis of this project has been my intellectual battle as an African working and studying in Europe to reconcile the different cultures and ways of life to which I became accustomed in Africa and in Europe. Thus, a key motivation for this research has been more of a response to my personal life experience across different cultures. A background to this experience is that I grew up as a local village boy and was taught the cultures and traditions of my indigenous Bayang tribe in Cameroon. During this time, I saw and knew the world as it presented itself in my small community. In this community everyone was seen as a relation. This culturally relational environment influenced my perceptions and taught me to think of myself 'in relation to others', 'within others' and 'as a part of others'. So strong was the community bond that it appeared as though there would be no life outside of my community. In this traditional context, leaders emerged naturally from the community

and were identified by their knowledge of particular aspects of the local traditions, specific talents and for some functions historically reserved to particular families. Here everyone took part in leadership in one way or the other and everyone was always happy to follow appointed leaders and to play a part in the wellbeing of the community in such project such as the construction of roads, building of a hut, clearing the road to the village spring and so on. When it came to calling to the ancestors, specific leaders knew how to do so and undertook such functions. Leadership was fluid, complex but culturally understood, practiced and made to ways of work. However, I would soon move to a big city in Cameroon and eventually to the European world to experience completely different ways of relating to people.

In the midst of the above transition, I found different interpretations and approaches to work and social inter-relationships. For the most, I became acquainted with some of the new experiences - some of which became imbued in my new daily routines and for others which I simply rejected and resisted. At the same time, I also discarded some of the indigenous African teachings which I had learnt as a boy growing up in my little village of Besongabang in Cameroon. At this point the question for me became that of knowing where I stood and making sense of the multiple identities I had come to embody. My reflections in all of these changes were whether I was still an African, whether I had become a European or a global citizen or whether I represented any culture at all. For these questions I found no clear answers. Rather, even more questions emerged.

Eventually, I would begin studies in leadership just to realise that some of the practices which were part and parcel of the normal leadership practices in my indigenous community in terms of relationality, inclusivity and humanity were presented as emerging concepts in contemporary Western and Anglo-centric premises. For instance, it struck me that the taken-for-granted cultural leadership practices in my local village community were celebrated as emergent alternatives to individualistic concepts. More worrying was the claims from books and journals that the leader-centred and individualistic approaches to leadership were universal and generalisable for all cultures across the world. However, only a small number of books provided alternative ways of conceptualising and researching leadership at the start at the time I was introduced to leadership as an area of study. Most books mostly be American writers tended to agree with the leader-centred approach to

leadership except for one this book titled: *'Leadership as Identity: Constructions and Deconstructions'* (Ford et al., 2008) which eventually became influential in encouraging me to explore leadership from alternative philosophical perspectives. The authors of this book (one of which eventually became my supervisor) and the other an external examiner) particularly wondered why thousands of leadership research was conducted in the essentialist paradigm when in reality we view the world from different perspectives. This intellectual interrogation reiterating the danger of limiting the exploration of the phenomenon of leadership from the dominant essentialist paradigm encouraged me to study indigenous African leadership from a more subjective or relativist paradigm. Thus, in a way, this book served as an academic and intellectual liberator and confidence booster that enabled me to undertake research in an area where practices may be regarded as unorthodox from the Western or Anglo-centric perspective. The idea that we live in many worlds and that the justification of the necessity to expand our knowledge of the different worlds we live and that we ought to see these worlds differently was another source of motivation to undertake this study.

#### **1.4 Theoretical foundation**

The African leadership concept of Ubuntu has been recommended as a starting point for leadership theorising in the African context (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Inyang, 2008; Jackson, 2004; Khoza, 2012). To this extent, the Ubuntu leadership concept served as a starting premise for the study alongside the social anthropological theory of social and cultural evolutionism derived from Charles Darwin's original evolution theory (Darwin, 1859). Through the social and cultural evolution lens it was possible to explore the process of change as well as make sense of changes in leadership practices and thinking during pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods. The concept of social and cultural evolution may not be popular within leadership studies. However, more recent research in social anthropology has applied the concept to observe that cultures and populations exhibit elements of 'change mutations' and 'reproduction from ancestral formations and practices' Aguilar and Ghirlanda (2015). Further, cross cultural studies have shown that cultures do not exist in static states. Rather culture and traditions and how we behave tends to be more of a dynamic process mainly influenced by our immediate space, events and the passage of time

(see e.g. Hofstede, 2003). The above theories on culture are consistent with the notion of social and cultural evolution as observed in leadership thinking and practice in the communities. Within the communities evolution is leadership thinking is clearly an ongoing reality. This finding draws attention to the relevance of social and cultural evolutionism as a framework to trace change and change processes in cultural settings. Within this study, the social and cultural evolution framework proved useful as a theoretical lens by helping to map the evolution of leadership practices and thinking from historical times to recent time. This mapping was relevant in upgrading the philosophy of Ubuntu for instance.

### **1.5 The research problem**

The main problem which this thesis set out to address was the dearth of research into leadership in the African continent – specifically within indigenous regions. Indigenous or rural regions hold the majority of African populations and it is within such tribal indigenous clusters and locations that African norms, values and practices are mostly exhibited. However, so far, there has been very little research within leadership studies conducted in Africa (drawing on publications in management and leadership journals). Evidence of this can be found in a review of articles published in 'Leadership Quarterly' between the year 2000 and 2009 where it emerged that of the 481 articles published during this period, only one publication included data collected in Africa (Gardner et al., 2010). Similarly, in a review of qualitative studies published in leadership and management journals up to the year 2004, it was established that there was no publication of work conducted in Africa or based on notions of leadership from the African context. (Bryman, 2004). This limited research in African leadership has resulted to significant lack of knowledge about leadership in the African context. Consequently, what tends to be presented as representative of leadership in the African context is in large part unsubstantiated generalisations and connotations depicting the behaviours and acts of political elites (see e.g. Rotberg, 2004; Wanasika et al., 2011; Agulanna, 2006). In the most cases such descriptions fail to capture the key tenets and essences of African leadership thinking (Nkomo, 2006). Even more unknown and unresearched is knowledge about leadership from the cultural and traditional roots of Africa as explored by Africans themselves (Bolden and Kirk, 2009). The problematic and limitation that only very little knowledge about leadership in the African context and other non-Western

cultures and locations around the globe exist in contemporary leadership studies literature has been recognised by a range of scholars. For instance, Storey (2004) decries the limited scope of the present leadership studies in the face excessive volumes of research from the Western context. Hence, it is contended that leadership may be the most studied topic in all of social sciences (Burns, 1978). Hence, Wood (2005) argues that if researchers keep looking in the same places they will continue to find the same things and may not create new knowledge. This problematic may have become an urgent one especially if one were to consider the popular (albeit functionalist) perception that leadership is responsible for better economic and social transformation of countries (De Hoogh et al., 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2011; Agulanna 2006). Based on the possible economic benefits of effective leadership it is assumed that some of the political, economic and social difficulties faced by African countries may be a result of Western intrusion and colonialist subjugation which may not have allowed African cultural and traditional leadership practices to evolve and be implemented as they should in context (Inyang, 2008). Considering the above knowledge deficiency, the key problem which this thesis partly addresses is the particular problem of the dearth of knowledge and comparatively under-researched reality of the phenomenon of leadership in the African context.

## **1.6 Research question**

The context of this study could be viewed as unorthodox from the Western perspective given that a vast majority of research into leadership have been conducted in structured organisations that mainly reflect the Western vision and perception of organising and leadership. However, in the case of this study, drawing on the researcher's African roots and experience as an indigene of one of the two regions of focus for fieldwork, it is known that the concept of organising and leadership tends to take various forms - indigenous cultural and quasi-Western – a legacy of colonialism. Drawing on the limited knowledge in the area of indigenous African leadership and the intervention of Western ideas and practices, the study was conceptualised as more of an exploratory research. The intention here is to build a foundation for future research into indigenous leadership. Nevertheless, the study is guided by two broad questions, the overriding intent being to make sense of

leadership in context from a variety of embedded questions. The two broad research questions explored were:

- *What does the phenomenon of 'leadership' mean to the indigenous communities and people of Cross River and Mambila regions in west and central Africa?*
- *How is leadership practiced within the local indigenous cultural council institution and in the more formal local government councils in the regions?*

As indicated above, these two questions hold within them several other questions which arise from the multiple dialogues between and amongst participants, from the researcher's reflections as well as from dialogue with supervisors, examiners and other persons involved in the research directly or indirectly. This multiple social and communicative intervention process of questioning, brainstorming and construction of knowledge does justice to the social constructionist philosophy upon which the study is based and is maintained throughout the study.

### **1.7 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured into eight main chapters. The first chapter introduces the research and provides a background. It highlights the main issues involved, the rationale and the research process. The aims and objectives, research motivation, statement of the problem and research question are also presented in this opening chapter. In the second chapter a selected review of the literature traversing the historical evolution stages of leadership as an academic subject is conducted. In the process key mainstream and emergent concepts are identified and discussed. Of particular relevance within this chapter is a highlight on the changing dynamic of leadership theorising from foundational theories to contemporary emerging thinking at different times. The third chapter is the second of two literature review chapters and focuses on descriptions, connotations, writings and research about leadership in the African context. It identifies and discusses some popular connotations, descriptions and theories. An important aspect of this third chapter is an analysis and discussion about the philosophy of Ubuntu leadership - the lone Afro-centric leadership concept within leadership studies. The chapter also features a discussion of Western influence in leadership thinking in Africa as well as historical accounts of

early African explorers and the works of some social anthropologists about indigenous organising, governance and leadership in west and central Africa from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to post-independent period.

In the fourth chapter, the research methods and methodologies are explained as well as the philosophical foundation of the study. Here justifications are provided for the choices made in respect to the research design, methods of data collection and processes of data analysis. The fifth chapter presents findings from the social anthropological analysis while findings from the organisational analysis are presented in the sixth chapter. In chapter seven the findings of the research are discussed in relation to the research question and relevant debates from mainstream and emergent leadership paradigms. In the final chapter eight key research findings are outlined and evaluated and the extent to which the thesis has met its aims and objectives evaluated. Further, the key contributions are outlined and the implications of the findings to leadership studies discussed. This final chapter ends with a reflection on fieldwork experience, some limitations of the study and areas for further research.

### **1.8 Chapter summary**

This introductory chapter has set the scene for the rest of the thesis. The background of the study has been outlined and the key debates, issues and contours of the research identified. The chapter has also presented the aims and objectives as well as the main research questions. This opening chapter has also articulated the main motivation for the project with an important influence being the researcher's personal experience in different worlds, cultures and countries at different times. Overall, this opening chapter has introduced some of the key debates that will be developed in the rest of the thesis. The next two chapters will explore the relevant literature within mainstream, emergent and African leadership.

## Chapter two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

In the previous chapter, the general context of the study was outlined with a note on the key literatures that form the basis of the main academic debates, arguments and theories relevant to the study. In this chapter which is one of two literature review chapters, a selected historicised chronicle of leadership theorising is conducted with a focus on the evolutionary process from foundational concepts to the emergent inclusive, critical, relational and ethical dimensions of leadership. Differences between mainstream theories and critical leadership concepts tend to be underlined by philosophical and paradigmatic disparity. Such differences are usually based on the presumption of the ‘*in here*’ world of subjectivity and the ‘*out there*’ world of essentialism (Gergen, 1999:9). Table 2.1 below illustrates some of the differences between the mainstream literature and emergent leadership theories and also identifies some common issues that arise from chasms between these two ways of conceptualising leadership.

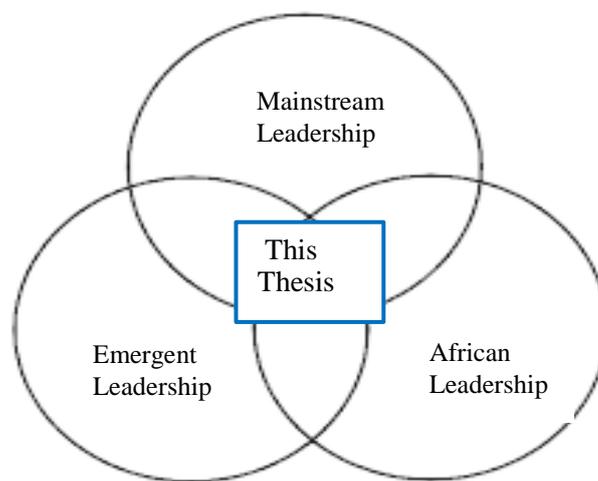
Table 2.1 Mainstream and critical leaders and current issues (updated from Edwards et al., 2014: 6)

Traditional/Mainstream theories	Critical leadership studies	Current issues in leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Early 90s – late 90s</li> <li>▪ Trait, skill, style, LMX, contingency, power, situational, path goal, transformational, transactional theories</li> <li>▪ Focus on leader effectiveness</li> <li>▪ Based on psychological</li> <li>▪ Quantitative research</li> <li>▪ Based on positivism</li> <li>▪ Leadership is known in numbers</li> <li>▪ Claims universality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Become known as a field in the Mid-2000s</li> <li>▪ Post-structuralist, feminist, discursive, and critical</li> <li>▪ Management research</li> <li>▪ Seek to problematize individualistic, male dominated and Western assumptions embedded within mainstream leadership studies</li> <li>▪ Based on interpretivism</li> <li>▪ Leadership is known in words</li> <li>▪ Based on local</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 90s onwards</li> <li>▪ Exploration of change, gender, followers, strategic leadership, distributed leadership, ethics, authenticity, toxic leadership, arts and aesthetics</li> <li>▪ Focus is on the exploration of these aspects of leadership, hence more focus on process rather than the individual</li> <li>▪ Quantitative, qualitative and sociological</li> </ul>

The above tables outline the main areas of difference between mainstream and critical leadership research as well as some of the issues covered in the two

literature review chapters. The first chapter will focus on foundational and mainstream leadership literature while the second review chapter will focus on connotations, depictions and theories that attempt to theorise or encapsulate leadership practices in an African context. The ensuing chapter will also feature a brief exploration of perceptions and constructions of indigenous leadership from other cultures and traditions the Maori indigenous population of New Zealand. It follows that this thesis is located at the intersections of three main literatures as illustrated in Fig. 2.1 below.

*Fig. 2.1 locating the thesis*



As a prelude to discussing the main issues, it might be worth tracing the historical foundation of leadership thinking in the Western context.

### 2.1.1 Ancient Western perceptions of leadership

A brief history of early conceptualisation and discourses of leadership in the West<sup>3</sup> is captured in Plato's, 'The Republic' in Ancient Greece around the fourth century BC in which Plato provides a narrative of Socrates' reflections and thoughts about leadership. In the above text which was read from (Bolden et al., 2011:21-22), Socrates, is said to have perceived leadership as based on professional and or technical competence than through populist or democratic decisions. A contrary

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<sup>3</sup> The West or the Western World is meant here to include Europe, North America and other dependencies such as Australia, Canada and other territories whose citizens descend from Europe and who continue to identify as historical migrants from Europe.

position to Socrates' was Xenophon's who argued that successful leadership required more than knowledge and competence distinguishing between a leader whose followers showed willing obedience and those whose followers complied grudgingly (Mitchell, 2009). As we see later the above historical debates would seem to be concurrent within mainstream leadership in such theories as charismatic, transformational and visionary leadership theories. Foundational theories such as trait and great man theories embody aspects of the above early accounts and thinking about leadership. Contrary to the early functional perception of leadership, emerging thinking and theorising is increasingly embracing the notion of leadership as a phenomenon that is socially constructed as explored below.

### **2.1.2 The social construction of leadership**

The inevitability, yet ubiquity of leadership has rendered the quest for continuous research to be a seemingly endless endeavour since prehistorical times (Gronn, 2011). However, as an academic discipline the study of leadership is a relatively new area of study which only began around the 20s and 30s. Bolden, et al., (2011) argue that leadership studies has remained popular given that it is through it that society and organisations are able to maintain a sense of purpose and order. However, the context in which leadership is practiced is always different which naturally result to multiple interpretations, practices and theories. This diversity and difference leads (Alvesson and Spicer, 2014:41) to argue that the 'leadership has always been a great source of ambiguity and confusion'. For constructionist-oriented researchers, ambiguity and confusion is considered inevitable and largely expected in the way we perceive leadership for the following reasons:

First, leadership takes place in a social environment and involves human behaviour which is 'soft' rather than 'hard science'<sup>4</sup>. From this perspective, leadership is not seen as an object out there that is independent of those involved in it as one could say for physical objects such as: stones, buildings or cars. Thus, interpretivists argue that given that leadership mainly unfolds out of a social process, its interpretation is subject to multiple expressions, discourses and meanings.

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<sup>4</sup> Soft science in this case refers to knowledge from social human activity such as arts, literature, qualitative social science while hard science refers to medicine, engineering, computing etc.

Second, we make sense the world from different material, cultural and philosophical perspectives which are driven by multiple interests, desires and environments. Within organisation studies some salient and distinctive scholarship has highlighted the prevailing (usually under-theorised leader-desires and self-indulgent schemes) that often underlie leadership and leader decision making processes. Such schemes include: political positioning and agency (O'Reilly and Reed, 2012), identity construction (Collinson, 2003; Food, 2006; Hogg, 2001) and power relation issues (Grint, 2005a: Hofstede, 1980). These desires and schemes some of which are culturally-influences are bound to result to tensions and ambiguities in the manner in which leadership unfolds and how it is articulated. Furthermore, it is well established that dimensions of emancipation and resistance to power also are constant events in organisational work places reflecting various personality differences – the consequence of differences in education, philosophical world-views and authority. Thus, Alvesson and Spicer (2012) have argued that humans are complex creatures, noting that some people would not like to work even in organisations dominated entirely by ideals that are generally considered to be acceptable.

Third, the contexts in which leadership is practiced are multiple and different. For instance, the leadership of a Christian organisation would require a different approach to that of a production factory. Further complexities that make common practices and discourses impossible are those that result from the complexity of human behaviour. Some people are more sociable and friendly, while others tend to be more work-oriented and less desirous of amusement, humour or noise. Similarly, some cultures are collective while others are individualistic. These disparities highlight the impossibility of arriving at a common definition of leadership - less so a universal narrative or discourse. Thus, from a social constructionist qualitative perspective leadership is more of a process of social construction and a way of 'doing' that is contingent on culture, context, personality, time, situation etc. Also, leadership is seen as the result of the input of many actors rather than one dominant individual. Bearing in mind that these individuals have different experiences, knowledge and cultural influence, it is expected that different contexts will present correspondingly different interpretations. However, from an essentialist paradigm, diversity and multiplicity is discomfoting and considered less valid. Hence, essentialist researchers always seek to obtain a universal definition and a set of

accepted practices accepted as constituting leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Bryman et al., 2011; Harding et al., 2011).

## **2. 2 Mainstream leadership concepts**

In the context of this research, the dominant mainstream leadership research will refer more to those popular perspectives which are theorised and articulated on the basis of 'functionalism', 'positivism', and 'psychologism' (Collinson, 2014:38). Mainstream research will also refer to constructions of leadership that are akin to Richard Barker's more elaborate description of mainstream leadership concepts as:

*“Trait and characteristic theories and empirical approaches supported by mounds of data, graphic models, and regression statistics... based on the language of logical positivism of the old physical science....and adaptation of the hierarchical view of the universe adopted by the early Christian Church... it presumes that leadership is all about the person at the top of the hierarchy who uses his exceptional abilities and qualities to manage the structure in relation to goal achievement”* (Barker, 2001:467- 469).

As Barker's description makes it clear, mainstream leadership theories take a positivist approach based on essentialist deterministic philosophies (Robson, 2011). Mainstream concepts quite often conceptualise organisations as hierarchical and leadership as the actions of one individual, the leader or persons appointed to formal positions in organisation. As we see later, leadership based on this philosophy have been challenged by emergent leadership theories. Theories within the mainstream could be categorised into four main groups: trait, behavioural, contingent and situational, and new or post-heroic Leadership. Each of these is explored further below.

### **2.2.1 The trait and great man theory**

The earliest research studies in the field of leadership as an academic field began around the 1950s. Such early work was influenced by research from the Ohio and Michigan university studies in the US (Northouse, 2010). During this early period researchers were interested in distinguishing some of the natural attributes or traits that differentiated ordinary individuals from potential leaders (Stogdill, 1974). This way of thinking about leadership was influenced by the predominant belief that some persons were 'born leaders' or 'born to rule' due to their individual natural characteristics or biological relationship to a previous leader (Northouse, 2010).

Thus, leadership effectiveness and success was guaranteed if leaders possessed certain implicit prerequisite characteristics, abilities or physical stature. To this end, research was mostly concerned with identifying attributes that appeared to depict the ideal leader. However, endless sets of attributes and traits were presented with no consensus (Northouse, 2010). Two excerpts from early leadership research from the likes of (Argyris, 1953) and (Edward and Townsend, 1958) are presented below as examples.

Table 2.2 Leadership traits in 'trait theory'

<u>Argyris (1953)</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exhibits high frustration tolerance</li> <li>2. Encourages full participation</li> <li>3. Continually questions themselves</li> <li>4. Understands laws of competitive warfare</li> <li>5. Expresses hostilities tactfully</li> <li>6. Accepts victory with controlled emotions</li> <li>7. Defeats never shattered them</li> <li>8. Understands unfavourable decisions</li> <li>9. Identifies selves with groups</li> <li>10. Sets goals realistically</li> </ol>

<u>Edward and Townsend (1958)</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strength and willingness to work hard, immensely hard in some cases</li> <li>2. Perseverance and determination amounting at times to fanatical single-mindedness.</li> <li>3. A taste and flare of commerce, an understanding of the market place.</li> <li>4. Audacity, a willingness to take risks that are sometimes large gambles.</li> <li>5. Ability to inspire enthusiasm to those whose cooperation and assistance is essential</li> <li>6. Toughness, amounting to some men to ruthlessness</li> </ol>

The two lists above as much as the many others presented by researchers at the time provided a catalogue of different attributes and traits. Another important observation by theorists at the time was that in normal life there was no significant difference between persons qualified as leaders and any ordinary person. Furthermore, it was observed that leaders who performed very well in one situation failed to perform in another. This led to the perception that there could be no born leader and neither could anyone be such a super-leader who is able to lead in any

context. These shortcomings momentarily downgraded both the trait and great man theories as a method of studying leadership. Moving forward from there, researchers began to focus their attention on leader behaviour in different situations instead of leader attributes (Northouse, 2010).

However, although trait theory and great man theories became disqualified (Stogdill, 1974), it has certainly not been abandoned as it is usually assumed in historical academic accounts and writings of leadership. In real life, it continues to resonate in many contemporary mainstream accounts of leadership as can be found in competency frameworks, charismatic leadership/transformational and other leader-centred constructions of leadership. This is also the case in work places where individuals benefiting from some naturally endowed attributes or traits continue to be considered to be best suited and are recruited for specific roles (Richardson, 2014; Stone and Stone, 2015). To this extent Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) observe that some of the traits which are normally desired in organisations include: drive (a broad term which includes achievements, motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative); leadership motivation (the desire to lead but not to seek power as an end in itself); honesty and integrity; self-confidence (associated with emotional stability); cognitive ability; and knowledge of the business.

The consideration of attributes such as the above has been the main drive for leadership development initiatives and projects by organisations which tend to want to transform simple individuals into leaders through leadership development projects (Day et al., 2014). However, it has been argued that the presence of any or all of the above attributes does not make someone a leader and neither does the absence of such traits automatically disqualify someone from being leader (Bolden et al., 2011). It follows that the debate about personality, traits and the heroics of a great man or woman remains inconclusive and is something we continue to grapple with in one way or another. It may well be that the study of traits, abilities and qualities in leadership has been subsumed by emergent collective and relational approaches in of thinking about leadership explored later in the chapter.

In fact we continue to observe trait and great man theories of leadership in formal monarchical government and some indigenous cultures. For instance in some traditional and cultural institutions in Africa, leadership succession is normally

hereditary against an expectation that the attributes and traits of a former leader is genetically transferred from the antecedent progenitors. In Europe, the Dutch Queen Beatrix abdicated the throne ceding power and leadership role to her son Alexander. Similarly, it is expected that Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain will be succeeded by her son Prince of Wales Charles. The basis of this genealogical succession is more of a recognition of the traits, attributes and abilities of historical leaders or families that were victorious in various conquests and battles fought and won (Rowley and Wu, 2014). The idea of succession in both cases of Britain and The Netherlands, there is an expectation the children will inherit the same leadership and conquering ability as their ancestors. Therefore, although great man and trait leadership thinking might not be immediately apparent in organisational contexts in other context it remains the known and approved practice. Nonetheless, academic research into leadership progressed from the trait thinking of the 1950s into exploring leader behaviour. As we see below, the key consideration in this respect was to categorise leaders according to the manner in which they deployed power and how leaders responded to their subordinates types and contexts (Bolden, et al., 2011; Northouse, 2010).

### **2.2.2 Behavioural leadership concepts relative to power**

The quest for power has been a central aspect of human existence throughout history. One could trace back to ancient Roman periods to explore one of the earliest works about power written by Niccolo Machiavelli, a political adviser to Roman nobles in the sixteenth century. In his most celebrated book *The Prince* (Machiavelli, 1972) Machiavelli advised that the notion of power was a means of control and that it needed to be deployed as illustrated in table 2.1 below.

Table: 2.3 Machiavelli's leadership principles

▪ It is better to be a conservative rather than liberal spender.
▪ It is better to be feared than loved. One can be feared without being hated.
▪ The end justifies the means.
▪ Cunningness is preferable to integrity.
▪ Take opportunities to give dramatic rewards or punishments
▪ Offer help to parties that are less powerful than you.
▪ Do not take common cause with parties more powerful than you.
▪ Use councillors that are truthful, but who have a narrow focus.
▪ Acting impetuously is preferable to cautiously.
▪ Seek a reputation of severity instead of softness.
▪ Use care not to offend the powerful or those subservient to you.

Machiavelli's principles above are clearly dictatorial and autocratic and reflect leadership within an empire system of governance. Given that the Roman Empire constantly faced revolt and political upheaval, it is understandable that the situation may have necessitated dictatorial approaches to tame peoples or regions that aspired independence. However, it would seem that these perceptions of leadership as much as the ancient Greek perceptions of leadership have followed through into contemporary organisational theorising.

Beginning from the mid-1950s into the sixties and seventies, leadership research focused more in finding out how leader behaviours towards their subordinates. One broad set of theories were the behavioural and contingency theories of leadership. At the heart of behavioural theories was the need for effective use of power and the necessity to appreciate how different work situations required different leadership styles. In respect to power, the two most prominent works that addressed the issue of power came from the works of (Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1958) and (Raven and French Jr, 1958). Tannenbaum and Schmidt theorised leaders' use of power as a continuum or range of behaviours ranging from autocratic leadership styles to less power or laissez faire practices. Between these two extremes their model identified seven approaches or ways of deploying power and authority in organisational leadership. Based on the leader's preferred style various approaches would be utilised notably: telling, selling, testing, consulting, joining, delegating or laissez faire or self-management. In modern day organisations we continue to find leadership

behaviours along Tannenbaum and Schmidt's continuum - although, it could be argued that leadership and use of power has in recent times tended to be more collective and inclusive as explored later in section 2.4.1 and 2.4.2. At the same time, leadership practices in some types of organisations and cultures remains autocratic, leader-centred and hierarchical. Such is the case in say military establishments where senior officers normally make decisions while those in lower ranks have to follow without much questioning (Pontefract, 2013).

Another prominent work on power was conducted by social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven in 1959. Their work focused in social power – particularly the foundation of social influences that lead to change in the belief, attitude, or behaviour of a person from the action of another person or an influencing agent. Based on the definition of social power as the potential or ability of an influencing agent to cause change in direction or movement of another in an organisational setting they found that there were mainly five sources of power including: legitimate, reward, expert, referent and coercive power French and Raven (1959). Table 2.2 below outlines the main tenets of each of the five sources of power.

Table: 2.2 French and Raven's five sources of power

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reward power: Based on an exchange of reward by the leader in return followership (similar to transactional relationship or leadership as we see later).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coercive power: Leadership based on the use of threat. To gain followership, leaders usually force subordinates to comply or face severe consequences or reprimand if subordinates fail to comply.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legitimate power: Power derived through official appointment such as board of directors appointing an individual as CEO or General Manager of an organisation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Referent power: Where subordinates voluntarily accept the authority of the leader due to the leader's perceived personal charm, ideas or vision (similar to Charismatic leadership as explored later).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expert power: Where followers acknowledge that the leader has better knowledge, skills or ability to make decisions for effective leadership for the collective benefit.</li> </ul>

What the five sources of power advanced by French and Raven tell us is that power does not emanate from one sources and that there are various sources of power and each might be required in specific context. Perhaps more important is the fact that there are no simple answers when it comes to power. For instance it is argued that a

power strategy that relies on surveillance (reward power, legitimate or coercive power) may not last once the need for surveillance ends or when - say appoint to an office comes to an end (Haugaard (2009). Thus, whilst both Tannenbaum and Schmidt and French and Raven inform power in leadership in some really interesting ways in reality the concept of power tends to be more complex as we explore in chapter seven from such work as (Braynion, 2004). One particular limitation of both studies is the assumption that power resides with the appointed leader and that other persons in organisations have little or no power at all. What is clear is that this leader-centred perception of power seems rather simplistic when one takes a stakeholder and constructionist approach to power and identity which highlight the influence of external power sources such trade unions and a stakeholder approach other collective power dimensions of power in organisations (see e.g. Scott and Lane, 2000; Urban, 2012). Nevertheless, the dominant perception of power in mainstream leadership thinking continues to be leader-centred - based on objective outcomes, and hierarchical ordering of organisational frameworks.

### **2.2.3 Behavioural or style approaches relative to work**

Away from the use of power to more work-related theories, other behavioural or style approaches to leadership theories after the trait and great man theories emerged between the 50s and the seventies. The goal of such behavioural studies, many of which developed in Ohio and Michigan studies was to establish how a leader's style could influence organisational success (Ford et al., 2008). At the centre of these ensuing research efforts from the trait period was the desire to distinguish between leaders with high motivation for task accomplishment and those with high motivation to cultivate good relationship with followers (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). The thinking was to match leaders to the right situation in order to achieve effective productivity. An influential study within the behavioural school leading to the development of the managerial grid was the work by (Blake and Mouton, 1964). Their grid categorised leaders into two groups or orientations namely: those with much concern for people and who concerned themselves more with for task accomplishment. Thus, Blake and Mouton's grid could be seen as more of a performance-gauging mechanism in which leader effectiveness was hypothesised and correlating against performance. However, pairing attention to task and

relationship with subordinates relative to employee performance was criticised on the grounds that the empirical data did not suggest that relying only on these two aspects was enough to achieve higher production all the time (Northouse, 2010). Rather, the overreaching perception was that a range of other factors - not least the particular situation in which leadership was practiced were necessary for leadership to be effective (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). Behavioural concepts were mainly developed from work within Ohio and Michigan Universities on the impact of leaders' behaviours on small group performance (e.g. Kats & Kahn, 1951 and Likert, 1961, 1967). Likert's (1967) leadership style typology identified four style approaches including exploitive authoritative, benevolent authoritative, consultative and participative as illustrated in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.4 Likert's Leadership style model

<p><b>Exploitive authoritative</b></p> <p>Based on fear and threats</p> <p>One-way communication</p> <p>Decision making is centralised</p>	<p><b>Consultative leadership</b></p> <p>Based on appropriate rewards</p> <p>Two-way communication (limited upwards communication)</p> <p>Decision making is decentralised (limited)</p>
<p><b>Benevolent authoritative</b></p> <p>Based on rewards</p> <p>One-way communication</p> <p>Decision-making is centralised (may be some delegation)</p>	<p><b>Participative leadership</b></p> <p>Based on group participation</p> <p>Two-way communication</p> <p>Decision making is decentralised</p>

Adapted from [www.le.ac.uk](http://www.le.ac.uk)

Likert's, findings above if anything provided the behaviours which task oriented and people oriented leaders had to adopt. However, as it became clearer that leadership was more complex than just leader behaviour, behavioural concepts were criticised as overly simplistic, reductionist and inconsiderate the different situations and context in which leadership takes place Northouse (Northouse, 2010). These criticisms might have shifted research focus towards a focus in the different situations, contexts and contingencies that leadership takes place.

## 2.2.4 Situational and contingency leadership

Situational and contingency theories were developed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s with the aim of exploring the role and importance of situational or contextual variables in effective leadership practice. Contingency theories required leaders to be flexible and always changing to adjust to follower maturity levels while situational leadership sought to match and fit leader behaviour to particular work and follower types (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014).

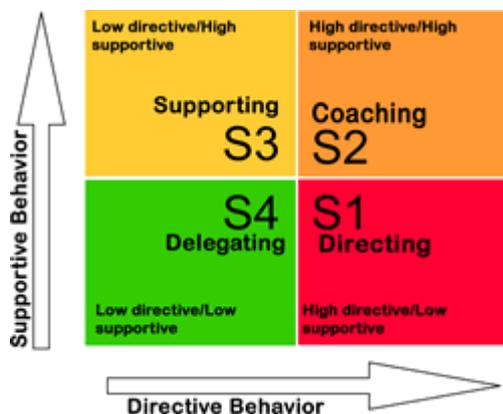
### A) *Situational leadership*

The premise of situational leadership was that the maturity stage of employees or subordinates demanded different leadership style, response or approach. In this respect, four stages of employee maturity were identified notably:

- New to the task (S1)
- Start to acquire new skills, (S2),
- Feels quite competent (S3) and
- Able to develop their own skills (S4)

Each of these stages of development was thought to necessitate that the leader adjusts their leadership style to match the particular level of maturity of subordinates (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). Based on the maturity level of subordinates or employees the leader could either employ high or low supportive and directive approach as illustrated in Fig. 2.2 below

Fig. 2.2 situational leadership model



A prominent work in situational leadership was from (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969), refined and revised (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977); (Hersey et al., 1979). Their work essentially emphasised the need for the leader to change and adapt to the situation they were faced with and kind of subordinate they had to lead. A key strength of situational leadership was that it was easy to understand, intuitively sensible and easily applied. However, it was criticised for lack of empirical support. A further criticism was in respect to the fact that it failed to consider the wider complexity of human behaviour by assuming that all leaders could change and adapt like machines or chameleons. Additionally, situational leadership was criticised for reducing subordinate maturity to four stages only, thus simplifying the complexity of human behaviour. On the basis of the above points, it was thought that situational leadership concept did not address some complex and practical issues in leadership (Bolden et al., 2011; Northouse, 2010). If anything, an important contribution of situational leadership was its consideration of followers or subordinates in leadership thinking, an aspect which had hitherto been neglected by antecedents.

#### *B) Contingency leadership theories*

The main argument of contingency approach was that effective leadership depended more the leadership style matched with the situation or kind of work. Thus, the two most important consideration of the contingency perspective were 'leadership style' (personality) and situational control (context). In the most widely recognised contingency models (Fiedler, 1964; Fiedler and Chemers, 1967 and Fiedler and Garcia, 1987), leadership style was perceived as a fixed set of actions that are measurable. The underlying conception of the contingency theory was that rather than forcing leaders to be flexible and adjust to situations (as for situational leadership) leadership was more effective if leaders were matched to the work situation in which they fitted the most. Thus, the contingency approach to leadership could be seen as a form of 'specialisation' or as an approach intent on putting the right peg in the right hole. This thinking is exemplified by Vroom and Yetton's (1973) normative contingency model which constructed different leadership styles (autocratic, consultative and group decision making) to match various situations of leadership (Northouse, 2010).

A major problem with the contingency theories was that there were no possible explanations as to why some leaders would be more suitable in certain situations

and others not. This limitation underscores the simplification of human behaviour that is typical of mainstream thinking. In his seminal paper, Fiedler (1993) referred to the inability to answer questions relating to the complexity of human behaviour as the '*black box of contingency theory*'. This rather honest admission of the limitation contingency leadership is underlines a fundamental flaw within mainstream thinking which is that of simplifying phenomena. Alongside, behaviour, situational and contingency approaches, an approach to leadership referred to as path-goal theory developed. In Path-goal leadership thinking, researchers suggested that if leaders simplified and clarified tasks, followers could be more able to accomplish their tasks and appreciate the value of their contribution in the organisation (see e.g. Evans, 1970; House, 1971/1974/1996). Thus, path-goal leadership theory could be seen as an extension of situational leadership in so far as its goal was to change the working 'situation' (Northouse, 2010).

There is no doubt that all the above early concepts have greatly informed our understanding of leadership – especially in terms of informing ways in which productivity could be achieved in the different situations. The above earlier theories have also exposed different leadership foci - surfacing alternative considerations, highlighting situational variables to consider and recognising the need for leaders to facilitate subordinate work experiences. Perhaps, more importantly situational and contingency leadership theories in particular opened up possibilities for leadership thinking beyond the individual leader into considering the role and involvement of followers or subordinates. They also highlighted the relevance of context in leadership thinking. As we see later, emergent leadership concepts have picked up on these initial perceptions to theorise leadership as contextually and culturally contingent, inclusive and ambiguous. Perhaps a foregrounding of the new perceptions of leadership which we explore later is John Adair's (1973) model of leadership which takes everyone involved in leadership into consideration as further explored below.

### C) *Action based leadership*

Action-based leadership focussed more on how leaders treat teams and individuals in organisations. The premise of action-based leadership is that leadership will be effective if teams, individuals and the appointed leader of the organisation are all

happy (Adair, 1973). In a way, action-based leadership could be seen as a further step in recognising the involvement of followers in leadership as well as the power of followers in leadership. Adair proposed that the main leadership functions included: defining the task, planning, briefing, controlling, evaluating, motivating, organising, and setting an example, cited in Bolden et al., (2011). A key point in Adair's action centred leadership was that he acknowledged the participation of others in accomplishing work goals and thus, highlighting the necessity of keeping individuals, teams and leaders satisfied and happy. Perhaps an important lesson from John Adair's three circle model is the need to maintain a balance between task accomplishment and the welfare of all those who are involved in the organisational process. This balance is illustrated in the interconnectedness of the three circles of action based leadership model, as illustrated in Fig. 2.4 below.

Fig. 2.3 John Adair's three circles model of leadership



The three overlapping circles demonstrate the interdependence of each of the three enmeshed relationships; - one in relations to the other two (Adair, 1983, p. 38). For Adair the circles are only complete when the three elements are present and function together and any dislocation or absence of one element of the circle makes others equally incomplete.

Whilst Adair's three circles model may be clear and reasonable, an important critique of the model was that it failed to recognise the complexity of human behaviour as well as the contextual influence factor involved in leadership (Bolden et al., 2011).

However, if one were to consider the conclusions of motivational theories that suggest that people are more motivated if they meet the working conditions are good and if they are able to meet their secured, social and self-actualisation goals (Herzberg, 1966; Maslow, 1946). Further, common sense also tells us that leadership and followership can be more effective when employees or followers feel satisfied with their pay package and are comfortable with their colleagues and leaders. Seen this way, the three circle model could be considered – in many ways similar to the burgeoning mainstream narratives and approaches to leadership that tends to construct a sense of leadership geared towards improved organisational productivity and efficiency. However, one main difference is that it seeks such goals while still recognising the importance of humane consideration of followers as much the social coherence and bonding of teams. What we see in this evolution process, is a gradual recognition of the complexity of leadership and a movement away – if only by a minority of voices from what seems to be an oversimplification construction of leadership during the early years of leadership theorising.

### **2.2.5) Issues with early leadership concepts**

A key issues arising from the above mainstream leadership theories at the very foundation of leadership theorising is the conspicuous reliance on mechanistic and statistical information and knowledge. This reliance tends to veil researchers from the complexity of leadership in real life. Rather, it forced researchers to conceptualise leadership in very simplistic ways – reducing leadership and the related issues of power, human behaviour and context to a limited number of variables. An example of this limitation can be found in both French and Raven's (1958) and Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1973) construction of power which present power as a wilful and exclusive prerogative of leaders or heads of organisations. Against these perspectives, philosophical the more radical poststructural views highlight the notion of resistance based on the observation that: "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, 1979: 45). Methodologically, many critics have questioned the overreliance on quantitative methods and statistical engineering which as veiling the unpacking of relational, emotional, moral and cultural aspects of leadership (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). In spite of these issues leadership theorising continues to be dominated by essentialist approaches and philosophies

(Ford et al., 2008). Such dominance became more evident in 1990s with the emergence of the concepts referred to as the new or heroic leadership paradigm (Bryman, 1992; Storey, 2004).

### **2.3 New leadership paradigm or heroic leadership approaches**

The period referred to as the new leadership period is considered to span between the late 1970s to the 1990s. A number of concepts dominated this period and have continued to be prominent in leadership scholarship up to the present time. The concepts most associated with this period include; transformational, charismatic and visionary leadership concepts. A comprehensive review of all the research associated with these concepts would be impossible to explore in one study<sup>5</sup> However, the following sections present a brief review of some of the key works, debates, issues and meanings associated with these concepts.

#### **2.3.1 Transforming and transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership theory has largely dominated from the late eighties. The notion of transformational leadership was introduced by James McGregor Burns as transforming leadership. Burns introduced transforming leadership alongside the notion of transactional leadership in his book titled: 'leadership' (Burns, 1978). Transactional leadership he explained was a leader-follower relationship in which the leader presents incentives to followers in return for something of value Burns – their service or followership (1978:4). In simple terms, transactional leadership would mimic contemporary relationship between the employer and the employee where the former pays a salary or wages to the latter in return for his or her services.

Burns contrasted the above transactional exchange form of leadership with transforming leadership where both the leader and the follower engaged in a reciprocal mutual and moral undertaking for effective leadership. He explained this kind of leadership as a situation where:

*“One or more persons engage with others in a way such that leaders and followers raised one another to higher levels of motivation and morality”* Burns (1978:20).

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<sup>5</sup> (For a more extensive review on transformational leadership read ( Bass and Reggio 2006) and more recently (Mhatre and Reggio, 2014)

Compared to transactional leadership Burns argued that transforming leadership was preferable (Northouse, 2010). What can be noted from Burns' transformational leadership and the earlier leadership concepts discussed above is a bolder recognition of the role of followers in leadership. However, it has been argued that the subsequent constructions of transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Bass 1990; Bass and Avolio, 1995) shifted Burn's idea of transforming leadership that encapsulated the roles of both leaders and followers in leadership to a more leader-centred theorising of the concept (Bolden et al., 2011).

The above observation is clearly visible in the subsequent theorising of transformational leadership in the sense that most accounts from research have presented an infinite number of attributes, abilities, traits, capabilities and personalities that depict the ideal transformational leader. The most popular of these is the principle of the four 'I'(s) which stand for: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration Bass (1990) and Bass (1999). These visions and imaginations attempt to construct a depiction of a heroic figure, a transformational leader perceived to be able to change the fortunes of an organisation. In imaginary effort several other depictions have been advanced – seemingly the mimicry of the multiple attributes and characteristic theorised to depict a leader in the early trait theories of the 1950s. For instance, Quinn (1996) described the transformational leader as an internally driven person who sees beyond technical competence and political exchange, but who prioritises vision realisation. Bennis and Nanus (2004) described the transformational leader as a person who influences the culture of the organisation through actions, decision-making, and personal attitude. Tichy and Devanna (1986) characterised the transformational leader as a person with the solution for organisational change. More elaborately, Covey (1992:287) asserted that:

*“The goal of transformational leadership is to ‘transform’ people and organisations in a literal sense – to change them in mind and heart; enlarge vision, insight, and understanding; clarify purposes; make behaviour congruent with beliefs, principles, or values; and bring about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating, and momentum building.”*

Indeed one could continue to cite an infinite number of descriptions and meta-analytical and essentialist<sup>6</sup> imaginations of what has been presented as the attributes of a transformational leader – the overreaching dream being that of creating a super human character or personality capable of achieving extraordinary things (Mhatre and Reggio, 2014)<sup>7</sup>. When these various constructions and imaginations are put under the microscope, a strong argument arises from critical thinkers to the effect that in reality, there could be no such superman given that in reality leadership is not often an individual undertaking (Pearce et al., 2014). Whilst it is not to be denied that some individuals may have more influence in organisations than others (Bolden et al., 2011), this thesis would argue that if indeed a transformational superman existed as theorised for transformational leadership then every organisation would have employed at least one of such heroes to solve the problems that organisations have faced in recent times. Such heroes could have averted such economic difficulties as the EU economic crisis, the UK banking collapse and the credit crunch. That organisations are yet to lay their hands on that transforming machine in human flesh suggests that the various constructions of transformational leadership or the transformational leader may only be dreams, desires and academic rhetoric or fantasy. In spite of the absence of such heroes proponents of the concept of transformational leadership propagate the concept as real and universally applicable. For instance Bass (1997) argued saying:

*“Supportive evidence has been accumulated from all but one continent to document the applicability of the (transformational) paradigm”* Bass (P.130) - (My clarification in brackets).

However, this notion has been criticised as not only reductionist but equally as blind to context. For instance within organisational settings it has been argued that leadership practice tends to be influenced by the culture of the organisation (Ogbonna and Harris, 2000). Some have argued that the manner in which transformational leadership is theorised is fundamentally flawed as it reflects the leadership of a *‘cult rather than leadership in a normal business organisation’*

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<sup>6</sup> Essentialist philosophies believe that definitive and objective accounts of phenomena can be captured and quantified such thinking is based on determinism, materialism and externalisation of social reality – Real World Research, Robson, C. 2011

<sup>7</sup> For a more elaborate exploration of transformational leadership see the recent work: Mhatre and Reggio, (2014) Charismatic and Transformational Leadership: Past, Present, and Future, *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*, 221

(Tourish, 2013:39). Furthermore Bryman (1992) has argued that the various descriptions could not possibly refer to the same concept or apply in every situation. In spite of the clear difference between reality and the fictional presence of transformational leadership, the concept has dominated and continues to dominate leadership theorising (Bass and Reggio, 2006). This continuous popularity draws attention to the effect of academic games and heralds the warning that:

*“The researcher plays an active role in constructing the very reality he or she is attempting to investigate”* (Chia, 1996:42)

It would therefore seem that the concept of transformational leadership is a myth rather than reality (Parry and Kempster, 2013). It could be argued that its presumed existence may be orchestrated by the intense volume of academic discussions and writing by academics.

### **2.3.2 Charismatic leadership theory**

Another popular account of leadership within heroic leadership paradigm is the concept of charismatic and visionary leadership (House, 1976; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Conger, 1989). The emergence of charismatic leadership has been attributed to the work of Max Weber (1947) in which the Greek word ‘*khárisma*’ which translates into the English language as: ‘*divine gift*’, favour, ‘gift of ‘grace’ or ‘freely given’. In ancient Greek mythology it was thought that some leaders embodied a divine gift for leadership from God. Such leaders were thought to be possessive of ‘spiritual powers that allowed them to lead in novel and inspiring ways’ (Mhatre and Riggio, 2014:223). Based on this Greek mythology, Weber constructed the charismatic leader as a person with exceptional personal charm that endears others to become followers. This thinking is captured in Weber’s explanation of the notion of charisma in which he explains charisma saying:

*“The term ‘charisma’ will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities”.*

Weber further explained that:

*“the power of charisma rests upon ‘heroism’ of an ascetic, military, judicial, magical or whatever kind...the bearer of charisma enjoys loyalty and authority by virtue of a*

*mission believed to be embodied in him*" (Weber, 1968 as cited in Bryman, 1993:291) .

Drawing on Weber's explanations above and considering the ancient Greek spiritual origins of the concept of charismatic leadership it comes across as an essentially abstract and imaginary concept rather than a concept that informs the reality of leadership in practice. Hence it is argued that its popularity in the 1990s may have resulted from the difficult economic conditions witnessed at the time which like transformational leadership would have built the hope and dreams of individuals with magical abilities and solutions to deal with the persistent problems. This expectation and dream may have resulted to the illusion of superficial extraordinary charming super-humans presumed to embody the charm that could attract employees for improved organisational performance. To this end, a number of attributes and abilities have been constructed over-time to depict the image of the charismatic leader. Northouse (2010) summarises these as: persons of dominant personality, having a strong desire to influence others and persons with self-confident and a strong sense of moral values and adds that 'strong role models', 'persons with competence' and those whose 'goals and ideology tend to be morally influential' are often considered to be leaders (P. 74).

Whilst the concept of charismatic leadership has been a popular has been popular in leadership, the concept has been criticised on several grounds. Bryman (1992) identified the problem of 'routinisation' and 'loss of charisma' to the effect that charisma is not a permanent condition or replicable condition which applies in every organisation and leadership context. Further criticisms have argued that the concept does not consider contextual variability (Mhatre and Reggio, 2014). Additional criticisms have centred on the inter-related accusations of the possibility of the so called charismatic and visionary leaders becoming narcissistic, invincible and toxic thus affecting the goals of the organisation and welfare of employees (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Maccoby, 2000; Yukl, 2009).

### **2.3.4 Critique of new leadership paradigm**

Undoubtedly the above new leadership paradigm or heroic accounts of leadership as significantly informed leadership in some useful ways (Bolden et al., 2011). However,

more recent practical events in organisations and incisive analysis of the claims of these leadership concepts has revealed a number of caveats, leading to criticisms and questions regarding the validity of some of the taken for granted assumptions they embody. Take for instance the view of a leading writer on transformation that leadership all about:

*“Leaders supervising subordinates...subordinates working hard towards institutional objectives as the primary goal for leadership and about the leader’s ability to persuade, inspire and motivate subordinates to release their own needs to work toward the interests of the leader or the institution that the leader represents”* (Bass, 1985 : 146).

What can be deduced from the above is the perception that leadership is mainly about what leaders do and that the followers are passive or completely inactive in the enactment of leadership. To this extent a key critique of concepts within new leadership has been that their focus in on one individual (usually at the top of the organisation). It is argued that conceptualising leadership on the basis of the actions of one individual is ‘analytically inadequate’, reductionist and an over-simplified as it fails to account for the complex unfolding interventions in the process of leadership (Bolden et al., 2011; Grint, 2005; Tayeb, 2001). It is in this light that Grint (2005) further reasons that mainstream scholars may have taken the ‘ship’ out of ‘leadership’ and are now studying leaders rather than leadership. He follows this with a humorous appeal to mainstream researchers to put back the ‘ship’ into ‘leadership’ (p. 33). Against the weight of such strong and reasoned criticisms, this hitherto limited construction of leadership seems to be changing to more holistic appraisal of leadership even within the mainstream. Evidence of this change can be found in Avolio’s (2007) publication where he queries the adequacy of mainstream theorising of leadership with the following reflective question:

*“Should this theory (transformational), like others in leadership have started with a more integrative focus that included a broader array of potential contingencies?”* (p. 27).

Avolio goes on to recommend increased consideration of cultural differences, environmental stability, industry type, organizational characteristics and task characteristics in leadership theorising (p.27). What is discernible from exploring the

historical trajectory of early concepts and contemporary heroic leadership theories is that there may be some serious dangers in theorising leaders rather than leadership. For instance, there is the danger of making leaders to adopt a 'monad' or 'superman' status and feeling invincible (Ford et al., 2008). Second there is the danger of making some people to claim a right to leadership. Also, it constructs a positive and unproblematic view of leadership (Collinson, 2005). Furthermore, it might blind us from the role of followers, gender bias and contextual and cultural differences. (Meindl et al., 1985). Even more concerning is the critique that mainstream approaches 'pay insufficient attention to the dynamics of power and the effects of 'follower dissent and resistance' in leadership Collinson and Tourish (2015:1419). Against this backdrop, alternative ideas around the concept of leadership became inevitable in what is often referred to as the post-heroic era.

## **2.4 Post-heroic leadership paradigm**

Post heroic leadership paradigm refers to a set of ideas and concepts developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Storey, 2005). Unlike in heroic leadership paradigm where leadership was conceptualised as individualistic and leader-centred, post-heroic leadership constructs leadership as an inclusive process of shared responsibility and distributed involvement (Bolden et al., 2011; Crevani et al., 2010; Fletcher, 2004). However, the post-heroic concept is only an alternative construction of leadership rather than a replacement of heroic leadership. In other words inclusive leadership does recognise the role of leaders and tends to conceptualise leadership in a somewhat objective and positive manner. This is different from say critical leadership approaches that focus in the negative and problematic aspects of leadership. Thus, whilst post-heroic concepts may be different in terms of shifting from leader-centred conceptualisation to more inclusive leadership thinking, some aspects of heroic leadership remain embedded within inclusive approaches. However, it must be noted that post-heroic leadership thinking is a wide denomination within which several other sub-constructs exist as elucidated below.

### **2.4.1 Inclusive leadership**

Inclusive leadership concepts are broadly similar ideas that suggest that leadership could not necessarily be enacted by one individual leader. Rather, within inclusive

leadership ideals leadership is perceived to be collective and as involving many players, processes and practices (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). Some of the most popular concepts within inclusive leadership include the emergent concepts of distributed, shared, participative and collaborative leadership. Each of these is explored in detail below. However, as a somewhat sub-field of inclusive leadership, distributed leadership will be explored more profoundly than the other approaches

### **A) Distributed Leadership**

For almost a decade, the concept of distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011; Harris and Spillane, 2008; Thorpe et al., 2011) has witnessed significant levels of interest in leadership scholarship. The central tenet of distributed leadership is its recognition of the direct or indirect involvement of multiple leaders in the overall leadership process (Harris, 2007; Harris and Spillane 2008); Spillane et al., 2004; Thorpe et al., 2011). Hence it is argued that in actuality leadership is distributed. This is because its unfolding is orchestrated by reciprocal interaction, inter-dependence, co-performance and mutual support between leaders and other persons working in the organisation (Harris, 2013). Thus, a distributed model of leadership focuses upon the various interactions that take place between people in an organisation or community rather than in the 'actions of persons in formal leadership roles' (Harris and Spillane, 2008:31). An important contribution of distributed approaches to leadership has been its attempt at reconfiguring and redesigning organisations into lateral and flatter decision-making processes (Hargreaves, 2007). However, it is thought that whilst distributed approaches to leadership may work in educational establishments such as Schools, Colleges Universities, it hardly resonates in more traditional organisational settings. A further, contention has been whether it is the same concept as the notions of 'shared', 'collaborative', 'democratic' and participative leadership Bolden (2011). Perhaps a stronger critique of distributed leadership is that it has tended to ignore issues around power asymmetry, ethics and personality diversity in organisations (Thorpe et al., 2011). Thus, there have calls to unravel the complex emergent work-related influence that take place in organisations rather than the blind thought that "leadership role is necessarily distributed" (Gronn, 2002:7). Other critics have highlighted the danger of distributed leadership in trying to assume that: "everyone working in an organisation should be regarded as a leader" (Ford et al., 2008:16). This warning reflects a similar argument that in normal organisational

life some people do retain more individual power than others. To this extent, Gronn (2009) argues that distributed leadership needs to underline the reality of unequal distribution in work places. Furthermore, (Harris, 2013:546) raises the concern of the danger of shielding the 'asymmetric power distribution and domineering conditions' under which some employees operate. Hence, Gronn (2009) argues further that in reality both distributed and individualistic forms of leadership and power structures often co-habit in organisations forming a complex hybrid configurations of approaches. To conclude Brown (2014) laments by observing that: "*all is not well with distributed leadership models*" (p. 540). It can therefore be said that for all its good intentions a distributed approach to leadership holds much promise in terms of advancing less power concentrations and recognising the role of everyone in an organisation in the unfolding of leadership. At the same time it might also be deceitful in terms of suggesting equal distribution of role and power in organisations.

#### *B) shared, participative and collaborative leadership*

Alongside distributed leadership, a set of collective leadership approaches that proffer similar narratives, dreams and reading of leadership have emerged within post-heroic leadership thinking. These include shared, collaborative and participative leadership. Shared leadership for one emphasises the concurrency of official and unofficial leadership as a simultaneous process (Yukl and Mahsud, 2010). Central to the concept of shared leadership is the recognition of the positive contribution and responsibilities of persons or leaders who occupy both formal and informal leadership roles in organisations or society (Pearce et al., 2014). On the basis of this reality, shared leadership is built on the perception that a single person at the top of an organisation could not possibly possess all the skills, abilities and knowledge required to run an organisation (Pearce and Manz, 2005). Rather it is argued that in reality, leadership unfolds as a dynamic process of shared roles including individual and collective input. Thus, leadership influence emanates not just from the top but equally across bottom, middle and top structural boundaries and hierarchies (D'Innocenzo et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014). For this reason, individualistic leadership action is not necessarily frowned against but the impetus of leadership is more about striking a balance between formal and informal contribution in the organisation from whoever is able to make a contribution in one way or another

irrespective of their position. Compared to distributed leadership explored above, it would seem that shared leadership differs from distributed leadership in that it accommodates individualism alongside collective involvement while distributed leadership rejects or is at least appears uncomfortable with individualistic framing of leadership.

Another collective leadership approach that has emerged within post-heroic leadership is participative leadership. Participative leadership approaches have been defined as a joint decision making process or a shared influence process in decision making between leaders and subordinates (Somech, 2005). The main attribute of participative leadership is that it encourages collective participation in organisational processes and decision making. By so doing it highlights the benefit of persons in formal and informal leadership position as well as persons in high and low levels in organisations to work together. This approach to leadership is often contrasted with directive or autocratic leadership, where 'subordinates are usually forced to act according to the orders of superiors with less right to question, argue or make suggestions' (Somech, 2005:778).

A third collective leadership approach to emerge in post-heroic leadership is collaborative leadership. Collaborative leadership approaches emphasise collaboration between leaders and followers and between employees in an organisation in formal and informal positions (Gronn, 2015). Like participative leadership, collaborative leadership envisages collective action whereby leaders and followers engage in decision making in a positively collaborative manner. This approach to leadership is built on common sense notion that many heads are better than just one when solving common organisational problems. If one should construct leadership as embedded and empowered by relational social interaction as articulated above then, it follows that leadership requires some degree of collaboration. Hence O'Reilly and Reed (2012) note (in the context of public leadership) that public leadership is increasingly one of collaboration between stakeholders and agencies. This argument is backed by a range of studies on collaborative leadership in particular Benington and Moore (2010) who hold that leadership may not be possible without collaboration. However, the extent of collaboration in leadership more generally would seem to be nebulous given the rise of individualism and hierarchical framing of organisational architecture which seems to privilege hierarchical dominance. It would seem therefore that collaborative

leadership has worked better in certain leadership contexts such as in political party leadership. However, although a brilliant idea which is often applied, it may be limited to organisations that require collaboration to succeed.

In conclusion inclusive and collective post-heroic leadership reveal a level of commonality such as the necessity to make good of the benefits of collective intelligence. Thus, (Jones, 2014:129) argues that: '*collaboration is synonymous with distributed leadership*' (p.129). Similarly, Grint, (2010) has observed that ideas developed as collaborative leadership have been located under distributed leadership and vice versa. This would seem to reiterate the concerns of Bolden (2011) that nuances and theoretical similarities exist between distributed leadership and shared and collaborative leadership creating theoretical confusion. If leadership is enacted through collaboration, collective participation and distributed power and role then how it comes into being is essentially a relational process.

#### **2.4.2 Relational Leadership**

The notion of relational leadership promulgates 'the significance of relations and relational dynamics in leadership processes' Crevani (2015). The more contemporary notion of relational leadership is said to have developed from an incident in a school in the US in which some female colleagues resisted the prevailing male dominated tradition of control to advocate 'relational' practice (Regan and Brooks, 1995). It follows that relational leadership holds a humane and compassionate undertone founded on an ethos of collaboration, care, courage, intuition and concern (Smit, 2014). Such humane attributes have expanded the concept of relationality into a wide range of writings, including: (Fulop and Mark, 2013; Mclean, 2014; Thompson et al., 2011; Wong et al., 2013) in the medical field; (Carmeli et al., 2012; Larsen, 2013) in Management strategy (Boatwright, 2010; Ospina et al., 2012); in Church leadership and gender studies and (Smit, 2014; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2011) in organisation studies. The emergent perception of relational leadership 'propound ways of theorizing and doing leadership that differs in many ways from traditional and non-positivist modes of study' (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011:1429). Relational leadership promulgates the virtues of: 'inclusiveness', 'empowering', 'purposive', 'ethical', and 'process oriented' ideals in leadership practice Komives et al. (2009). Relational leadership has been defined as an

approach to leadership highlighting the idea that leadership effectiveness could best be achieved through moral and humane relationships between actors in work places (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011; Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien, 2012; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Uhl-Bien and Ospina, (2012) have identified two main strands of relational leadership - the 'constructionist' and the entitative. The constructionist strand tends to be more concerned with processes through which leaders construct organisational 'realities' and 'identities' Cunliffe and Eriksen, (2011). Research within this strand defines relational leadership approaches as:

*"A social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e. evolving social order) and change (i.e. new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviours, ideologies, etc.) are constructed and produced"* (Uhl-Bien, 2006:668).

The behaviour of leaders from this perspective is normally envisioned to exhibit leadership that is characterised – as Uhl-Bien (2006) where:

*"The leader holds herself/himself as always in relation with, and therefore morally accountable to others; recognizes the inherently polyphonic and heteroglossic nature of life; and engages in relational dialogue"* (P. 1425).

The three interwoven threads that run through the above perceptions are relationships, morality and acceptable social behaviour.

Contrary to the constructionist perception, the 'entitative' strand tends to focus on positional leaders within organisational structures Küpers (2014). Hence the emphasis about the nature of relationality tends to be the 'self' or what the individual leader actually does to achieve organisational outcomes (Uhl-Bien and Ospina, 2012). Thus it could be argued that relative or constructionists' accounts of relational leadership seek a humanist relationality while entitative perceptions of relational leadership tend to be instrumental and functionalist in construction. For instance Fletcher (2010) argued that:

*"Relational leadership is not about fostering high quality relationships for the sake of the relationships themselves, but for fostering high quality relationships that will yield positive organisational outcomes"* (p. 123)

Fletcher's quote above clearly constructs relational leadership in the sense of its necessity as a means of effective production. Whilst the notion of leadership as essentially based on inter-human relationship has maintained traction in leadership theorising, it has faced two main problems. First, scholars have not identified the specific skill sets, practical actions and behaviours that leaders and followers need to

exhibit relational leadership (Fletcher, 2010). Second, it is argued that despite its aspirations humane, ethical and moral relationships have seldom materialised in real organisational life (Fletcher and Kaufer 2003; Sinclair, 2007; Sorenson and Hickman, 2002).

Critics point to the prevalence of high power-distance, hierarchical structure, unethical practices and individualistic positioning instead of relational practice. This less visible relational practice in organisation suggests that there is a clear gap between relational leadership in practice and extent of theorising of relational leadership (Fletcher, 2010; Uhl-Bien and Ospina, 2012). This thesis offers an opportunity to make sense of the social construction of relational leadership within an indigenous African context - particularly how interpersonal social contiguity and the conviviality enable active and visible indigenous relational leadership. The manner in which such relational practice unfolds is presented in section 5.1.5 and further discussed in section 7.2.2.

### **2.4.3 Critical leadership**

Critical leadership is mainly concerned with exploring the dynamics of social relations, emancipation of society, challenging deeply held convictions and taken-for-granted assumptions. It serves as a valuable resource for influencing and stimulating debate, illuminating of potentially harmful social processes etc. (Evans et al., 2013:11). A leading scholar in critical leadership studies Collinson (2011) presents critical leadership studies (CLS) as:

*‘the broad, diverse and heterogeneous perspectives that share a concern to critique the power relations and identity constructions through which leadership dynamics are often produced, frequently rationalised, sometimes resisted and occasionally transformed’* (p.181).

It has been argued that the development of a critical perspective to leadership is in part engendered as a response to the uncritical nature of dominant mainstream research which - as elicited in chapter two often broadly theorise leadership as:

- The ‘catch all and panacea, magic solution and overarching answer to problems faced by organisations (Bolden et al., 2011; Jackson & Parry, 2010; Storey, 2004).

- Universal, generalisable, top-down influence process and homogenous undertaking (Bass, 1997; Northouse, 2010).
- Individualistic, leader-centred, predictive and apprehensible (Jackson and Parry, 2010).
- Macho-cultured and highly masculine depicting the image of the heroic man (Collinson et al., 2014; Ford, 2006).

Thus, critical leadership studies emerge as comparatively new and perhaps more radical approaches to studying and conceptualising leadership. Unlike inclusive approaches that seek better organisational outcomes through more collective working approaches, critical leadership studies draw on critical management philosophy (CMS) to problematise the mainstream hegemonies, orthodoxies and objectivities (Collinson, 2011). A central tenet of critical leadership studies is that it takes account of aspects such as: cultural and contextual differences, identities and power relations, language games and other mundane day to day acts and actions involved in leadership which mainstream studies tend to ignore (see e.g. Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Collinson, 2005, 2011; Ford, 2010; Ford et al., 2008; Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007).

By exploring leadership taking account of the above dimensions, critical leadership studies unpack new frames of leadership and account for perceptions that could be considered as unorthodox. To this extent, a key aspect of critical leadership is that it surfaces multiple alternative meanings and constructions of leadership from a range of cultural and demographic contexts. Another key aspect is that it radically challenges some taken for granted assumptions of mainstream accounts by highlighting the constant ambivalence, tension and discontinuities in leadership discourses (Ford, 2006). Perhaps the most popular contribution of critical leadership has come from post-structural, constructionist and feminist epistemological stances. Constructionist-inclined critical scholars have focused in exploring the multiple socially constructed meanings and underlying oppressive forces that typically characterise leadership dynamics. From the social constructionist perspective of critical research, leadership is conceptualised as:

*“Co-constructed, a product of sociohistorical and collective meaning making, and negotiated on an ongoing basis through a complex interplay among leadership actors, be they designated or emergent leaders, managers, and/or followers”* (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010:152)

From a feminist post-structural perspective, the focus has been to unpack the prevailing masculine domination of organisational leadership in practices. An important finding within the feminist lens has been unpacking of the predominantly competitive, aggressive, controlling and self-reliant masculine behaviours that characterises leader identities in contemporary organisations (Ford, 2006). This feminist work in leadership studies has sought to interrogate and challenge masculine dominance in the discourses and practice of leadership highlighting some consequences (Ford, 2015).

Other research efforts within the critical paradigm have sought to highlight issues around inter-ethnic suppression/dominance and class-based privileges in society and in organisational work places (Collinson, 2011; Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). Thus on the whole critical studies illuminate leader and systemic impact on followers (Collinson, 2006). It follows that critical leadership seeks to challenge the usually taken-for-granted assumptions of mainstream conventional accounts of leadership and encourages alternative constructions. A poignant example of presenting leadership differently from mainstream universalisation is Grint's (2005) work presenting four ways in which leadership is conceived including:

- Leadership as Person: meaning that it is WHO leaders are that make them leaders,
- Leadership as Result: the perception that WHAT leaders achieve that makes them leaders,
- Leadership as Position: the thought that it is WHERE leaders work that makes them leaders and
- Leadership as Process: The notion that it is HOW leaders accomplish their tasks that make them leaders.

If anything, the four ways of thinking about leadership proposed by Grint above comes as a strong challenge to the perception of leadership as the product of an individual leader's implicit personal natural abilities, or attributes such as charisma and intelligence. Rather, by presenting leadership as in four different ways, Grint highlights the complex nature of leadership and thus poses some serious questions about the credibility of conventional or mainstream accounts of leadership. If leadership is constructed differently and means different things to different people then it may just be right to suggest as Wood (2005) has suggested that alternative locations need to be explored rather than just the Western context. Similarly, it would

seem equally logical to adopt alternative methods, philosophical opinion and methodologies. Nevertheless, critical leadership approaches have been criticised for amongst other weaknesses of the tendency to underestimate the 'social and cultural forces operating unconsciously on people' and the "difficulty to account for the nondiscursive aspects of leadership" (Alvesson and Spicer, 2014:44). Another critique has been that critical views may have belaboured the crucial role of contextual and cultural influences. Hence (Grint, 2000:4) argues: "*the problem remains in establishing precisely what the context and culture are*". This research partly builds on Grint's argument above by engaging an indigenous African context and surfacing alternative discourses and practices (chapters five, six).

#### **2.4.4 Discursive Leadership**

Fairhurst (2011) has argued that discursive leadership studies primarily seek to:

*'Understand the ways in which language and communication are put to use as a series of "doings" that construct leadership in situ' (p.495)*

It follows from the above description that language and communication is central to discursive leadership. Discursive leadership research draws on ideas and intelligence derived in active communicative interaction. Rather it relies on the multiple, contrasted, defragmented and at times ambiguous meanings that are often generated when explaining leadership in a real life context. Given its reliance on discourse, 'language' is considered not just as speech or communication vehicle. Rather language is considered a lead to reality. In this respect discursive scholars argue as follows:

*"language does not simply reflect states of mind but may be responsible for constructing attitudes, impressions and behaviour that ultimately constitute leadership practices and identities" (Baxter, 2014:2).*

By exploring the language employed to articulate leadership in work places, discursive writers have contributed to leadership studies by problematising the variability and inconsistencies that are often embedded in 'actors' accounts of leadership in practice. As a consequent writers and researchers constantly unearth some of the social, political and cultural forces and tension at play in work places (Fairhurst, 2008). Given its focus on live and active communication as a means of

sense making (Fairhurst and Putnam, 2014), discursive leadership approaches tend to shun a priori predictions, assumptions and mainstream taken for granted generalisation. Through discursive research it is becoming clearer that rather than linear, perfect, orderly, in reality leadership unfolds in disordered and at times incomprehensible ways. Thus, discursive scholars conceptualise leadership as an on-going process that is always in a state of becoming which we may never fully comprehend (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

Nevertheless, essentialist-driven scholars have raised the problematic of relevance and praxis and questioned whether verbal expression can constitute reliable and credible knowledge (Fairhurst, 2011). However, discursive scholars have argued that language and telling embodies reality and constructs reality. For instance Ayer (1952) argues the manner in which we employ language or use words make assertions to become facts in so far as they 'reflect the true feelings of the speaker' (p. 107). Further, (Foucault, 1972:54) argues that discourses 'systematically form the objects of which they speak'. In the course of this study therefore, discourses about leadership in context did not simply describe the world but tended to bring the phenomenon of leadership into being. Additionally, Hardy and Thomas (2015) argue that discourse embodies the realities through which objects, spaces, and practices are better understood and materialised.

Besides the above essentialist concerns, the question of language translation and multilingualism has been raised to criticise the dominant use of English language as a common lingua franca in writing and researching English. The main contention relative to language has been whether question the meaning of leadership in one language can mean the same in another language (Jepson, 2010). The concern within this debate has been the danger of 'Anglophonising' or 'Westernising' leadership in non-English speaking context. For instance, it is argued that Western thinking tends to privilege individualism. On the contrary, the African sense of leadership tends to encode and denote communality, increased interpersonal socialisation and people-orientation (Jackson, 2004). If these differences exist in the way we speak about and understand leadership in different language (Jepson, 2010), it is thinkable that the employing the English language to explore and write about leadership in a non-English-speaking context, could be problematic. This is mainly because some traditions, cultures and languages defy the logic, hierarchy

and ordered framing of reality in Anglo-phone and Western thinking more generally. Rather, many non-Anglo-centric cultures and languages speak of leadership and organising in dramaturgical, collective and disrupted ways. Thus only utilising the English language may belie and foreground other realities some of which draw on mythologies, traditions and repertoires which are likely to be construed as unorthodox from the Western perspective (Ruel, 1969). An example of the risk that English language use might distort the real meaning of leadership in another language was proven in a number of cross language and cross cultural work. For instance a study of German and English employees' expressions of leadership in the chemical industry in both countries Jepson (2010) observed that German workers' explanation of certain material and meanings of leadership reflected historical German narratives. This understanding and meaning was different from the way the English thought about similar work processes and leadership.

In another comparative comparing Japanese and English follower work goals, it was found that Japanese and British followers showed significant differences in the way each culture and language frames, articulates followership and the goals each set of participants seek from their leaders (Fukushige and Spicer, 2011). To this extent, a key relevance of discursive leadership approaches is that they enable the researcher to traverse cultural and contextual barriers but to make sense of leadership as presented in the language and context of the research. To this extent, utilising the English language to articulate leadership in a non-Anglo-Saxon language context stands the risk of constructing hierarchies, placing ordering or emphasising logic when none exists. In spite of this important aspect of leadership learning, the area of leadership and language remains under-researched in leadership studies. To this extent, the present call for papers to explore ways of representing, expressing and enacting leadership beyond the English-speaking world (Schedlitzki et al., 2015) represents a step in the right direction. This thesis recommends further research into leadership in other languages within emergent leadership. Such an effort would take the queue from scholars who have engaged with ethical and moral aspects of leadership away from erstwhile mainstream positive construction as explored below.

## 2.4.5 Ethical and moral approaches to leadership

The study of ethics and leadership has been traced back to Aristotle's time in Ancient Greece (Nye Jr, 2014). However, a plethora of recent corporate, political, and religious scandal has been witnessed in a range of organisations from across the world (Brown and Mitchell; Ciulla, 2014; Kim et al., 2015). As Ciulla (2014) succinctly puts it: "*We live in a world where leaders frequently disappoint us*" (p.1). Hence there has been a renewed interest in examining and confronting unethical behaviour in organisational practice. Ciulla's point-blank quip above cannot be far from the constant reality in organisations given the persistent repeat of negative events in corporate, political and community leadership such as: the Enron scandal in the US. Also, the UK MP spending abuses in politics, the UK banking scandals such as the LIBOR rate scandal (BBC, 2015).

Another reason why research into ethical and moral leadership practice has heightened is because of a resurgence of the deontological<sup>8</sup> argument that profit alone is not enough for sustainable organisational wellbeing (Ciulla, 2014; Verissimo and Lacerda, 2015; Wang and Hackett, 2015). There is the realisation that organisational growth needs to be sustainable, humane and should serve the wider societal good rather than that of achieving short term organisational goals. The case of British Banks Barclays and HSBC of paying hefty fine to banking authorities for manipulating LIBOR exchange rates (Hertz and Friedman, 2015) and Trafigura Ltd for dumping toxic waste in Abidjan in Africa (South, 2016) are but a few examples. More recently VW is expecting a heavy fine to both EU and US governments for manipulating emissions (Le Page, 2015). These are but a few cases that serve as markers of the punitive action that can befall an organisation and the devastating effects that can arise from unethical practice to communities (BBC, 2010; Khan, 2015). In spite of these development, mainstream leadership has mainly theorised leadership as positive and unproblematic and as an undertaking that is conducted on the basis of good ethical standards and presumed wider good of the organisation (Schyns and Schilling, 2013). This overly positive appreciation of leadership has

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<sup>8</sup> Deontology or deontological ethics is an approach to ethics that focusing on the rightness or wrongness of actions themselves rather than the rightness or wrongness of the consequences of those actions or the character and behaviour of the actor. In other words, it is about focusing on the correctness or wrongness of the act rather than the outcome or result of the act.

tended to obscure and overshadow negative and unethical acts of individuals in positions of leadership. However, the recent focus on the moral and ethical debate around leadership in practice (e.g. Cropanzano and Stein, 2009; Cuilla; 2014; Einarsen et al., 2007; Jordan et al., 2013; Lipman-Blumen 2005; Rhodes 2012; Schyns and Schilling, 2013) has unearthed such concepts as: bad or destructive leadership (Schyns and Schilling, 2013) and toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Watson, 2007). Such debates exploring decision making processes and justice in organisations have sought to open spaces or forums where negative practices could be exposed, debated and theorised.

The very idea of unethical leadership has proven to be a tricky affair to define given the subjectivities and ambiguities of actions and behaviours that could be considered to be ethical or acceptable behaviour and those that are unethical or bad. The argument tends to depend on cultural and contextual factors given that what is right in one situation or cultural context may not be right in another. Even within the same organisations Lipman-Blumen (2005) observes that even employees always hold different views. One group of employees often find a particular behaviour despicable and unacceptable while another considers the same as heroic. In organisational writings, the case of Adolf Hitler has been cited as an example of the above dilemma. It is clear that Hitler enjoyed popular support at various times during his reign yet he was also regarded as an example of a toxic leader by some (Jackson and Parry, 2011). In spite of this dilemma, a more general definition advanced to encapsulate toxic or bad leaders has been provided as:

*“Those individuals who, by virtue of their destructive behaviours and their dysfunctional personal qualities or characteristics, inflict serious and enduring harm on the individuals, groups, organizations, communities and even the nations that they lead”* (Lipman-Blumen, 2005:2)

What has also emerged from unethical leadership studies has been the increasing evidence that destructive leaders cause serious problems to followers, organizations and society. Not surprisingly writers such as (Walton, 2008) expect toxic leadership practices to become a more common phenomenon given the heightened competition and diminishing resources of organisations. It is worth noting however, that the Western discourse of ethics dominates writing within this field. What is also

observable is the tendency for writers to explore ethics in a rather generic way without much recourse to the heterogeneity of the culture and context in which unethical practices may be taking place (Ciulla, 2014). Thus, future research in this area should seek to explore amongst others aspects of leadership that may be considered as ethical in say an African context but considered unethical – say in the Western context. More knowledge is therefore required in this field of ethical leadership.

## **2.5 Leadership, culture and context**

The phenomenon of culture and the location or context in which research into leadership is articulated and enacted has emerged as a contentious issue in contemporary leadership studies (Sveiby, 2011). Leadership scholars hold three main points of view about culture and context namely: the essentialist or universal, the cross cultural and critical constructions. The archetypical mainstream account of leadership tends to be advance a theory of universalisation, staying blind to cultural diversity and contextual differences. Mainstream scholars argue that there are such global brands as McDonalds and Disneyland which are collectively enjoyed across the world suggesting that cultures may be converging and consolidating creating cultural and human universality (Brown, 1991; Deguchi, 2014).

Contrary to the above mainstream ideas, cross cultural leadership theorists and researchers (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004) emphasise cultural differences between countries. For instance Hofstede (1980) presents five dimensions of culture that distinguishes one national culture from the other including the dimensions of: Power distance, uncertainty avoidance individualism-collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and long-term versus short-term orientation. Also, the GLOBE leadership project, House et al., (2004) subsequently added four more cultural dimensions to Hofstede's five above making a total of nine dimensions including: assertiveness, gender equality, human orientation and performance orientation. Nevertheless, concerns have been raised about the methods employed in both research works. The main argument is that the quantitative methods employed have reduced such complex phenomenon as leadership and culture by placing them into boxes under a few set of variables (Tayeb, 2001; Williamson, 2002). Another critique has been that these studies

conceptualise culture at country level, suggesting countries and regions to be homogenous when they are not (Fang, 2003; McSweeney, 2002).

Contrasting the above mainstream disregard for cultural specificity but complementing cross cultural recognition of cultural difference is the more recent anti essentialist critical argument that culture and context are key determinants of leadership 'knowing' and 'doing' (Collinson, 2011; Ford, 2010; Jackson and Parry, 2010). This argument is founded on the consideration that leadership is essentially a cultural activity infused in values, beliefs, language, artefacts and rituals (Jackson and Parry, 2010). Also, that constructions and meanings of leadership are mainly representations of local realities or constructions of the immediate worlds in which people live and experience life on a daily basis (Schwandt, 2003). It follows from the pro-cultural argument that globalisation cannot be denied and that there are behaviours and practices within leadership that will always be common amongst human beings wherever they are. However, even such common features would not yield exactly the leadership narratives or practices. To this extent, the study lends support to the critical argument given the reality - not only of cultural complexity, multiplicity and diversity of context but perhaps more importantly the complexity of human behaviour which is at the very centre of leadership. Also, given that researchers undertake research from different philosophical worldviews, many organisational types and for various purposes, it seems more plausible that leadership will be expressed in different ways.

## **2.7 Chapter summary, reflections and gaps**

In this chapter the historical development of leadership thinking and theorising has been presented featuring some of the key concepts within mainstream leadership, post-heroic and some emergent views, concepts and arguments. The review has highlighted the very strong challenge to centralised, linear hierarchical, individualised and universal concepts by emerging critical and inclusive leadership theories. At the same time it has emerged that mainstream leadership research continues to dominate leadership scholarship even as inroads have been made by the emergent inclusive, collective and critical scholars in more recent times. What comes across from this exploration is a philosophical divide in which different intellectual and paradigmic research communities defend their preferred ontological and

epistemological worldviews. In this philosophical positioning, the fact that mainstream cross cultural research aggregates cultures at country level such as presented for the case of Africa poses serious questions and creates a knowledge gap for leadership understanding particularly for sub-cultural groups, tribes and communities within countries. In this respect, it is interesting to see how leadership is conceptualised in the particular two regions of Cross River and Mambila (chapter five and six).

Focusing on the evolution of leadership studies, the review highlights a number of points. First, it is apparent that the focus of research in earlier studies was on leaders' as individuals and their attributes, actions and behaviour with followers considered only passively involved. This manner of conceptualising leadership has dominated mainstream leadership thinking with research focus being around the actions, decisions and voices CEOs and Managers at top of the organisation and followers as inexistent (Howell and Shamir, 2005). What has emerged further is the dominance of Western perceptions of leadership. This dominance is so conspicuous particularly from the northern hemisphere – USA with virtually all of early research work in leadership is predominantly of American provenance. This dominance inevitably highlights American bias in the way leadership has been theorised (Den Hartog and Dickson, 2004).

A further revelation of the review is that although emergent theories have argued against the predominantly individualistic, leader-centred and production-oriented thinking in mainstream accounts, research has mainly explored the Western context with very little research in the African continent. The Western dominance raises the suspicion of Western countries always trying to decide what should count as knowledge and the manner in which non-Western concepts or voices should be presented or whether they should completely be ignored (Said, 1979). Additionally, there are the related concerns of political domination, intellectual superiority, ethnocentrism and biological superiority. These concerns can be removed by exploring and theorising research from indigenous African context even if these contexts might not practice or articulate leadership the same as in the West.

## **Chapter three: Studies and discourses of Leadership in Africa**

In the last chapter the historical chronicle of leadership as an academic field of study was reviewed with a focus in mainstream and emergent notions, concepts, theories and research. In this chapter, the focus is to explore connotations, assumptions, perceptions and theories on leadership in the African context with more specific attention in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The chapter reviews, research into leadership, historical explorer ethnographies, early colonial administrator diaries and social anthropological and ethnographic accounts of leadership in West and Central Africa, amongst the Maasai tribe in east Africa and from the Maori culture in New Zealand. The chapter is structured into four sections. The first section explores common assumptions of leadership in the African context and goes on to examining Ubuntu leadership philosophy. The second section examines contemporary empirical research into leadership in the African context. The third section explores ethnographies and social anthropological research on leadership with a particular focus in the two regions of focus in Cameroon and Nigeria. In the fourth section leadership meaning and practice from the Maori cultural perspective is examined as an exemplar of indigenous leadership out of Africa.

### **3.1 Theories and perceptions of leadership in Africa**

Contemporary representations of leadership in Africa, particularly for sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have sought to compare and contrast between Western practices and perceptions and approaches considered to be representative of 'African'<sup>9</sup> leadership thinking. Such comparatives have led to opposites such as: instrumental versus humanistic, developed versus developing, and civilised versus uncivilised (Jackson,

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<sup>9</sup> Most research conducted in parts of the African continent has tended to generalise practices observed in one country to the whole of Africa though the African continent is made up of 43 countries each of which might be different in a number of ways. This has been the case for studies such as the GLOBE project and Hofstede's five dimension where West African was considered as a country rather than a region – see e.g. (Nkomo, 2006) for detail of this conglomeration

2004). Ironically such mainly asymmetric and political assumptions continue to be held more broadly due to limited knowledge of leadership in the African context (Bolden and Kirk, 2009). This paucity of knowledge has meant that analysts and critics continue to rely on the above dichotomies established during Western colonial governance of Africa as representations of leadership in the African context. However, it has been argued that given that the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser was one of Western dominance this power asymmetry could not have evolved a fair appreciation of the fundamentals of leadership thinking in Africa (Inyang, 2009). The overriding assumption of colonialists was that Western ideas and practices were civilised and best while African cultural and traditional approaches to leadership were bad or inferior (Blunt and Jones, 1997; Inyang, 2009; Jackson, 2004). Based on this assumption, African cultural approaches to leadership were relegated and have from the colonial *époque* assumed to have been lost. Nevertheless, more recent empirical work is beginning to resurface constructions of Afro-centric organisation and leadership in much better ways (see e.g. the recent works Bolden and Kirk, 2009, Fouries et al., 2015; Jackson, 2013; Khoza, 2012; Van Zyl and Dalglish, 2009). The emerging views that have surfaced in the literature advance the notion of 'hybridity' Jackson (2004). Other writers have found similarities between leadership in the African context and certain aspects of leadership elsewhere while some have doubted the existence of typologies of Afro-centric leadership (e.g. Bolden and Kirk 2009). In the midst of this dilemma, the more important question and limitation of some of the studies has been about the extent to which the African continent constitutes a homogenous social entity given the complex configuration of the continent (Nkomo, 2006). These issues have led to various connotations, narratives and assumptions. However, beyond the rhetoric Ubuntu leadership philosophy has featured as the most recognisable Afro-centric leadership theory in leadership studies.

### **3.1.1 Ubuntu leadership philosophy**

The word 'Ubuntu' derives from the Ndebele language of the Xhosa tribe which is one of the most spoken indigenous languages in South Africa. The spirit of Ubuntu is captured within the expression '*Ubuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' which means: 'the existence of every individual is only possible through other persons'. In other words,

one lives with and in relation to others. Translated into the English language, the word Ubuntu would mean something like: 'humanity or the habit of exhibiting humane behaviour' Karsten and Illa (2005). Ubuntu has been presented as an indigenous African leadership philosophy that projects fundamental African value systems such as: group solidarity, teamwork, service to others, harmony and interdependence within a community or an organisation (Khoza, 2012). Within Ubuntu thinking, primacy is accorded to: re-enforcement of social relations, creating a family atmosphere in various communities and in promoting affinity and kinship (Karsten and Illa, 2005). In a nutshell, Ubuntu is in principle a humanist concept or philosophy of leadership (Bolden, 2014).

Whilst the philosophy of Ubuntu may embody such admirable, humanistic and people-oriented attributes, questions have nonetheless been raised in respect to the extent to which these values may be considered to be uniquely African (Nkomo, 2006). For instance it has been argued that these attributes may be general human values ubiquitous in other cultures and that nothing makes Ubuntu any different from such natural commitments to social welfare as common in every human community (Sigger et al., 2010). Further, there is the more serious critique that Ubuntu may have naturally emerged as a response to the series of threats and attacks to which African communities were historically subjected. The historical waves of attacks - it is argued naturally required community solidarity. Thus, analysts suggest that it may well be that the philosophy of Ubuntu might merely be a cultural strategy for community survival during uncertain times and in the face of poverty and occupation rather than a theoretical construct (Nkomo, 2006). Against this backdrop of questions and debate regarding the validity and credibility of Ubuntu, the theoretical status of Ubuntu as a management concept remains questionable (Sigger et al., 2010). In spite of the above concerns, pan-Africanist, post-colonial and some Western researchers of the African context present Ubuntu as a model and framework to develop more Afro-centric leadership concepts (Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Karsten and Illa, 2005; Inyang, 2009). Following from this, Inyang (2008) argues:

*'The concept of Ubuntu is therefore considered as an important value of African culture that can form the foundation of African management philosophy in tune with the peoples of Africa'* (P.128)

It follows from the above that there is amongst African scholars a great deal of support of Ubuntu as a unique African concept. Confirmation of this wide support is further demonstrated by proclamations such as that of the famous South African Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu who declared saying:

*“We Africans have this thing called ‘Ubuntu’. It is about the essence of being human; it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being able to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours.”* (Desmond Tutu cited in Turnbull et al., 2012:59)

One possible reading from the words of the distinguished Arch Bishop’s dreams and generosity in sharing Ubuntu with the rest of the world is possibly his frustration of observing that organisations and communities may have lost humanism, relationality and inter-dependence in their leadership and operational approaches. Seen from this perspective the embodied values of the philosophy of Ubuntu if applied could undoubtedly help in creating a more humanist leadership practice. Nevertheless, perhaps the strongest critique levied on Ubuntu has been that although it upholds such good values, these have hardly materialised even in South Africa of its provenance (Bolden, 2013). Also, academics have raised concerns about the fact that the concept lacks empirical support and that its foundations detaches it from a concept destined to provide solutions to Managerial or leadership problems in an organisational context (Nkomo, 2006). It would seem therefore that Ubuntu may be suitable in leadership within an indigenous community context but it might not apply as presented in an organisational context.

Further criticisms have been to the effect that whilst the philosophy of Ubuntu might capture the Xhosa indigenous way of life at a time long gone, it fails to account for contemporary political and social developments such as the effects of colonialism. Hence it is argued that the philosophy might be out of its time. This later criticism may be backed by research into the nature of culture which is said to evolve in a dynamic process changing with time, space and other multiple influences (Hofstede, 2001). Further critique of Ubuntu - like most writings and thoughts on leadership in the African context is tendency to homogenise the African continent by assuming all African cultures, traditions, territories and people to be the same. This attempt at always homogenising Africa leads (Nkomo, 2006:16) to argue further saying:

*“The notion of a homogenous African leadership or management may be just as dangerous as the idea of a universal theory of leadership”.*

In spite of the above criticisms, Ubuntu it is generally agreed that the philosophy of Ubuntu encapsulates the central elements of indigenous African leadership as its main virtues seem resonate with many indigenous African countries, communities and tribes. It might be that the concept needs further development and adjustment as responsive to the various communities and contexts both in Africa and the rest of the world.

### **3.1.2 Post-colonial or Pan-Africanist perception of leadership**

The post-colonial representation constitutes a body of work within African leadership thinking which suggests that extant Western mainstream leadership concepts are imported concepts and practices that cannot be applied in the African context. Writers within this paradigm argue that Africa needs to develop indigenous theories and ideas of leading that take account of African value systems and its natural environment. The argument here is that whilst there may be common challenges and approaches to leadership everywhere in the world, the African context is faced with different challenges. These include the complexities of multiple languages, cultures and traditions. Added to this are variations in political history and disparate social, economic and educational condition between countries. Socially, allusion is made to the collective and harmonious formations that characterise the African social environment. Based on these factors African scholars taking a postcolonial view of leadership argue that Western functionalist concepts such as transformational and charismatic leadership are clearly unsuitable in the African context (Inyang, 2009; Edoho, 2001; Kuada, 1994; Haruna, 2008; Nkomo, 2011; Obiakor, 2004). This argument is encapsulated in the remarks of a leading African scholar saying leadership in the African context should be about:

*“How to effectively run organisations...interwoven with the daily existence and experience in Africa and its contextual reality” (Edoho, 2001:74).*

Edoho’s views above reiterate the necessity for local African customs, social value systems, and traditions akin to the African context to form part of leadership theorising in the context. These thoughts result from the common assumption that

indigenous African leadership and managerial ingenuity collapsed and became distorted and disoriented with foreign intrusion. Hence such localised approaches need to be restored into leadership theorising to mirror the African context (Inyang, 2008). At the heart of this post-colonial project is the perception that for Africa to emerge from its economic and social problems, local indigenous African leadership concepts and practices must be established and institutionalised (Anyansi-Archibong, 2001; Kamoche, 2000; Mangaliso, 2001).

The above pan-Africanist views reflect a growing indigenisation crave whereby communities and people from different cultural backgrounds are beginning to more forcefully reject universal values and way of life in favour of local customs and traditions that provide a sense of unique cultural and intellectual identity. Such postcolonial African views also align with the growing recognition in recent time of worldly leadership and alternative wisdom even by Western scholars. There is a growing acceptance particularly in critical leadership studies suggesting that local indigenous people in various parts of the practice leadership according to their cultures way of life and philosophical world view (Bertsch, 2012; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2003; Turnbull et al., 2012). Hence (Bertsch, 2012: 81) opines:

*“People are becoming more aware of their own culture and such local interpretations are becoming more popular, resulting in an increasing resistance to cultural change and global assimilation”*

Bertsch’s suggestion lends support to the notion of leadership as contextually and culturally contingent and would seem to explain the more recent African Renaissance’ which is geared towards solving African problems using indigenous African solutions (Mbeki, 1998; Nzelibe, 1986; Said, 2002). However, there is a more pragmatic construction of leadership which also merits exploration.

### **3.1.3 Neo-pragmatic school**

The second school of thought adopts more of a pragmatic exploration of both local indigenous African thinking and the inevitable Western concepts that has become part of the African gestalt. Prominent within this school is Jackson’s (2004) oeuvre based on data from sixteen African countries. In this text Jackson tends to suggest that African management practices are shaped through ‘complex, multi-layered social, cultural and historical events that require understanding, reconciling,

integrating and synergising' (p. 3). To Jackson, African leadership is inevitably a hybrid of Western appropriation and indigenous African culture and tradition. He argues that hybridity may be good for the African context in the sense that the imported Western practices from colonialism can merge with local practices, resulting to new ways of managing and leading. He argues further that African leadership thinking must not return to its traditional roots. It is worth noting here that in advising against returning to African cultural practices, Jackson supposes that Afro-centric ideals might be inexistent, inferior or unworkable. This of course would be contrary to the views of the postcolonial scholars explored above. Even so, some African writers concur with Jackson's hybridity thesis against the argument that there are dimensions of Western functionalism that could be beneficial to African enterprise. For instance, (Fashoyin, 2005:43-45) argues that whilst management (leadership) in the African context needs to be strongly rooted in cultural beliefs and traditions, the desired leadership training for the African leader – as he put it:

*“Must enable the African manager or (leader) to transform imported theories and concepts into acceptable cultural norms which can then be applied to management practices in Africa”*

What is evident in the above perceptions is the idea that African leadership practices might have something to learn from Western philosophies and practices. This way of engaging a positive co-habitation echoes the concept of mimicry Bhabha (1994). In mimicry, 'hybridised' cultures are considered to appropriate each other in a positive way such that the positive elements of the colonial culture reforms or is reformed by the local. However local culture retains the key cultural and traditional tenets as suitable in context (Bhabha, 1994:122). In this process, the colonised culture appropriates the coloniser, makes it different - yet almost the same. Thus, the hybrid is not a perfect reproduction but reproduces slippages, excesses and differences, which sometimes confront and challenge the dominant culture and vice versa (Ibid).

The notion of hybridity seems an inevitable approach given that any attempt to westernise indigenous African cultures and traditions has so far been unsuccessful as the local traditions and cultural forms of leadership continue to be practiced especially within indigenous communities and institutions such as the *Ekpe* indigenous institution of community governance in Cross River (Ruel, 1969;

Partridge, 1905). It is also clear that Western approaches cannot readily be applied in the African context as they would in a Western organisational context. The proof of this is that organisations and governments in Africa have spent huge amounts to train their personnel in Western leadership development programmes with the hope that they will become better leaders. However, as Kuada (2010) has noted, surprisingly the numerous Western training projects have not succeeded to change leadership practices in Africa. What has happened instead is that leaders tend to observe local politics, behaviours and understanding of context to be successful.

Reflecting on the postcolonial argument engaged above, this thesis would argue that whilst there may be a yearning for Afro-centric leadership theorising, it might be impossible to construct concepts of leadership that are strictly African after the experience of colonialism and the current wave of globalisation. What might be required is to make sense of the different leadership traditions and cultures in specific indigenous tribes and communities. This way, we may be able to differentiate between the various connotations of leadership and the varieties of practices, philosophies and constructions underpinning leadership in different locations and cultural contexts across SSA. This is a gap within this literature and is one which the present thesis undertakes to partly address.

### **3.1.4 Other discourses of leadership in Africa**

According to Bolden and Kirk (2009), the term 'African leadership' evokes multiple, emotive and sometimes conflicting meanings and connotations both positive and negative. To some African people it is a pride to be seen or identified as being different or able to provide an alternative way of conceptualising leadership. Thabo Mbeki's expression below provides a sense of that pride when he writes:

*"Now is the time, I believe, for Africa to send its own tall ships across the waters, not to conquer, but to proclaim that Africa has found its will, that Africa has found its way and that Africa has earned its right to lead"* (Mbeki, 2006 cited in Swart et al., 2014: 23)

However, the above sense of pride is dampened by the most popular descriptions of leadership in the African context encapsulated and described as grossly corrupt, dictatorial, self-enrichment seeking, tribalistic, incompetent and so on (See e.g. Museveni, 2000; Obiakor, 2004; Rotberg, 2004; Salawu, 2011; Sebudubudu and

Botlhomilwe, 2011). It is common knowledge particularly in political leadership that African leaders normally put family and personal interest first, ethnic interests second and corporate interest third (Wanasika et al., 2011). In relation to tribalism, it is expected that when the head of organisation or country is from a particular tribe or region, he/she quickly appoint people from his/her tribe or region even when they may not be as qualified as other persons from other tribes (Fajana, et al., 2011; Fonchingong, 2005; Power, 2006). Thus, Rotberg (2004) argues that political leaders in Africa often serve their 'personal' and 'tribal' interest rather than the collective good of the state. The prevalence of this practice would seem to dispute the perception that African leadership thinking has always been one of cross cultural management (Jackson, 2004). Rather, it highlights a key aspect of leadership in the African context in the midst of a plurality of tribes which is a constant balancing act between to manage the often competing tribal and regional antagonism between communities (Jackson, 2004). In trying to understand the foundations of this practice, Davidson (1959) draws on the history of early African civilisation to argue that tribalism and antagonism are not innate African cultural value systems. Rather, he charges that such tribalistic behaviours result from the anachronistic reconstitution of African states by Western colonialist. This he opines has led to internal tribal distortion, displacement, and anarchy between tribes and communities. Hence there has been an unstoppable emergence of antagonistic, protectionist and manifestation of separate loyalties of leaders even within the same countries. Davidson's thinking seems to be supported by the demographics of present day African tribes in many countries. It is common to find historically separated tribes, clans and regions with quite different languages, customs and religion brought together to form one country (Ardener, 1996; Mazrui et al., 1986; Partridge, 1903). For instance the Tikari tribal people of West and Central Africa are spread into three countries yet they see themselves first as Tikari than as Cameroonian, Nigerian or Chadian (Zeitlyn and Connell, 2003). The same can be said of the Hausas, Mandingo or the Bayang people who find themselves spread into more than one country (Partridge, 1905; Ruel, 1969). All of these tribes see themselves as nation states and engage in relationships with others within the same country as foreigners even when they have been crafted to a same country. The different tribal denominations deal with each other in much the same way as the British would

consider the Dutch or the French because many pay more loyalty to the tribe than their countries of nationality.

Against this historical distortion, the very perception of corruption and unethical leadership practices is debatable as it appears to be a consequence of history rather than reflect the ethical and moral script of indigenous African culture and traditions. To this extent, this study argues that, some of the popular connotations of leadership in Africa fall short of providing a fair representation of leadership thinking in the context. Most appraisals tend to highlight problems rather than empirically theorise leadership in context. Thus, a more focused work such as this one informing the foundations of leadership thinking from the indigenous cultures and traditions could better theorise leadership within the micro-communities and regions. It will be interesting to find out how the issue of ethics and moral practice is articulated and practiced in the communities of focus within this research. This is presented in chapter five, section 5.1.3 and 5.1.4.

### **3.2 Empirical Research into leadership in the African context**

As indicated in the opening chapter, African leadership research is only just developing. Hence there is a limited number of empirical research work conducted in the field so far. In this section some of the most cited empirical works completed in Africa are explored.

#### **3.2.1 Leadership and management in practice**

Perhaps the most expansive empirical work about African leadership practice in Africa is to be found in Jackson's (2004) work under the cross cultural leadership and management rubric. Angling on the cross cultural stakeholder approaches and employment various research methods and covering sixteen African countries, Jackson observes that in practice African managers demonstrate high skills in many aspects of management and leadership and are particularly efficient in managing cultural diversity and multiple stakeholder interests. He also provides an antithesis of Western instrumental view of organisation which tends to consider people as another resource for production to the African humanistic practice and perception of people as value in their own right. Additionally, Jackson accuses the West to have adopted

a 'disparaging'<sup>10</sup> appraisal of postcolonial Africa as having nothing to contribute to global business (p.27). Other key values of leadership and management practices summarised for leadership in organisations in Africa include: the prevalence of kinship, respect and humility, regard for compromise and commitment to social solidarity. Within these premises interpersonal, tribal and interest related antagonism and inter-tribal tensions are elevated as behaviours and factors that have historically and which also currently permeate African leadership. However, collective and shared leadership practice is noted as an overriding and prevalent approach to leadership practice in context (P. 30-31). As has been queried for the concept of Ubuntu above, a key question that arises from Jackson's findings is the extent to which the enumerated styles, perceptions and practice of leadership can be said to be typically African. It is hard to say that some if not all of Jackson's findings are approaches to leadership not practiced in the Western context as well. This thesis would argue that most of Jackson's findings could be found in the West as well. Thus, a key critique brought that is brought to bear upon Jackson's work by this thesis relates the generalisation thesis alluded to earlier above and more importantly the inability of this work to locate itself within the African context. Hence, it may be important in view of future research to develop a framework that could enable researchers to locate their work in the context of Africa (see proposed framework as illustrated in fig. 7.2, chapter seven). This thesis suspects that because the organisations and locations explored by Jackson were mostly typical Western forms of organisations in urban cities in Africa there is no so much different with leadership practice in a Western organisation. Therefore, although there is much to take from Jackson's work in the various countries, some fundamental aspects of Afro-centric leadership – particularly practices exhibited within indigenous institutions and from the cultural and traditional roots of communities within SSA may have been missed.

### **3.2.2 Leadership meanings**

Another highly cited work in African leadership explored the meanings that Africans associate with leadership is a study titled: 'African Leadership: Surfacing New

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<sup>10</sup> The condition of looking low on - demeaning or considering a thing or the way of doing something as inferior, inconsiderate or archaic. In this case, Western leadership and management styles are considered to be better and superior to local indigenous practices.

Understandings through Leadership Development' Bolden and Kirk's (2009). Based on action research and co-creation of meanings the study explores perceptions and connotations of leadership from participants - mostly attendees of a Pan-African leadership conference in UK in six African countries. The key findings of this work were that:

*"Africans aspire for leadership founded on humanistic principles, and a desire for more inclusive and participative forms of leadership that value individual differences, authenticity and serving the community"* (Bolden and Kirk, 2009:80)

The above statement reiterates the relevance of humanity in the conceptualisation of leadership in the African context as espoused by the philosophy of Ubuntu. Another finding of the work was its corroboration of the prevalence of corruption in the practice of leadership as well as the relevance and influence of local African religious belief systems, gender and age in leadership thinking. These findings draw attention to the manner in which culture, tradition, leader identity, context and history may enforce different and complex conceptualisations of leadership. In this respect, a key difference established between the manner in which leadership was framed in by the African participants demonstrated the notion of unity or at the very least a closer the relationship between the individual and the community or society in which one belongs. This was different from the Western notion referred to as the Cartesian split where in Western societies the individual seems to be more detached from the whole of the wider community (Ibid). Also, revealing of this work was the negative sides of indigenous African culture in such areas of gender where the local traditions prevent women from certain kinds of functions including leadership. These negative orientations of indigenous African leadership rooting into historical cultures and traditions highlight the view that not all is good in leadership practices from an indigenous African context. Thus, in craving for Afro-centric notions and theories of leadership some of these negative aspects will need to be accounted for. It would seem that in trying to factor these aspects, one might be compelled into accepting some Western and globally acceptable social conventions such as gender equality which may have become acceptable practices in the African context. It follows as indicated earlier that a strictly Afro-centric leadership concept may be difficult to attain at the current time. Both studies have set the scene for further understanding of leadership in context.

### **3.3 The social anthropology of leadership in Africa**

The African continent is considered to be the cradle of humanity. Therefore it is thinkable that the notion of leadership may have first developed in Africa as the early man began to seek permanent shelter, undertake farming and domesticate of animals in the Stone Age. However, not much is written or theorised about leadership in the African context before the arrival of Europeans on its shores and even up to much later. The preferred way of communicating history and passing-down knowledge for the African captured and preserved in narratives of historical events, symbols, mythologies and in active replication of cultural and traditional repertoires. Given, that not so much research exist in leadership within the many African tribal clusters, this study analysed the written accounts of early Western explorers, anthropologists and colonial administrators to make sense of leadership in the African context as they saw it. This body of knowledge is explored below as a prelude to the empirical data.

#### **3.3.1 Early explorer accounts of leadership**

The story of the exploration of Africa dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC when the Carthaginian explorer Hanno and his men encountered the African race at the coast of West Africa as his crew dropped anchor to hunt game and find fresh drinking water (Dugard, 2004). Hanno's men came face to face with the first ever African known to the rest of the world. In an ensuing fight between the lone African and the Greek crew of seamen the African was killed and his torso transported to ancient Greece. In Greece and across the Western world, the ensuing representation and interpretation of this other human species in a negative narrative established Africa's reputation as a savage land. So devastating and frightening was the narrative that no sailor ever set foot on the cost of west and central Africa for more than eight centuries until Portuguese slave merchants anchored on the coast of east Africa in 1498 (Dugard, 2004). Amongst the early Western explorers to explore the interior of Africa is the British explorer Dr Mungo Park. Park set sail from Portsmouth, UK on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1795 and docked on a small coastal village in present day Gambia on June 4<sup>th</sup> the same. His mission was to find the river Niger and discover where it meets the Atlantic coast. This voyage took him through several African indigenous

communities including the Mandingo, Jalloff, Foullah and Jullah tribes in present day Gambia and Senegal. Explaining the nature of community leadership from his original notes, Park explained that leadership and decision making in the tribal communities was - in his words from his daily diary entries:

*[The government in all of the Mandingo states is monarchical. The power of the sovereign is however by no means unlimited. In all affairs of importance, the King calls an assembly of the principal men, or elders by whose councils he is directed, and without whose advice he can neither declare war, nor conclude peace....the courts are composed of the elders of the town and their proceedings are conducted in the open air. The both sides of a question are freely canvassed, witnesses are publicly examined and the decisions which follow generally meet with the approbation of the surrounding audience, with the general rule of an appeal to ancient customs] (p.13).*

From the above diary entry, a sense of leadership could be constructed about leadership in an indigenous community context at the time. An important aspect of leadership from the above quote is the notion leadership as a collective process in which discussions are open and decisions are made by way of arriving at a consensus according to the culture and traditions of the people.

In another diary entry, Park wrote:

*“The concerns of this world they believe are committed by the almighty to the superintendence and direction of subordinate spirits under whom they suppose that certain magical ceremonies have great influence. A white fowl suspended to the branch of a particular tree, a snake head or a few handfuls of fruits are offerings... superstition frequently presents to deprecate the wrath or to conciliate the favour of tutelary agents ....they follow the precepts and examples of their forefathers”*

The above explanation highlights the prevalence of spirituality and belief in the metaphysical and transcendental interceding of gods and other assumed external non-human interveners.

Parks observation above is corroborated by the writings of another of the very few successfully completed expeditions in Africa - the voyage of John and Richard Lander in 1830. The Lander brothers noted that the leadership of the villages along River Niger were usually led by a number of appointed persons or leaders who were regarded as the head of each community – a patriarch to who the entire community looked up to. The patriarch of each of the villages invited other personalities and together they discussed and made decisions. In certain communities, they noted that

there did not seem to be any clear hierarchy at all. Rather, noble and knowledgeable people sat together to discuss and make conclusions, explaining as follows:

*“Everyone styles himself a great and powerful man...there is hardly any knowing who is monarch here or even what form of government prevails. Besides the king of kings himself, four fellows assume the title of royalty... this evening we received an invitation from these chieftains....very little ceremony is observed by the people towards their sovereign, they converse with him with as little reserve as if he were no better than themselves”* (Lander, 1830:45 & 47).

This depiction by the Lander brothers, suggest a rather similar leadership arrangement construction to Park’s above in which there are seemingly multiple leaders taking part in community leadership in almost equal ways.

Further to this collection from explorers are entries from David Livingstone another African explorer who criss-crossed Africa from east to west from 1841 to 1856. His account of leadership in the many villages and communities visited present a common scenario in which there was in each tribal community a central leader who worked in collaboration with some key men for community leadership. In one of the villages he noted:

*“The entire villages worked to cultivate the surrounding fields and if necessary waged war”* cited in (Livingstone, 1855, cited in Dugard, 2004:78).

Other early explorers including Hugh Clapperton, 1825, Dixon Denham 1823 described leadership as community-based with a designated leader leading alongside other persons in the community. In terms of leadership in practice, Denham explained that the leaders of most of the communities were generally affable, sociable and fair to all according to their cultural way of life. It seems from the above historical observations that the key tenets of leadership at that time were such values as a strong sense of community, shared responsibility and decision making, influence of belief systems and social inter-dependence. As we see during colonial colonisation, it seems some of these virtues were relegated to the background in favour of Western functionalism

### **3.3.2 Early colonial officials’ accounts**

Charles Partridge, a colonial government secretary for the in the Cross River region in eastern Nigeria between 1900 and 1903 kept extensive daily records of

observations, explanations and way of life of the local indigenous communities. His diary notes were published upon his return to the UK in 1905, under the title; '*the Cross River Natives*' (Partridge, 1905). Much like the previous explorer accounts, Partridge noted that leadership in the communities was mainly a community process which involved many partakers for different functions and events. He also observed that elderly persons were recognised and these persons were central to the leadership of the tribe or community.

Partridge further noted that an important aspect of leadership was the involvement of cultic groups and indigenous institutions such as the 'Ekpe' which he identified as the main governing institution of indigenous African tribes in the Area. Within this system he notes the worship of gods and belief in ancestors based on the perception that ancestors protected and informed how things should be done. The General UK colonial consul for Nigeria Frederick Lugard regarded such indigenous institutions and reliance on ancestors and gods as non-progressive, uncivilised and (Lugard, 2013). He thought that the colonised had to abandon this way of life and comply with British values as a means of suppressing indigenous leadership and social order. The resultant effect is the Europeanisation of the concept of leadership in Africa. The legacy of this is an assumption of intellectual superiority of Western thinking to African value systems (Bryceson, 2012; Nyamnjoh, 2012; Tibebe, 2014). Nevertheless, as explored in detail from the empirical analysis of the two regions explored within this these (Chapter six and seven) there is a constant tensions between African and Western views of leadership with each trying to assert their relevance and legitimacy upon the other. The result has been that various forms of ideological and cultural changes, differentiating identities and mutations of leadership thinking are active in context.

### **3.3.3 Anthropological studies in west and central Africa**

In a classic book on the social anthropological research on governance and leadership amongst the Bayang tribe in Cross River region, British anthropologist (Ruel, 1969) further confirmed the spiritual and communal nature of leadership amongst the Bayang tribal cluster. His ethnographic experience of leadership in practice amongst the local communities led him to state as follows:

*“Perhaps the most important general characteristic of the position of leader is the leader’s dependence in his role upon those whom he represents... ‘Kefor’ or leadership is a thing of the community: it remains always subject to community control. The community collectively make a man a leader...the leader remains essentially a representative and should always be aware of this... no leader has an innate right to his position... a leader may according to the circumstance have a great deal of influence and his word may be much respected but in itself, the office of leadership does not carry formal authority” (Ruel, 1969:66)*

In terms of leadership meaning and how it is known and thought about, Ruel identified the symbol of the leopard as an important symbol encapsulating the local meaning and sense of leadership. Ruel’s identification of the symbol of the Leopard as indicative of leadership amongst the Bayangs of Cameroon in 1969 and Mungo Park’s identification of the same symbol amongst the Jullah and Mandingo in Gambia and Senegal in the sixteenth century is quite striking. Further social anthropological and ethnographic accounts from (Mansfield, 1908 and Koloss, 1994) both established that leadership in the communities explored in the Cross River region in Cameroon was mainly communal with shared functions and goal of protecting the cultural rights of every individual in the communities. More importantly, they observed that belief in ancestors and gods as well as spirits in water and forest was central to the notion of power, wisdom and ability. Leadership was therefore not seen as necessarily a human action but more of an undertaking in which ancestors and other spiritual forces have a superior role to play to make leadership possible and effective.

The above transcendental, cultic and metaphysical perception observed by these ethnographers seems to continue to influence contemporary leadership thinking in west and central Africa. This was the central argument of a more recent reflective study exploring barriers to good ethical practice in African governance and political leadership in Nigeria. In that study, Osam Temple (2011) observed that kinship, extended family and ethnic relationships remained fundamental to leadership practice in the African context. Like Nicholson (2005) he also highlights the view that African leadership tends to be rooted in the African belief in metaphysical manifestation through ritualistic and cultic practices (p. 47). Additionally, he highlights the prevailing confusion and constant struggle by African leaders to grapple with competing definitions of reality and sovereignty, personal identity, and religion. He concluded by noting that ethical and democratic leadership practices could only

materialise in the African context if the idea of metaphysicality and the prevailing belief system is challenged in favour of: global leadership training, emphasis on social security, mass education, democratic governance and adherence to the rule of law.

From the above views, it is clear that spirituality, cultic practice and expectation of metaphysical intervention remain central to leadership thinking in the local tribal level which is then carried through at national political leadership. However, contrary to Osam Temple's views about adopting global leadership ideals, this thesis argues that given that leadership is culturally and contextually contingent, adopting Western leadership training for leadership in the African context is problematic. Such a route has the likelihood of enforcing individualistic, leader-centred and universal notions of leadership with the inevitable ramification of a culture-context disconnect. As the review in this chapter and the former (chapter two) make evident, universal leadership models and concepts have been found to be inappropriate, unassuming and incommensurate within certain cultures and context. Already, writers have argued that adopting Western views and thoughts about leadership in the context of Africa is tantamount to Western re-colonisation of Africa (Blunt and Jones, 1987). What this study sees as important is a better understanding of the African through sustained research leadership development projects that take the specific context into account. This way some of the seemingly unorthodox beliefs and practices may be refined and made to work more effectively. Here too there may be more to learn from these indigenous practices and way of thinking about leadership – some of which emergent researchers seek to understand such as how to evolve more relational, distributed and more sociable and humane practices.

What is also noticeable from the above review is that writers and researchers articulate and present differently relative to the adopted research approaches. For instance, explored from an organisational context (Jackson, 2004 and Bolden and Kirk, 2009) highlight the issues of hybridity of cultures and speculate about the existence of Afro-centric leadership. By contrast Nicholson (2005) and Temple (2011) articulate deeper culturally inclined and transcendental dimensions of leadership from a cultural and traditional perspective. It is clear from the difference in emphasis that each research approach provides a different kind of meaning. It would seem therefore that in order to gain a broader and deeper understanding, a

concomitantly adoption of multiple approaches and methodological combinations could be a quite useful approach. This would seem to explain the persistent call for cross disciplinary research for leadership research in the African context (Jackson and Parry, 2011; Bolden, 2011). However, judging from the empirical studies explored above, such cross disciplinary work remains uncommon in the particular context of research into leadership in the African context. It is therefore clear that a transdisciplinary methodical gap exists in the study of leadership particularly in the African context where culture and tradition tend to inform practice in formal and informal organisations. This study partly addresses this conceptual gap by exploring leadership from an organisational and a social anthropological perspective.

### **3.3. 4 Indigenous leadership amongst the ‘Maasai’ tribe in Kenya**

In a study of leadership amongst the indigenous Maasai tribe in Kenya exploring kinship, culture and organisation through ethnographic fieldwork, Nicholson (2005) found that the goal of achieving harmony and living collectively was central to leadership thinking amongst the Maasai tribe in Kenya. He also observed that the nexus of kinship, culture and organisation centres on strong culturally reinforced set of behaviours, thinking and routines angled around spirituality. Leadership he found was not confined to one individual. Rather, it was cultivated and sustained at all levels of the indigenous social system. In the social construction of leadership, multiple alternating roles and duties of leadership, power and authority operated simultaneously at different times and for different events. More importantly, Nicholson found that indigenous leadership within the Maasai is underpinned by spirituality and that mythical beliefs sustained cultural integrity to make leadership possible.

### **3.3.5 Leadership in Maori culture in New Zealand**

Ancient traditions present various perceptions and practices of leadership that might seem unorthodox to Western constructs. Within leadership studies there has been a recent turn towards exploring leadership practices from non-Western regions and cultures (see for example: Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Kenny and Fraiser, 2012; Sveiby, 2011; Turnbull, 2009; Turnbull et al., 2012; Warner and Grint, 2006). Such work has in many ways corroborated the suggestion made over two decades ago in relation to the danger of adopting universal ideologies and concepts that:

*“Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of ‘fact’. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in their structural forms”* (Cohen, 1985: 98).

Following from the above quote perhaps one of the most published indigenous leadership concepts in contemporary leadership studies is leadership as practiced and conceptualised amongst the Maori culture and tradition in New Zealand (see for example the works of: Holmes, 2007; Metge, 1995 and Metge, 2014). Holmes (2007), explains that leadership in Maori tradition is primarily about reconciling the competing transactional and relational demands of the local culture and traditions in ways that maintain traditional Māori cultural values. This work identified humour, humility, selflessness and self-deprecation as the main behaviours associated with leadership. Further, that there is an assumption when thinking about leadership in Maori culture that power and leadership is not developed or created by the single individual. Rather, the right and ability to lead is perceived as both transcendental (decided by the gods) and collective (empowered by the people or followers). These virtues of leadership are embodied in the expression: *whakaiti* in the local language, denoting the ‘preferred norms and values’ of leadership and followership in Maori tradition (Metge, 1995: 103). In more recent analysis, Metge (2014) has traced the Maori notion of leadership or what is referred to as: *nga-Tikanda Maori* and *Ngu-Ture Maori* as another important element of leadership derived from the ubiquitous flax plant which is grown and used variously by the local people. The flax plant is used as a favourite metaphor and encapsulates the concept of ‘*Whanau*’ or notion of family. The underlying thought is that the common roots of the Flax plant all join together to create strength and stability for the larger whole. This idea coming from a natural plant is extended into leadership thinking to emphasise social coherence, inter-dependence and the notion of leadership as ‘family’ Metge (2014).

In terms of leadership practice and succession, Katene, (2010) explains that the right to undertake leadership as an appointed leader of the community is based on genealogical kinship as well as relationships alliances with other tribes, knowledge in specialist areas and possessing spiritual strengths one of which is the *mana* and *tapu* Katene (2013). What we learn from Maori cultures and traditions as articulated

above is that the notion of leadership embodies spirituality. Also, meanings of leadership are derived from items within the immediate natural environment such as the Flax plant (Metge, 2014). In the light of the Maori example explored here, it will be interesting to explore ways in which indigenous leadership practices and the underpinning constructions of leadership in the two regions of Cross River and Mambila in Africa (as explored within this research) compares with the case of Maori leadership culture. The findings are elaborated in chapter five. Further comparison with leadership in the Maori is elucidated in chapter eight, section 8.2.

### **3.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has explored writings, connotations and research in leadership in the African context. The chapter also explored anthropological perspectives of leadership in west and central Africa. The key learning developed above is that leadership thinking in the African context tends to privilege a communal approach based on democratic decision making processes and shared cultural roles. The philosophy of Ubuntu emerged as the lone Afro-centric leadership concept in leadership studies. Proponents highlight the virtues of humanity, communality, people-orientation and close relationality amongst people within a community as the key characteristics underpinning the concept. However, the spiritual aspect of leadership that emerged as an important aspect of leadership in explorer accounts and anthropological ethnographies are conspicuously missing in Ubuntu philosophy. In relation to extant literature on leadership in the African context, the review highlights the fact that research has tended to focus more around the actions and behaviours of political leaders in urban cities in Africa with corruption emerging as a key characteristic of African leadership. However, it is argued that such unsupported and narrow connotation of leadership may be relaying a distorted and misleading view of leadership in the African context as they refer more to leadership in the political arena.

In respect to other forms of indigenous leadership, the review highlights a number of similarities between explorer accounts of leadership, anthropological research findings from the Cross River and Mambila region and amongst the Maasai and Maori cultures. Some key commonalities include the influence of spirituality, metaphysical thinking and the goal of maintaining a sociable, humanist and culturally

shared responsibility in leadership. The evidence supports the fact that knowledge and research into leadership in the African context is limited. Thus a key gap within this literature is really the very limited knowledge and empirical material particularly so for indigenous institutions and formal organisations located in indigenous African communities.

A second gap established relates to the methods and methodologies which have been utilised to study leadership in the African context. The methods employed in the handful of empirical studies reviewed shows that each study followed a particular research perspective that is either a social anthropological or an organisational approach. This means that each research project essentially informs leadership from the particular perspective in which the research was conceived. A key problematic of focusing research from one lens either organisational or anthropological is the potential limitations in terms of scope of understanding (Creswell, 2012). Given that both formal organisations and indigenous institutions operate concomitantly, in indigenous and rural communities and regions in Africa, it will be better to explore these two approaches of leadership by deploying the methods and lens that best informs each approach. The choices of methods and methodologies as well as the philosophical perspective adopted for the study to address the research aim objective and questions are articulated in the next chapter.

## **Chapter four: Research methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter articulates the philosophical perspective and choice of methods utilised as well as the processes of data collection and analysis engaged. It examines first the interpretivist – in particular the social constructionist philosophical paradigm that informs the study, then outlines, explicates and provides justification for the research methods adopted. In this process the data collection processes, the research design strategy and the analytical processes are elicited. Further, the chapter explains the processes and actions taken to ensure credibility, consistency and dependability. Additionally, the researcher's fieldwork experience is reflected upon in relation to access to participants, recruitment and role of fieldwork assistants and some of the risks and difficulties faced in the field. Furthermore, the measures taken to address or the recommended Leeds University and other ethical guidelines and the contextual adaptations made in active fieldwork as necessary in the context are summarily explained. The chapter ends with a reflection on some of the possible limitations in the methods methodologies and processes.

#### **4.1.1 Research Philosophy: Social constructionism**

The aim of the study was to make sense of leadership in an indigenous community context through discussion, social interaction, collective group conversation and observation of real life day to day activities within the communities of focus. Exploration essentially involved discussion and interpretation of cultural events, historical stories and artefacts. Thus, the desired data for the research was more of expressions in literary form generated through a social process. The process unfolded as essentially a subjective interpretation of the actions, thoughts and experiences of the indigenous people. Against this background, the study was approached from an interpretivist epistemology based on the constructivist ontology. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy, concerned with 'the study of criteria by which we determine what does and does not constitute warranted or valid knowledge (Gill and Johnson, 2010). Ontology refers to the nature and form of knowledge. In other words ontology seeks to capture 'the essence of phenomena and the nature of their existence' (Ibid, 241). Based on this broad epistemological and ontological foundation, the study adopted social constructionism as its preferred dimension of

interpretivism in order to capture the relational, ethical, and emotional dimensions of leadership (Cunliffe, 2008; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Ciulla, 2014). These dimensions are increasingly considered as essential aspects of leadership theorising (Bolden and Kirk, 2009). Social constructionism focuses on knowledge of the social world with the goal of creating knowledge that develops from active human interaction (Cunliffe, 2008). In constructionist research it is held that:

*“Social reality is not separate from us but that social realities and ourselves are intimately interwoven as each shapes and is shaped by the other in everyday interactions”* (Cunliffe, 2008b:124).

The above expression entails a reality in which the actors make reality and are thus, part of that reality. It is such actors who say what that reality is and who influence how it changes and evolves. That reality ceases to be what it is when those who bring it into being decide it is no longer their reality. It naturally follows therefore that by way of interpretation, reflection and writing during the course of this thesis, the researcher, along with other social agents involved in the research process were actively involved in creating some of the knowledge developed. Hence, Czarniawska (2003) argues that reality emerges from and through conversations and from stories told by people about their experiences.

#### **4.1.2 Locating this study within social constructionism**

It has been argued the social constructionism is a broad church and that scholars within this paradigm range from the more subjective and inter-subjective to the more constitutive who seek ‘objectivity’ and ‘social facticity’ (Cunliffe, 2008b: 127). For this study the more subjective approach to constructionism was adopted with individuals negotiating meanings by enunciating their various perceptions, meanings and ways of making sense of the phenomenon of leadership as they have known and experienced it in context. However, given that the process of writing the thesis was the responsibility of the researcher, bias is acknowledged in the findings presented and discussions of the various aspects of leadership explored in the field. One aspect of bias would have arisen out of the researchers ‘identity’, ‘self’ and culture as an African. This, recognition would seem to concur with the argument within qualitative research writers that: *‘researchers bring certain beliefs and philosophical*

*assumptions into research'* (Creswell, 2012:15). However, for this study, the research question, desired knowledge and kind of data underpinning the overall study influenced the adoption of a social constructionist approach (Gray, 2013).

#### **4.1.3 Conviction about social reality**

Besides the above theorising of social reality, the researcher's conviction about the concepts knowledge and reality was central to adopting the social constructionist approach. My perception of reality aligns with the views expressed by Gergen (1999) to the effect that for social phenomena as leadership reality is not divorced from us. In other words, social reality has no external existence independent of what actors make it to be. In this respect, my role as researcher was to construct an impression of the world as I experienced and witnessed it during fieldwork and admittedly influenced by my various experiences, journeys across cultures and past academic trajectories (Ratner, 2008). A profound reflection on this leads me to think for instance that it is our appreciation of leadership that makes one type transformational, another relational and yet another discursive. Within our mental processes as social agents in the academic field, we create these differences, mould them and then they become what we say they are in the different ways in which we make sense of them. However, these realities do not remain out there in their definitive and static forms and states. Rather, from time to time we revisit these socially constructed realities in the form of concepts, theories and accepted framing, make changes, think again and create new realities through our writings, language and constant interpretations. Hence it is argued within subjectivist social sciences that reality is always crowded with uncertainty, ambiguity, contradiction and incomprehensibility, never definitive (Crotty, 1998; Ford, 2006; Rorty, 1991). Like Gergen, I do acknowledge that different kinds of knowledge exist. There is knowledge of the physical world such as stone, trees and buildings which have a determined independent and external existence as created by engineers, architect or builders. This knowledge is however different from knowledge of the social world which is in my view more of collective social thoughts, reflections, constructions and imaginations (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, in researching the phenomena of leadership in a local community context, a constructionist approach tends to offer better opportunities for making sense in an exploratory project such as this one. Hence,

Bolden and Kirk (2009) emphatically recommend interpretivist and constructivist epistemological and ontological worldviews when researching leadership within an African context. In this respect their advice is as follows:

*“In developing an Afrocentric perspective on leadership, we propose that development activities that promote relational, critical and constructionist perspectives on leadership, with an emphasis on dialogue and sharing experience, could be an important means for surfacing new insights and understandings” (Ibid, 20)*

The possibilities offered by constructionist philosophy as expressed in the above quote and my own convictions were the key motivations for the adoption of a social constructionist philosophy as a guide to the study.

#### **4.2 Research methodology and methods:**

The methods decided for the study were informed by the philosophical perspective, research question as well as the research aims and objectives (Bryman, 2008; Robson, 2011). Key elements of the methods employed as elicited below include the adoption of qualitative methods and the use of a variety of data collection devices including; interviews, group discussions, field notes and interpretation of artefacts and symbols. The data were analysed thematically and narratively. The analytical process is presented in tables and thick description (Pratt, 2009).

##### **4.2.1 Research method: Qualitative research**

The study adopted a qualitative research method which is concerned with studies that involve interaction with the subjects and presented in literary form (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). A qualitative research approach was thought to be most appropriate for the study given that empirical data were to be generated from storied accounts, cultural artefacts, cultural activities, historical accounts and discussion. These data being of a literary form, rather than statistical form necessitated qualitative approaches which are thought to provide better opportunities to explore information of a subjective nature (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell 2009; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

An alternative research approach such as the mixed method that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches was considered. However, it was rejected

because of its limitation in depth (Driscoll et al., 2007). Quantitative methods were also considered but were rejected given the incommensurability of the adopted (relativist and anti-foundational) philosophical paradigm (Kuhn, 1982) and the desired data type included in the study which is mainly in literary subjective form. Further, concerns over the accusation that quantitative approaches tend to simplify complex phenomena such as leadership and culture into a small number of variables and factors (Bazely, 2004; Driscoll et al., 2007; Tayeb, 2001) meant such approaches could not meet the research aims and objectives nor answer the research questions.

#### **4.2.2 Approach to fieldwork**

An inductive approach to research was adopted in the data collection and analytical process. In inductive research theories are developed from raw data with the researcher reading the raw data in detail to derive concepts, themes or models through the analysis and interpretation of oral and textual data (Ezzy, 2002). Simply put, inductive research is an approach where the researcher allows theory to emerge from the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Thomas (2003) outlines the purposes of adopting an inductive approach to research as being for the following reasons:

1. To condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format.
2. To establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and
3. To develop of model or theory about the phenomenon under study.

A key advantage of engaging the field inductively was that it afforded the researcher with the possibility to make sense of the underlying deeper meanings of some of the cultural signification and meaning underneath the dances, folklore and traditional repertoires that were observed and which surfaced from the raw data. However, the process of data collection and analysis was not a simply orderly set of actions and processes that were entirely planned ahead. Rather, the process was flexible and emergent, often determined by events in the field. The conditions and circumstances

were responded to in various creative ways - mimicking the notion of *'bricolage'*<sup>11</sup> Kincheloe (2005). The process of bricolage was also employed in gaining access, making adaptations to the prescribed ethical conduct of the university and in getting to know and selecting research participants. For instance, many languages were used in different communities which meant a constant instantaneous change from one language to another. In some places the more commonly employed Pidgin English was used as the main mediating language between the researcher and the participants. In some communities the local languages were employed with intermittent switching in and out into English and Pidgin as was best convenient for participants and the interest of the researcher to capture the local traditional meaning in the local languages.

#### **4.2.3 Research design strategy: Case study**

In order to explore leadership meaning and practices in the two indigenous regions the study adopted a case study approach to research (Yin, 2009). Case study design has been defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon deeply within its real life context (Bryman, 2008; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). Given that two regions were to be explored, a two case design based on the selected regions namely: Cross River' as case '1' and 'Mambilla' as case '2' became the two cases to be explored – identified as regions. The goal was not to compare the two regions. Rather, as an exploratory research within previously unresearched areas the goal was to gain a deeper rather than a holistic understanding of leadership in the two regions only. In this respect, the research field was limited to the twelve main indigenous community council organisations (ICC) and eight local government councils (LGC) within the two regions. Table 4.1 below illustrates the two regions and the communities and local government councils explored.

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<sup>11</sup> Kincheloe, (2005:2) describes the qualitative researcher as a 'bricoleur'. The word 'bricolage' is a French word relating to the act of trying different things without a clear knowledge or mastery of the process and the expectant outcome. The word is usually applied to building or putting things together. Trying to assemble a jigsaw puzzle is a good metaphor to explain the meaning of this word – simply put it means trial and error.

Table 4.1 outline of research field and communities

Case 1: <b><u>Cross River</u></b>	Case 2: <b><u>Mambilla</u></b>
Indigenous community councils	Indigenous community councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Okoyong</li> <li>• Mamfe</li> <li>• Eyumojock</li> <li>• Ikom</li> <li>• Etung</li> <li>• Obubra</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wum</li> <li>• Weh</li> <li>• Essu</li> <li>• Akum</li> <li>• Takum</li> <li>• Ussa</li> </ul>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Okoyong</li> <li>• Mamfe</li> <li>• Eyumojock</li> </ul> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Cameroon</div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wum</li> <li>• Weh</li> <li>• Essu</li> </ul> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Cameroon</div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ikom</li> <li>• Etung</li> <li>• Obubra</li> </ul> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Nigeria</div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takum</li> <li>• Ussa</li> </ul> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Nigeria</div> </div>
<u>LGCs</u>	<u>LGCs</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ikom</li> <li>▪ Mamfe</li> <li>▪ Eyumojock</li> <li>▪ Etung</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wum</li> <li>▪ Takum</li> <li>▪ Essu</li> <li>▪ Ussa</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.4 The context of research field: Indigenous SSA

The context of research is within prototypical indigenous community in west and central Africa. Exploration was limited to the aforementioned parts of Nigeria and Cameroon only and in the specific selected indigenous community councils and local government councils in the two regions of focus. Indigenous communities were considered to be rural clusters of people or tribes in locations that are far away from urban centres in both countries. Indigenous was defined to mean communities of people who live within broadly similar linguistic and cultural circumscriptions. These include groups of villages, clans or tribes situated within a similar geographic location such as Mamfe, Ikom, Kuteb or Aghem. The classification of communities as indigenous and rural in the official documents of both countries served as a reference to identifying communities as rural or indigenous. For the case of communities in Cameroon, documents from the ministry of Territorial Administration (MINATD) were key references. For Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of State affairs and state government information archives served as information sources of reference. Additionally, previous ethnographic studies also served as a guide to identify communities as indigenous and rural (examples of this include: Partridge, 1903 and Ruel 1969) for Cross River and (Zeitlyn and Connell, 2003), for Mambilla region. It is worth noting that in both Cameroon and Nigeria and much as in many other countries in SSA, traditional government (which employs indigenous customary African leadership and organisational frameworks) operate alongside the more

formal local government councils (Owusu-Sarpong, 2003). The formal councils are British colonial-established government institutions. Thus its organisational goals, the structure, objective and approach to leadership tend to be similar to the leadership model that is applicable in British local council authority council. Thus, it is headed by an elected council chairperson. The former - cultural council is more traditional and is headed by a Chief or Fon who is either appointed by the community or through hereditary rule. The size of each community depends on the number and size of its constituent villages or quarters. Table 4.2 below identifies each community and outlines the constituent villages or quarters.

Table 4.2: Communities and the constituent quarters or villages

<b>communities</b>	<b>Villages or quarters</b>
Wum	Naicom, Kosoo, Zongofuh, Zongafe. Zogokra
Weh	Azoh, Osuh, Mbausuh, Keheh, Fefuh, Uwet
Essu	Kendong, Wickah, Uttoh, Kidgeme
Mamfe	Mamfe, Small mamfe, Besongabang, Mile one, Banya, Egbekaw,
Eyumojock	Eyumojock, Ndebaya, Taboh, Kembong, Ossing, Ndekwai, Ewele, Ekok, Afap etc.
Okoyong	Okoyong, stranger quarters, Mission, mile two.
Etung	Ekimaya, Efraya, Agborkim, Nchofang, Etara, Okooroba, Mkpote, Ajassor, Acharum,
Ikom	Ikom central, Ikom village area and environs
Obubra	Obubra, osopong, ofumbongha, ochon, iyamoyong, ababene, apiapum
Akum	Akum, Kpep, Ezong, Birama
Takum	Takum town, Manga, Lafia, Shibung Egbang, Lanke – Lissa
Ussa	Lissam, lubu, patcha, etc

Source: (Eyong) NB. This compilation is only reflective rather than exhaustive.

#### **4.2.5 Data types and units of analysis**

The research was designed to combine organisational research approaches (interviews and discussions) alongside social anthropological approaches (ethnography – observation and interpretation). This combination resulted to what has been referred to as the ‘transdisciplinary’ approach Czarniawska (2012). Ethnography normally requires the researcher to immerse his or herself into the local context by physically engaging in fieldwork in the process which according to (Dewalt and Dewalt, 1998:26) involves:

*“living in the community, taking part in usual and unusual activities, 'hanging out,' and conversing (as different from just interviewing and brief discussions) while*

*consciously observing and ultimately recording what was observed” (Dewalt and Dewalt, 1998: 261).*

Thus, in ethnography the researcher tends to say to the local people something like:

*“I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them” (Spradley, 1979:34).*

The organisational approach involved interviews and discussions – although it must be said that there is a broad overlap between the two perspectives rather than each approach being exclusive to the other. The inspiration to adopt the above transdisciplinary approach was emergent and grew in necessity as the research developed. However, the overarching goal was to gain a richer, deeper and diverse understanding of leadership in context from multiple periscopes. The addition of ethnographic approaches was particularly useful as it has been argued that ethnography offers a ‘useful reflexive lens’ which when combined with discursive approaches enables better ‘description of the processes of analysis and writing of research’ (Pritchard, 2012:144). This was certainly the case in this research as further argued in chapter seven.

A number of considerations influenced the data collection approach and methodical choices. Key to this decision was the type of inquiry and the kinds of data sets (Bryman, Gray, 2013; Robson, 2011). Also determinant was the research aims, objectives and research questions. Additionally, the researcher’s skills and the available resources determined the data types and analytical approaches adopted (Blaikie, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). With regards to the social anthropological data, the interpretivist, humanistic approach to anthropology (Just and Monaghan, 2000) was decided in line with the constructionist perspective adopted for the study. By adopting the more subjective and interpretive anthropological practice the study avoided the often identified short-comings of foundational anthropological research which tends to claim objective and complete knowledge of culture (Monaghan and Just, 2000). Rather, the research took into consideration the views of emerging social anthropologist such as Elizabeth Wolf who argue that:

*“At this post colonialist period we need to be sensitive to the sins of our forefathers”*  
Wolf (1992:125).

Thus, rather than seek objective knowledge which was part of the (sins) or approach of the forefathers of anthropology, this study sought to make sense of leadership within indigenous cultures and traditions in a relative and subjective manner.

#### **4.2.6 My Role as researcher, access and challenges**

The entire research process was dynamic and emergent. Thus, as much as the study takes an inductive approach, there is a fair level of abduction. A common reality was my own shifting identity. At different times in the field I represented and posted multiple identities which I refer to as the different me(s). It follows that my identity was an ever dynamic process in which my personality and identity changed in different sequential waves depending on the kind of activity I was undertaking, the people I was working with and the location. For instance in the Cross River region my role appeared to be that of an auto-ethnographer engaged in an introspective study of the ‘self’ or own cultural practices. In the Mambila region my identity tended to suggest that of an African studying another part of Africa. Thus, there was always the insider-outside interplay from one community, location and activity that always grips the academic home comer (Oriola and Haggerty, 2012). There were times I felt I was no longer the African that I was in terms of saying or doing things in the manner that the local people expressed or did. More generally though, I felt very much at home and understood most of the cultural and traditional interpretations more than (in my view) any foreign researcher would have been able to do so in the space of my short stay in the field. This would seem to support the view that research for Africa by Africans has the best possibility to bring real understanding and change in the way Africa is understood and how it further develops (Rotberg, 2013). At the same time my acquaintance with the field and the local cultural traditions might have blinded me to some of the kinds of information and observation which might have intrigued a Western researcher.

In relation to access to the research site and to participants, it was relatively easy and open. The gatekeepers in each community were mostly welcoming, affable and supportive as long as I respected their traditions and followed their protocols. The

main difficulty I faced in the field was more in relation to the difficult nature of the terrain. With very few roads, bridges and communication infrastructure it was extremely difficult to move from one point to another. This was even more difficult in the communities within the Mambila region. The most difficult challenge was to access the communities around Akum and Birama which are located between the enclaves of the Northwest of Cameroon and the middle belt state of Taraba in Nigeria. In this enclave, some communities seemed completely cut-off from the rest of the two countries. In this difficult terrain, the role of fieldworkers was important in advising how to deal with the local authorities, how to negotiate access and to explain to the local people about the purpose of the research and what their participation in it entails. The role of the four fieldworkers recruited at various times and the way they were recruited is explained.

#### **4.2.7 Role of fieldworkers and access**

Given the difficult nature of the terrain, four fieldworkers - Vivian, Agnes, Stanley and Kenneth - were recruited to help facilitate certain aspects of the project at different times and places in both countries and regions. The key role of the fieldworkers was mainly to negotiate access, arrange for means of transportation and to communicate in the local languages. Agnes was recruited by a member of the researcher's family based on her knowledge of the Nigerian side of the Cross River region. She is a trader and constantly travels across the border into Nigeria for trade in foodstuff and soft drinks. Through her contacts and knowledge of the area across to Nigeria, it was possible to connect to Stanley who is a close friend to her. Upon her recommendation, Stanley who is a photographer and electrician by profession was recruited. Stanley helped to introduce the researcher to the local government chairman of the area who then opened-up further access and later was helpful, in using his car to drive the researcher to different sites.

Vivian is an acquaintance of the researcher in Cameroon. As a native of the Mambila region in Cameroon, she had returned to her village five years ago from the city of Douala where she lived and worked as a school teacher. By asking from the local Presbyterian Church where she worshiped, her mobile telephone number was obtained from a member of the congregation still living in the city. A call was made to her by the researcher and she agreed to help with the research. Her role was to

speak with the local people, explain what the research was about and ask their approval before the researcher met the key deciders. In certain places, she merely accompanied the researcher who did the talking. At another time she helped with planning, making appointments and translating my explanations into the local languages when necessary to do so.

The fourth participant Kenneth was recruited by chance. On a trip from the Cameroonian side to the Nigerian side of the Mambila region by use of motor cycle taxis (the only means of transportation) the road was so bad that passengers had to drop from the bikes and walk on foot for some distance until the road was good enough for the bikes to run with passengers. Kenneth was one of the passengers walking, returning to his village after a visit to a family member in a small town. Through conversation, the researcher explained his mission to Kenneth and requested if he could help as an assistant. It turned out that Kenneth was the head teacher of a local school and quite conversant with the local Kuteb languages on the Nigerian side of the Mambila region. Kenneth was instrumental in seeking and gaining access – especially considering the very difficult terrain and the secluded nature of the region. He was involved in negotiating access, translating meanings and in helping with transportation – particularly across rivers in a very mountainous region. He did great.

All four fieldworkers helped to facilitate access in the various communities in ways that the research achievements would have been impossible without them. In general, gatekeepers and research participants had more trust in the research and for the researcher when a local person who they know quite well and who spoke the local language was involved in the research. The fieldworker negotiated transportation costs, carried the researcher's luggage and equipment, decided on best routes and approaches as well as negotiating crossings between rivers from one community to another. Sometimes this required payments which only the fieldworkers knew the right amounts. Without their assistance, such amounts would have been considerably higher and access would have been less easily available.

More importantly, they helped to educate the researcher about how to observe the local cultures and traditions such as what to bring into the chief's palace, how to gather the community and how to greet the local chiefs and notables of the

communities in their traditional and cultural ways. It follows that having fieldworkers to assist in research in indigenous communities is highly recommended. However, it is advisable, to recruit persons who are trustworthy based on recommendation from the local authorities and noble men. Where one has family or acquaintances in the region, they could also suggest credible and trustworthy assistants. This way, the fieldworkers take responsibility and seek to keep their good relationship with the local families who have recommended them. The four fieldworkers were paid a token fee at the researcher's discretion.

### **4.3 Rationale for Credibility, Consistency and Rigor**

There has been a growing concern about the quality of qualitative research amongst scholars in the academic research fields of organisational studies and social sciences more generally (Symon and Cassell, 2012; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Tracy, 2010). Major critiques on qualitative methods of inquiry are that studies are too general, unreliable and often void of the required quality standards in terms of scrutiny (Bryman, 2004). Unlike in quantitative traditions where the credibility of research work depends mostly on the appropriate use of research instruments or tools, in qualitative research, credibility depends to a large extent on the ability of the researcher to maintain consistency and overall good research practice (Robson, 2011; Symon and Cassell, 2012). Hence (Patton, 2002:14) argues that;

*“In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary instrument and the credibility of qualitative methods, hinges to a great extent on the skills, competence and rigor of the person conducting the field work”*

In consideration of the human involvement of qualitative research as highlighted in the above quote, a number of criteria have been identified or suggested by scholars as constituting demonstration of good practice and acceptable research processes. The most popular benchmarks of good quality qualitative research include such suggestion of Easterby-Smith et al. (2008:422) where it is contended that credible qualitative research should demonstrate the following criteria:

- Show evidence of reflective practice,
- Demonstrate knowledge of existing research in the area,
- Show discipline in practice,
- Provide enough evidence to support views and

- Clearly articulate the research contribution.

Similarly, some researchers have suggested that good qualitative research should contribute to theory, be well written and should provide a clear description of the methods employed and make sure these were appropriately utilised (Pratt, 2008; Savall et al., 2008). For particular case of case study designs it has been argued that the extent to which the researcher is able to document and keep records determines the level of credibility (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, Tracy (2010) proposes eight key markers of quality in qualitative research as including: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. In attempting to meet the above criteria Denzin and Lincoln, (2005) and Patton (2002) have called for qualitative researchers to be mindful of the cultural and environmental context differences that often exist in different kinds of research and alternative socio-cultural context in which research is conducted. Within this research every effort was deployed meet the above criteria throughout the research process as explained below.

#### **4.3.1 Credibility**

The study achieved credibility by means of engaging the entire research process in a careful, meticulous and inclusive manner. The researcher's origin from the Cross River region meant that the study benefitted from good knowledge of the local customs and traditions. This insider status allowed for a deeper immersion into the communities in ways than informed deeper meanings through increased participant confidence and openness. A key benefits of this confidence include disclosures in aspects of indigenous community leadership and day to day life including: the prevalence of witchcraft and discourses around indigenous cults and meanings of rituals that participants in these kind of close cultural clusters often find uneasy to share with foreigners. The examples of the ethnographies of such as (Partridge, 1905) and (Ruel, 1960) are clear instances of such reticence where the local people refused to discuss the secrets of the Ekpe cult in Cross River. The insider status of the researcher (Chapman and Gajewska-De, 2004) was relevant for the credibility of the study. This would seem to concur with the argument that researchers operating in their national, linguistic and socio-cultural context of origin are more able to gain better understanding and far-reaching access and closeness with participants (Karra

and Phillips, 2008). In the case of this study the insider status minimised communication barrier, cultural dis-connect and participant scepticism which are key challenges faced by foreign social anthropologists exploring indigenous cultures (Ruel, 1969; Monaghan and Just, 2002; Wolf, 1992).

Another way in which credibility was achieved in the present research was through the adoption of a three stage approach to fieldwork. The process involved three separate visits to the field at various times and for different purposes to ensure that the information gathered was checked and confirmed by participants to achieve credibility and dependability. In this respect, empirical research in the field evolved in three stages. First, there was a two week pilot study, followed by a continuous three months main fieldwork engagement with the field for data collection and simultaneous analysis. These two visits were followed by a third visit lasting for two weeks with the aim of verification, clarification on some points and confirmation of the written draft with participants.

In terms of the data collection process, each event was meticulously completed and handled in order to limit the possibility of errors and omissions. In this respect, fieldnotes were written in detail, photographs taken and on-the-field analyses instantly completed and orderly updated on a daily basis. In this process reflective practice was consistently employed throughout the research process. This meant that there was constant improvement and checking to make sure that methods are consistently applied and dependable.

More importantly, the findings were presented, debated and discussed in a number of peer reviewed academic conferences. First, the results of the pilot study exploring leadership within the Ekpe institution in Cross River region was subject of a conference publication and presentation (Eyong, 2012) at the Developing Leadership Capacity Conference at the University of Exeter in June 2012. During this presentation some of the preliminary observations and ideas that were developing from the field were discussed and sharpened by more experienced academics. The ideas generated in that conference built into some of the earlier research questions and the eventual methodologies employed. The findings, research method and fieldwork challenges also led to a publication at and presentation (Eyong, 2013) at the second Researchers in Development (RidNET) conference University of Leeds in

2013. Here the practical aspects of researching the African context and the ethical challenges involve in the context and how these challenges were addressed presented debated and critiqued with a range of academics. Some of the issues highlighted and questions raised were discussed with participants in the subsequent third phase of fieldwork. After the third visit to the research field and subsequent analysis, the main findings, contribution and implication of the overall study was the subject of a story told at a joint PDW (Eyong, 2014) at the Academy of Management in Philadelphia, USA in August 2014. Finally, the complete written work was read, reviewed and discussed with an experienced researcher from Nigeria who has conducted research into leadership in Africa and published. This added to the continuous examination of the supervisor at the University of Leeds. All of these processes helped to improve the credibility of the study but more importantly the manner in which the actual research process was conducted was critical in ensuring a high degree of consistency, rigor and dependability.

#### **4.3.2 Consistency, rigor and dependability**

It is argued within qualitative research that the qualities of consistency, rigor and dependability depend on the degree of congruence maintained in the application of research methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It follows that the manner in which methods are applied in the course of data collection, analysis in reporting findings is of the most importance when determining quality and dependability of qualitative research (Smiith and Hodkinson, 2005) Denzin and Lincoln (2005:917). In a recent version of his book on qualitative research Silverman (2015) argues that consistency, rigor and coherence are mainly achieved through contextual sensitivity and meticulous research process. However, (Flick, 2009:26) argues that “errors and flaws may result from interpretation and transcription”. This study took account of the above directives and consideration and maintained consistency, rigor and coherence during the collection, analysis and reporting of empirical data through various revisions and constant checking that the issues were comprehensively covered and that these were well analysed and confirmed. Given that the study included many data types, the main challenge was to maintain a consistent quality standard for interviews and discussions. In this regard, a number of measures were taken to achieve consistency, rigor and dependability:

- Interviews and discussions were conducted in convenient venues where participants felt comfortable and free enough to express themselves. Although the interviews and discussions were unstructured, the use of prompt or aide-mémoire questions (Bryman, 2008) and follow-on questions helped to maintain consistency in questioning and in the issues covered. A copy of the prompt questions used is presented in appendix C.
- In line with social constructionist and discursive approaches the data collected were shared with colleagues, mentors and participants not as a means of seeking objective outcomes but rather as a continuous social construction process of knowledge. Further dependability was achieved by means of a third visit to the research field in April 2014 whereby the findings were shared with participants and clarification sought on a number of points. In this final process of analysis participants suggested adjustments and changes thus meeting the condition of good qualitative practice (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).
- The analytical process was continuous throughout the study with both the recorded data and transcribed data simultaneously used throughout the analytical process. This meant that at no point was there disconnection between the voices of participants in the field and the transcribed data. The above actions and process led to a dependable, rigorous and consistent outcome.

#### **4.3.3 Purposive sampling**

Participants and locations for the study were selected relative to the purpose of the study. For this reason the research adopted a purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling method involves the selection of 'typical locations' and 'research participants' who may have experienced the phenomenon to be explored or who are part of the area or group to be researched (Ezzy, 2013; Patton, 2005; Robson, 2011). Hence, the participants selected to take part in the study were individuals living in the selected communities who have good knowledge of the local culture and traditions and who have experienced or acted in indigenous leadership situations in those communities. A total number of 76 participants formally took part in the study according to the schedule and locations illustrated in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Communities, research activity and participants

Community	Date	Interview	Group discussion
		Number of participants	Number of participants
Okoyong	10 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> June	-	10 (ICC)
Mamfe	11 <sup>th</sup> June/17 <sup>th</sup> July	2 (LGC: 1, ICC: 1)	-
Etung	19 <sup>th</sup> June	2 (LGC: 1, ICC: 1)	8 (LGC)
Ikom	20 <sup>th</sup> June	1 (LGC only)	10 (LGC)
Obubra	24 <sup>th</sup> June	1 (ICC)	-
Eyumojoock	25 <sup>th</sup> June	1 (ICC)	-
Wum	29 <sup>th</sup> June	2 (LGC:1, ICC 1)	8 (ICC)
Esu	30 <sup>th</sup> June	1	
Weh	1 <sup>st</sup> & 20 <sup>th</sup> July	1 (ICC)	10
Takum	4 <sup>th</sup> July	1 (LGC)	8 (LGC)
Ussa	5 <sup>th</sup> July	1 (LGC)	8 (LGC)
Akum	7 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> July	1 (ICC)	
	Total: 76	14	62

#### 4.3.4 Sampling of councils

The focus of the research being that of exploring leadership in rural indigenous communities meant that only communities in the two regions which were identified as rural were included. Hence, most of the communities selected for exploration – were locations in the rural areas and with many years of occupancy in their locations. In choosing the regions and communities, the researcher’s knowledge of the tribes in the regions and ethnographic studies were relied upon. The above consideration led to the selection of twelve communities in the two regions as identified in table 4.3 above.

#### 4.3.5 Ethical practice

Any research involving human participants is bound to be faced with ethical concerns and researchers need to exhibit acceptable ethical behaviours (BERA, 2011). To this extent, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Leeds ethics committee prior to embarking on field work (see appendix B). The process of obtaining ethical clearance involved several revised submissions with the researcher having to present a consent form explaining the process of educating participants about the research and making sure that they fully understood the purpose of the

research and freely consenting to take part as participants. Another important aspect of the ethical approval process was for the researcher to guarantee anonymity, confidentiality and strict data protection practice in accordance with the ethical guidelines and data protection practice required for research conducted in the context of the UK. Within the recommended practice, one way of demonstrating participant consent was for the participants to tick a number of boxes to indicate that they fully understood the various aspects the purpose of the study, the conditions of participation and their right of stoppage at any stage. However, as articulated below some of the prescriptions of the University's ethical guidelines could not be applied in exactly the same manner as approved due to some contextual exigencies.

The approval thus obtained, every effort was made throughout the research process to maintain good ethical practice recommended by the British Social Association (BSA, 2002), the Social Research Association (SRA, 2003) and British Educational Research Association guidelines (BERA, 2011). In particular as much as possible the researcher avoided any action or behaviour which could cause harm to any of the participants before, during and after the research. Also, the researcher sought and dully obtained the voluntary informed consent of participants before their involvement in interviews and group discussions in accordance with the above guidelines. In this process, the purpose of the research, role of participants and their right of withdrawal were well explained, understood and agreed by participants. Thus, the ethical practice of the University of Leeds was the overriding code of ethical practice for the research. No specific ethical guideline was sought in Nigeria or Cameroon for research in an indigenous community in both countries. However, local cultures and traditions and the conditions and context of the communities gave rise to tensions between what could be seen as an imposed Western view of ethical conduct and what is considered to be acceptable in an indigenous African context. Thus, the researcher was faced with a number of challenges about how to deal with the local cultural and traditional customs and the recommended ethical guidelines from the University of Leeds. One of such difficulties was how to deal with participants who could not read or write. For these cases, the researcher was inevitably required to deviate from the recommended practice. For instance, instead of such illiterate participants ticking boxes and signing the consent form, the researcher read out the content from the forms and sought verbal permission from

the participant and ticked the box himself. Another deviation relates to the requirement for anonymity and confidentiality. It emerged in practice in the field that the identity of and discussions of participants in one-to-one interviews could not be guaranteed considering that in the context of the local culture and traditions, knowledge is not perceived as something that is possessed or known by one individual. Thus, within the local traditional councils, participants for one-to-one interviews either spontaneously invited other persons to join in the interview or other uninvited persons joined the conversation along the way. Sometimes, these uninvited persons took over and became to main speakers. Therefore, it is common practice to begin an interview with one person and end with a totally new participant who was not previously contacted. Due to this contextual reality the conditions of anonymity, confidentiality and privacy could not be respected in the traditional councils.

However, the researcher maintained the privacy of participants by not personally revealing the names of those interviewed or what was said during these discussions with any third parties. Also, due regard was taken to protect the data gathered on audio records and stored in a pass-locked computer accessible only by the researcher.

A striking observation in relation to ethical practice is that the local people care very less about privacy, consent and anonymity which are the primary concerns highlighted in the Leeds University Ethical Guidelines. What was of the most importance and priority in the culture and traditions of the communities was much more about how the researcher engages with the local people. The key ethical practice for these people was more about greeting an elder in the right way showing the necessary respect such as bending to salute and shaking hands with both hands in a subdued posture. Also important was about where the researcher sits in a community gathering and the traditional items such as kola nut which is a necessity to bring along to offer the community before explaining the object of the visit to the community. These unwritten aspects of indigenous ethical practice and other such as where you live how you communicate and so were fundamental. Thus, rather than privacy and confidentiality, demonstrating respect and recognition of the local customs, traditions and authorities is regarded as a more important ethical practice than obtaining consent, protecting data protection or maintaining the privacy of

participants. Indeed in line with the communal customs of the local people, it is considered more ethical for interviews to be conducted openly rather than privately. Any private engagement between the researcher and one individual participant only is perceived as a conspiracy and might lead to expressions of concerns by the local people. The accepted cultural ethic in context is that interviews and discussions be open so that anyone interested to listen to what is being said should be allowed to do so. In fact it is appreciated when there is another person present to correct claims that may be made by one participant by adding to the discussions when points have not been clearly articulated about the culture. These contextual contingencies meant that the researcher had to make discretionary decisions when it was necessary to do so rather than strictly adhere to the approved ethical guidelines from the University of Leeds.

This experience in the field in Africa would suggest that the general provisions of the above ethical guidelines calling for researches to use their discretion (BERA, 2011; BSA, 2002 and SRA, 2003) might have to be accorded more relevance and emphasised in these kinds of context rather than the often elevated conditions of anonymity, confidentiality, consent and data protection. Also, perhaps greater consideration needs to be given to contextual issues given that in certain contexts it is the contextual reality rather than the ethical guideline that determines how research should be conducted. In this respect, the researcher employed discretion to maintain integrity, respect of the local customs and to exhibit professionalism at all times. First the researcher tried to learn about the local cultures and traditions in order not to infringe on local conventions. Based on this consideration, permission was always sought when taking photographs of artefacts and other images in the field. A consequence arising from the respect shown to the local people and their institutions was the decision not to include any photographs with human faces on them in the thesis. Therefore, although the research conformed to the BSA, SRA and BERA ethical guidelines (BSA, 2002; BERA, 2011) most of which is adopted by the University of Leeds ethical guidelines, relevant contextual deviations were made for certain aspects in order to address local cultural, environmental, social and traditional exigencies. Future researchers in these and similar non-Western settings need to be advised to consider the local culture and traditions more seriously. It is important to learn how to engage with the mundane issues highlighted above in

order to facilitate access, develop trust and gain acceptance within the community rather than rely solely on the ethical guidelines designed which are often more suitable for research in the Western context.

#### **4.4 Data collection strategy: Organisational Perspective**

As indicated earlier the study was conceptualised to draw on Management and organisational studies and anthropological research approaches. Hence, two main data types representing each tradition formed part of the overall data collection strategy. This included interviews and group discussions for organisational research approaches and ethnographic methods (observation, field notes, interpretation of artefacts and visual/symbols) for social anthropology as elicited below.

##### **4.4.1 Group discussions**

The main use of group discussion is to gain collective meaning or constructions of social phenomena (Bryman, 2008). In this research group discussions provided collective insight into the different meanings and constructions of leadership in context. Group discussions took the form of a 'group conversation' in which between eight to twelve persons sat together to explore and talk about their cultural understanding of leadership and their experiences as leaders, followers or member of the community. A total of ten group discussions were conducted, eight of which were formal and two informal. The conversations followed the African customary story-telling tradition where families sit together under a tree round a fire to tell tales and pass-on knowledge. The stories explore various aspects of the culture and history of the people as well as reflect on the mythologies of the community and the exploits of historical community leaders, legends, and heroes. Through these stories deeper meanings of leadership are shared. A key aspect of most of the discussions was the absence of a moderator to coordinate discussions. Quite often participants intervened spontaneously and intuitively as they would normally do so in their traditional meetings. Although the researcher intermittently intervened during the discussions, most of the discussions flowed naturally without much interruption. This way a normal conversation environment was maintained as much as possible. This process is consistent with the local culture. Thus it avoided the difficulties of distortion and change from the normal custom and ways of passing information

(Spradley, 1979). This way, participants felt free enough to express themselves. By employing an informal approach it was possible to plunge into deeper meanings in a natural manner under normal cultural circumstances. This way the researcher's presence became less influential in influencing the behaviour change of participants (Mitchell and Jolley, 2012).

#### **4.4.2 Unstructured interview**

Unstructured interviews provide a means of attaining deeper levels of reflection and thought from individual participants (Bryman, 2008; Gray, 2013; Robson, 2011). The interviews conducted for the research were very informal. This informal approach is based on the argument that the freedom enjoyed by interviewees in informal unstructured interviews enables the interviewer to tap into the deeper personal experiences (Gray, 2013; Klenke, 2008; Robson, 2011). As in unstructured interviewing, no a priori questions were set. Rather, conversation developed from what participants articulated. Thus, follow-on questions were mostly used to explore participants' thoughts rather than direct questions. Although prompt questions were used, this was mainly for the purpose of re-focusing the discussions where participants excessively strayed away from leadership into say national politics or football.

#### **4.5 Social Anthropological approaches**

An important aspect of the social anthropological research approach was the ethnographic method employed in the collection and analysis of data. Ethnographic research necessitated the researcher to live amongst the local people in all the two regions for a total period of two months. Ethnographers maintain that in order to understand what people do or think in indigenous communities it is best to closely interact with them for an extended period of time and experience their daily lives (Monaghan and Just, 2000). For this reason, the researcher lived in the communities for a combined period of over three months. The experience of living in the local communities enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of cultural norms and values and as well as local constructions of leadership in much deeper ways. Living amongst the local people also built the confidence to discuss issues about their culture, traditional practices and belief systems. Furthermore, it mitigated the

prevailing power asymmetry that existed between researcher and participants from the start which is often problematic in anthropological research (Wolf, 1992).

#### **4.5.1 Observations, artefacts and fieldnotes**

Ethnographic data were generated through interpretation of visual symbols, artefacts, notes and observation of traditional practices during rehearsals of historical cultural ceremonies. Observations focused around traditional and cultural practices within the local traditional council activities and leadership in practice. Key areas of interest in leadership practice were events such as celebration of deaths, council meetings workings and general social and cultural activities in the communities. Some of these events were witnessed while others were covered in narratives. Artefacts were explored and the interpretation of these came from the local people in various shrines, at the homes of leaders and elders and at the community places. The knowledge gathered was recorded as fieldnotes, oral recoding in tapes and also internalised by the researcher (Wolf, 1992).

#### **4.5.2 Analysis of the data**

The general process of analysis followed recommendations for good qualitative research including the works of: Ford (2006), Gephardt (2004), Golden-Biddle & Locke (2007), Pratt (2009) and Van Maanen (1979). A mixed qualitative analytical approach involving narrative analytical approaches (NA) and thematic approaches (TA) was utilised to analyse the data. Thematic approaches enabled a holistic sense making of leadership in context while the narrative data ensured that individual and stand-alone stories were not simply abandoned but taken into account as well in the overall thesis. Thematic analysis also enabled the integration of data generated discursively as well as the ethnographic data.

#### **4.5.3 Narrative Analysis (NA)**

Narrative analytical approaches focused in the meaning and linguistic forms of stories that people tell about their lives or events around them (Maitlis, 2012). 'Narrative' refers to: *"a kind of organisational scheme expressed in story form...a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experiences"* (Taylor, 2007:13). However, narrative analysis is approached from multiple dimensions. This study employed the most common form of narrative analysis which

incorporates thematic, structural and dialogic/performative approaches (Maitlis, 2012). The actual process of narrative analysis followed the recommendation by Petersen (2004) as follows:

Step1: Listening, transcribing and reading of the full interview texts several times within an extended time frame from August 2013 to March 2014. This process of reading and listening to the original raw data remained an on-going practice throughout the analytical process to avoid disconnection from the research field (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). The transcription made the data to be easily accessible and manageable. Transcription also enabled the extraction of similar and distinct parts/passages as well as the retrieval of 'power' and 'proof quotes' from participant discussions (Pratt, 2009). In the process of reading, recurrent passages or chunks explaining the same issues were manually coded by means of a different font colour and background in Microsoft word (Hahn, 2008).

Step 2: The second step was to reduce or delete repeating researcher/interviewer questions, interventions and comments from the full transcribed interview script and to condense and delete similar responses from participants. This way the main expressions of participants and the questions of the researcher become more visible and manageable.

Step 3: In step three some words, phrases or passages that detract or distort the sense of the key ideas issues were reduced and taken out from of the transcribed data.

Step 4: In the fourth step the reduced data showing clear participant input in the text were thoroughly examined to construct meaning and piece together some of the related discourses.

Step 5: At the fifth step, the process of reduction engaged in step three and four were repeated several times until satisfied that the key ideas and narratives have been retained.

Step 6: Identifying fragments of constituent themes (sub-plots) from the emerging ideas, meanings and construction.

Step 7: The related parts were then put together to create coherent core and independent stories.

Step 8: This was an additional step to ensure credibility and dependability. It involves a return to some key participants in the field in April 2014 to confirm the analysis and findings as written. This confirmation, verification and cross-checking process led to minor modifications and corrections to ensure that the research outcome reflected at best as possible the views, observations, themes and constructions of leadership in context.

#### **4.5.4 Analysis of Ethnography**

The general opinion in anthropological circles remains that problems in ethnology or social anthropology are best studied through the application of humanistic methods of living and sharing with people in their local community. It is asserted that current qualitative social anthropologists employ much similar approaches in studying organisations as do critical organisational researchers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2014; Symon and Cassell, 2012). However, the goal of anthropological research is unlike organisational research which is predominantly to find out how things work, improve and become more successful (Hatch, 2012). Anthropological perspective seeks to make sense of the cultural and traditional behaviours and processes of a people with the prime goal of illuminating, informing and establishing differences without the desire to seek problems or solutions – just to know (Monaghan, 2000; Wolf, 1992). Therefore, although one might draw from the same discursive data, the goal of the analysis from an anthropological perspective is different from analysis from the organisational perspective. In this research each perspective sought to achieve peculiar understanding and knowledge relative to the particular lens or approach engaged.

#### **4.5.5 Thematic Analysis (TA)**

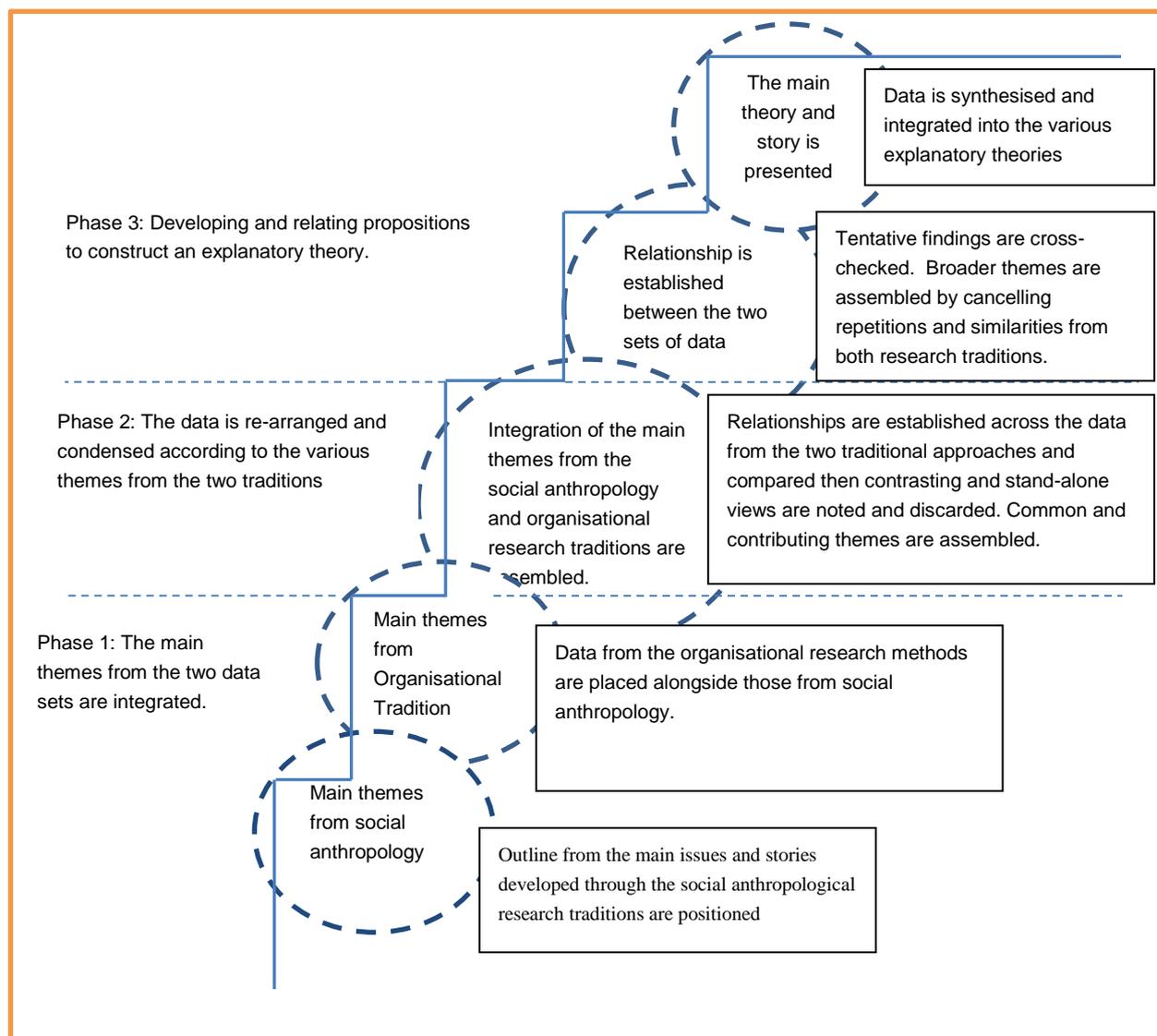
As indicated above, thematic analytical approaches were utilised along-side narrative approaches at different stages of the study. Unlike narrative approaches that seek to identify individual ideas thoughts or experiences, thematic analysis is concerned with identifying common themes across various data sets in order to construct an integrated theory (Maitlis, 2012). Therefore, to construct a fairly

representative theory of leadership in the indigenous communities studied, thematic and narrative analytical approaches were complementarily utilised. This way it was possible to capture the varied and diverse discourses and report them both separately and at the same time also build a representative concept of leadership in context by integrating emerging themes from the overall combined data.

### 1. *Thematic analysis*

The thematic analytical process followed a model adapted from involved three faces. The first face consisted of identifying similar ideas from the various data sets, the second consisted of inter-relating common findings and the third was more about integrating the overall findings of the research to construct themes, headings and a representative narrative of theory of leadership in context. Fig. 4.1 below illustrates the three phases of thematic analysis and elucidates the various activities or actions involved in each phase. The model begins with those activities explained above for narrative analyses and builds into thematic integration process as outlined and illustrated in Fig. 4.1 below.

Fig 4.1 Process of thematic analysis and integration



## 2. Process of thematic harmonisation

### Phase 1: Listening and transcription of data

The first stage of the analysis followed involved several readings and eventual transcription of the oral recordings and fieldnotes from observation. In this process reoccurring meanings, phrases, paragraphs and discourses and summaries were identified and extracted to begin the process of theme formation.

### Phase 2: *Re-arrangement and reduction of data*

In the second phase of the analytical process, the appended chunks of recurring passages, views, expression and interpretations which had been put together were reduced by cancelling out repetitions, duplications and similar views. Some portions were re-examined in the course of which some expressions which were found not to match a corresponding information or explanation were restricted to the particular perspective from where it emerged. This evolved into three types of information, the social anthropological, the organisational and findings that is common to both approaches. The resultant data was a set of synthesised abstract statements and phrases. These abstract sentences were further examined and developed into themes relative to the meanings they brought. After this process, the emergent themes became, clearer in what could be considered as a process of moving from open to axial coding as commonly employed in grounded theory (Clayman and Gill, 2004; Holton, 2007; Strauss and Corbin, 1994) .

### Phase 3: Integration of themes into headings

In the third and final phase the themes were integrated to form headings. Some of the headings matched existing topics in leadership literature while some were entirely new. Each heading stood apart but together the various headings contributed towards making sense of leadership in context. However, the process was carefully handled as much as was possible, there may have been some limitations in the process of data collection, application of methods or during data analysis as further examined below.

## **4.6 Limitation of the research method**

Although the selection of methods, process of data collection and analysis were carefully decided and engaged with, there may have been some short-comings. One possible issue is perhaps that of language. Pidgin English and the English language were used at various sites. In some communities not all the participants were fluent enough though they did get their points across. Perhaps their participation would have been different if they were fluent in English. Also, where the local Pidgin English was used, the researcher had to translate this to English. It is possible that in the course of translation certain words or expressions may have been understood or translated differently. However, a third visit to the research field to discuss the

findings mitigated the prevalence of such translational or interpretational errors. Further, as an exploratory research that intended to set the foundation for future studies in indigenous African leadership, the use of multiple data sets and the inclusion of up to twelve communities in two regions may have curtailed the extent of depth and detail that could have been reached had the focus been on one community only. It is therefore recommended that future research should focus in one or two communities for a more detailed sense making of leadership in context. Finally, the methods and processes were applied within the means, skills and time allowed for the study. Perhaps a much longer engagement with the field and the application of other methods would have produced different outcomes. Therefore, it is also recommended that future research should engage with communities much longer than the present one was able to do so.

#### **4.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter has articulated the choices made in collecting, analysing and presenting the data. Central to these choices is the choice of qualitative research approaches and the adoption of the constructionist perspective. It is clear from the social interaction process in which the researcher co-constructed meanings and engaged in collective social activities in the communities in the process of data collection and exploration that an active process of social construction was maintained. The chapter also informs that an inductive approach to research was followed in which the findings mainly result from the data with interviewing, group discussion and observation identified as key methods through which the empirical data was generated. From the chapter it is clear that there were no disruptions were encountered during fieldwork. Access to participants was easily granted by gatekeepers and communities were supportive. The chapter has also elucidated on the various actions and processes taken to ensure credibility, consistency and acceptable ethical practice. Finally, the chapter has explicated how thematic and narrative analytical approaches were utilised to analyse data and integrate common findings. The next two chapters will present findings from each of the two analytical perspectives.

## Chapter five: Findings: Social anthropology

*“Africa is witnessing a resurgence of interest in leadership rooted in indigenous values, yet much of the empirical research in this context has been conducted by Western researchers, through Western paradigms, for consumption by Western audiences....through a more inductive appreciation of what Africans themselves say about leadership we believe that a richer and more contextually sensitive account is possible” (Bolden and Kirk, 2009:80)*

Chapter four articulated the philosophical perspective, the research methods, data collection approaches and the processes of data analysis adopted. This chapter is one of two presenting the findings resulting from the analytical process. The present chapter explores the findings that emerged more from the social anthropological analytical lens, while the next (chapter 6) will focus on findings emerging more from the organisational research perspective focusing in LGCs. Discussions of the various issues, theories and academic debates that arise from the two findings will be explored in chapter seven.

Given the focus of the social anthropological research in traditional local councils, the findings presented in this chapter reflect leadership from the local indigenous cultural traditional councils of focus (see table 4.1, chapter four). In order to make sense of the manner in which leadership is constructed in such a culturally defined organisational framework, the research adopted a micro-ethnographic<sup>12</sup> anthropological approach. In this process the researcher actually lived in some of the communities in line with ethnographic research practice (Dewalt and Dewalt, 1998). This active engagement with the traditions of the local people enabled a deeper understanding of the customs, traditions and culture of the local people (Iliffe et al., 2009). This understanding was further enhanced by the researcher’s experience as

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<sup>12</sup> Ethnographic research in which the researcher lives within the local community for a short rather than a long time to conduct anthropological research for such purposes as necessary for educational and other purposes – explained in Btyman, A. (2008) Social Research Methods, London: Sage

a native of Cross River region - one of two indigenous regions explored in Cameroon and Nigeria. Such personal intimacy to the research field added an auto-ethnographic dimension to the study, thus complementing the ethnographic research to evidence the social anthropological dimension to the thesis (Okely, 2012; Watson, 1987; Wolf, 1992). It is also stressed that the term Africa is used in relation to the geographic location of the research site rather than claiming to generalise the findings as the African continent is not homogenous. Thus, whilst reference is constantly made to Africa, the focus remains within the two regions studied.

This chapter is structured into four main themes with corresponding sub-themes. Four first order themes are developed within this chapter including:

1. Insight into indigenous leadership
2. Symbolism and artefacts associated with leadership
3. Rituals, myths and stories around leadership practices
4. Historical belief and philosophies on leadership.

### **5.1 Insight into indigenous leadership**

A general observation in both regions was the perception that the phenomenon of leadership in these communities embodies various activities, practices, and discourses. Also, fundamentally, the concept evokes multiple sensitivities including emotional engagement some of which are inspired by symbols and other items within the natural physical environment of the regions and communities. Before delving into the key findings from the fieldwork, it is worthwhile to present a thick description of the physical environment of the research field and the cultural traditional behaviours of the local people. This will construct a sense of presence in a prototypical village community as it is often recommended in anthropological research practice (Geertz, 1973).

Join my journeys into the research field. The local villages are very remote and completely different from the busy and bustling cities of Douala in Cameroon and Calabar in Nigeria. The houses are constructed of baked red clay upon which thatch roofs are mounted. It has rained just after noon – the first rains after five months of intense heat from the slowly ending dry season (October to December). The thatched roof of a nearby house (a local bar) has not been prepared and proofed

against the rainy season. As it rains a few drops of rain come through the roof forcing us to shift our sitting position in order to avoid the worst of the rain drops. The villages in the Cross River region are mainly small clusters of houses on both sides of a main central dusty street running through the length of the village. In the Mambila region, there is a central square – often the market or community centre from where many roads connect into the various quarters. I have just spent a night at the village of Okoyong. The night was very noisy. The noise came from the hoot and tu-whit tu-whooh sound of a huge number of owls and the tweets, shrieks and quacks of hundreds – perhaps thousands of nocturnal birds and wildlife. The enormous volume of sound seemed to suggest that these nightly creatures were enjoying the twelve hours of thick darkness offered in these kinds of localities. From near and far the nocturnal activities generated a cacophony of sound that made it difficult to catch any sleep on the less than comfortable wooden bed provided by my host – a distant relative. The night is followed by a stream of morning visits and close scrutiny by almost everyone in the community seeking to exchange their morning greetings. I hear a constant commotion of greetings *neyi*, response: *ehhh neyi-nkwoh* from near and far each time a person meets another for the first time after the night. I receive many greetings and visits from the nearest neighbours enquiring how I slept. I feel a deep sense of concern for one another and inter-connectedness demonstrating a true sense of community. Soon I find a group of young men lined up along the road for community work on this Sunday morning planning to clear the road to the village spring, the main source of drinking water supply. Later that afternoon, I take part in the local council meeting, I am asked to discuss my project and the reason for my presence in their midst. Speaking the local language makes me wholly accepted. Nevertheless, I sensed a hint of suspicion by some elders as I could see an old man whispering something into the ears of another. I immediately suspected they were sceptical about the motives for my visit. There was the suspicion that I could be investigating their Chief's attitude. The repeated tendency of members of the local council to wriggle away from my gaze suggested to me that I had to do something. Understanding this facial expression from my time as a young child in my village, I decoded the wriggles and looks and ordered a carton of twenty bottles of lager and twenty litres of the local palm wine. Once these items were presented, I rose to salute the assembly in the local Ekpe tradition – *debueh* – *wahh* the people responded. I repeated the salutation *debueh* and for the second time the people

responded *wahh*. The salutation built support and favour amongst the men who sat in the inner chamber of the house and the women who sat outside of the main sitting area. Then I rose again to present what I had for the community and to appreciate their warm and kind hospitality. I then went on to explain my project again and to reassure them that I was indeed trying to learn about their tradition in a good way so as to explain this tradition to others who would like to know about how they practice leadership in their culture.

The above scenario presents a flavour of my experiences and encounters in the field. Other visits were pretty much similar with only minor variations especially so for communities within the Mambila. However, in communities within Mambila region the vegetation was quite different from what I observed in communities in Cross River region. For instance the fields were mainly grassland with corn farms lining streets, compounds and almost everywhere unlike the dense forests and cocoa plantations I found in communities within the Cross River region. Also, rather than meet with the community to explain the reason for my visits as was the case in Cross River, in communities within Mambila region my plans to conduct research in the community was mainly agreed with the village head. Once I approached each community in the Mambila, I was immediately directed to the chief's palace. It was after I had explained and agreed with the Chief and presented any pleasantries that he would later inform the other members of the traditional council. A prototypical palace of the chief has an array of internal décor, most of which as medicines. I sitting am in the palace of one of the local chiefs in a community in Mambila region. On my right there are bags or concoctions of medicines in leaves of plants as well as statuettes of animals in wooden and bronze carvings. I am told these serve to protect the chief and the entire community. In front on the chief is freshly tapped bamboo wine from which I and other visitors are served by the chief from a special cup made out of bull horn. It is within this snapshot that the social anthropological research is engaged. In order to explore the different ways in which leadership is conceptualised in this context, this section is structured into four second order or sub-themes namely:

- Definitions of leadership,
- Leadership in the local languages,
- Structure and decision-making

- Leadership doing
- Other cultural aspects of leadership

### 5.1.1 Definitions of Leadership

Leadership in the communities in the communities is generally perceived as a means through which the local people maintain social coherence, social order while ensuring that the hegemonic traditional norms and values and way of life are preserved. Thus, taking up leadership emerges as a humble and dedicated devotion to serving one's community and ensuring the well-being of everyone in the community. However, given the different needs and concerns of communities in each of the two regions, divergent narratives define leadership meaning in each community. Also, various actions characterise leadership in action. For instance participant (WEI1) from Weh community, defined leadership as:

*"A devotional, and a dedicated and emotional ability that a chosen person or an opportuned person needs in order to enhance the well-being of and joyful moments of the subjects ... Somebody who is submissive, somebody who listens and somebody who is patient and devotional - somebody who has opted to be a dedicated person to the community"*

Another participant (ESI1) from Esu community described the ideal leader saying:

*"A leader is the man whom everyone in the tribe looks up to, in times of complaints...a man that is friendly with everybody, a man who admits even mad people, even thieves...a leader is not supposed to discriminate among the people"*

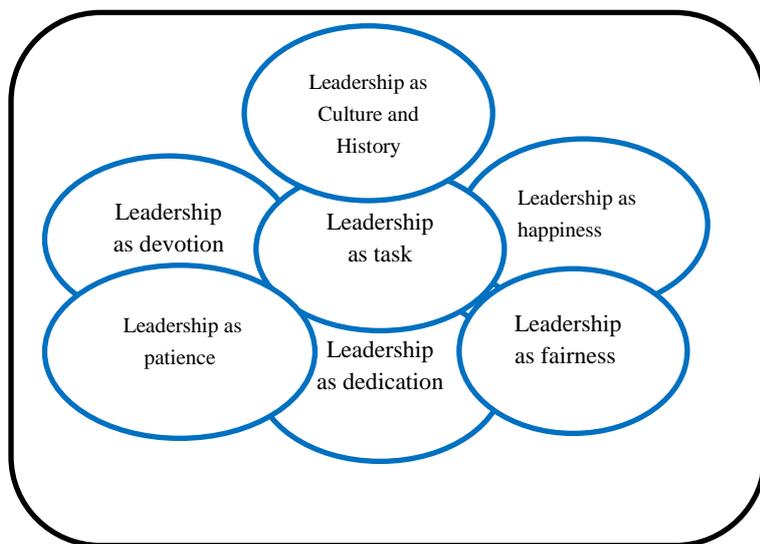
Yet another participant (TAGD4) from Takum employed the metaphor of a family and a teacher to define leadership saying;

*"A leader is just as the head of the family, he is the leader of the house, the controller of the house. He guides his children... In the village community the leader has the duty of advising the people, to tell them this is bad and not to do it. The village needs somebody good to guide them and teach them how to do things basically"*

What can be drawn from all three participants' perspective above is a reiteration of the view that leadership in context is about how the community looks after its people in a humane, caring and fair manner. This seemingly derives from the local

communal nature of day to day activities characterised in the very tightly-knit social-cultural environment. At the same time the views present leadership as a process of social construction in which each member of the community lives, cares and supports the other with leaders coordination and facilitation the process. However, whilst communality, humanity emerge as central aspect of leadership in context, a number of different meanings can be drawn from the views of the above three participants as illustrated in fig. 5.1 below.

Fig. 5.1: Definitions of leadership in context (Eyong).



From the above diagram it is clear that leadership in the indigenous communities complex rather than simplistic. It is also evident certain aspects of leadership are highlighted than others in rather ambiguous ways. This plurality of meanings draw attention to the complex nature of leadership even within an indigenous cultural environment which many would consider to hold collective views due to its seemingly homogenous nature.

### 5.1.2 Leadership in the local languages

An intriguing finding about leadership came from the meaning of leadership when translated in the four main local languages (Aghem, Kuteb, Kenyang and Ejagham). An analysis of the local languages showed that the phenomenon of leadership is in the local language is expressed using several other words, each signifying a different kind of leadership. Thus, a key learning from the local languages was that the one word 'leadership' cannot be employed to encapsulate all aspects of leadership in the

local indigenous community. The range of words that encapsulate leadership in various contexts is explored below.

- In kenyang language, the expression; *Kefor-etok* or *Nfor-etok* is employed differently from the word; *'muh-nti'*. *Kefor-etok* refers to the head or leader of a traditional cluster such as a village community or head of a family group. *Muh-nti* refers to the head of an organisation or group. This expression applies even if in a group formed by the village community. In addition, the word *'sessekou'* is employed for leadership with an indigenous institution in Bayang sections of the Cross River region. There is also the word *'kessienci'* which refers more to leadership by age or seniority. Finally, there is the word *'kennem'* which is more of the right to undertake leadership as a respectable and successful person in the community. The difference between this language and culture and Anglo-centric notions of leadership as provided in the use of English language, is that a different word cannot be used to express these various leadership roles. By contrast in English language, the word leader or leadership could be employed in all five contexts.
- In Ejagham language, the expression: *'Ntufam'* meaning the head of the village is different from: *'Neh-chi'* which means the head in an operational sense where an individual is appointed to head a group. In addition, other words and expressions are employed for female leaders and other kinds of appointed leaders and situations of leadership.
- In the Mambila region, the expression: *'Batum'* is used for the culturally instituted leader while *'Wuhtisikoh'* and *'Wuhketse'* refer to the leadership of a group - such as leading a community project.
- In Kuteb language the word *'Ukweh'* is employed to refer to the head of the Takum and Ussa clan, while *'Ndituweh'* and *'shina'* are respectively employed for leadership of a much smaller village. Other expressions refer to group leadership and leadership in politics. In addition, other words which are used for different kinds of leadership including: elders, spiritualists, title-holders and notables who are also leaders of the community in different ways. These persons all share in the management of the affairs of the indigenous community council (ICCs) as different kinds of leaders but they are not

addressed using the same word 'leader' as it is the case in the English language.

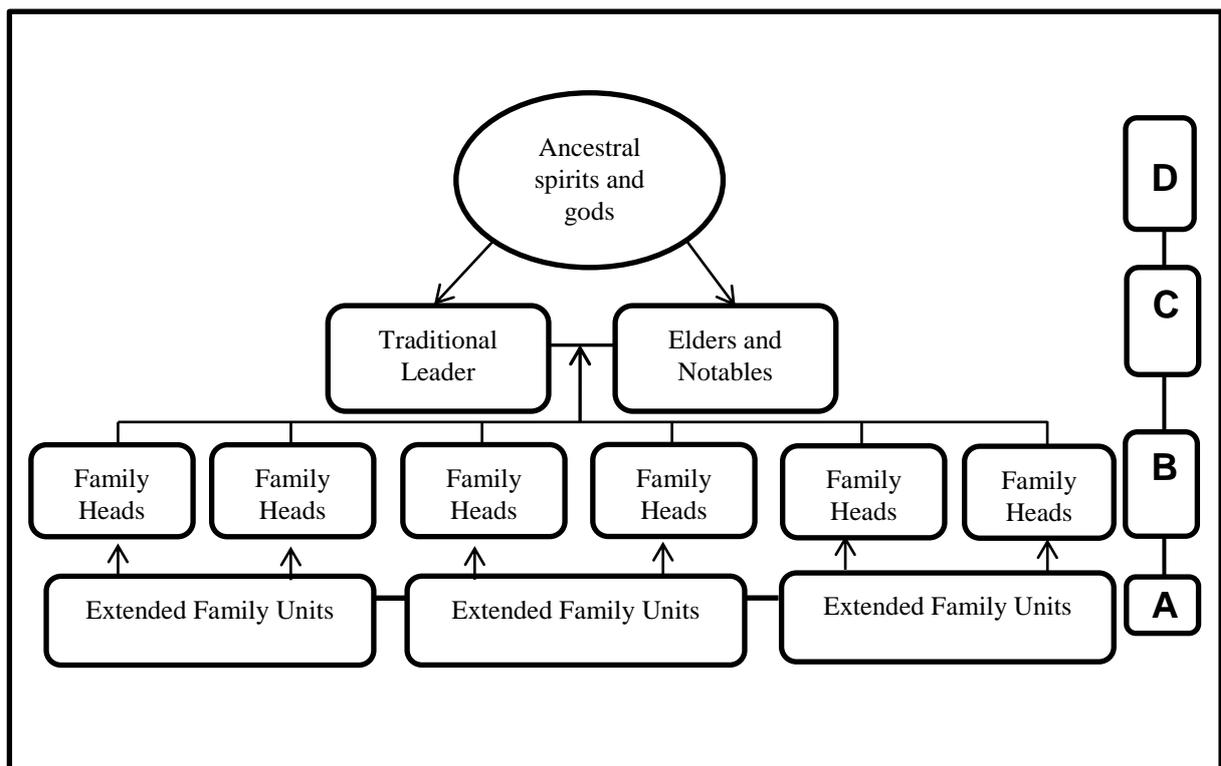
The above linguistic analysis shows that there is significant linguistic tension between the Anglo-Saxon perception and meaning and the meaning of the notion of leadership in the local African languages. However, the focus of this study not being to explore translational dissimilarities this study recommends socio-linguistic and translation lens to further investigate these differences. In the respect, the verbal reporting method (VRM) is highly recommended for such future research. This difference lends support to the argument that Western languages – particularly the English language may not have the precise words and vocabulary to articulate leadership in non-English speaking cultures (Jepson, 2010). This limitation and other language related issues are further discussed in chapter seven, section 7.3.2.

### **5.1.3 Leadership structure and decision-Making**

Another sub-theme that surfaced from the data in respect to the manner in which leadership is defined in the local context recorded in fieldnotes is the decision-making process and structure of an indigenous community. Here, the data revealed two slightly different frameworks or practices for each region. The first typology is mainly characteristic of communities within Mambilla region where the leaders of the communities benefit from biological inheritance rights. Thus, their voice tends to be more influential although they might keep silent in deliberations. Most of the debate and decisions are first discussed at the level of families and then moved upwards to the community traditional council for further deliberation and final decision. Thus, in communities in the Mambila region, the decision making process is distributed across the different layers of the communities. Responsibility for leadership role is also variously shared by individuals according to competence, family background and rank in society. For instance in the community of Wum, Weh and Essu, it was observed that the appointed community shares various leadership responsibility to various members of community. It was also evident that other appointed individuals coordinate community activities, manage micro-projects and address visitors on behalf of the wider community instead of the appointed leader. However, the decision of the hereditary leader of each community is final as he could appoint and dismiss any appointed individual as he pleased without account to any one or to the

body of elders. This is because beyond the human powers of the hereditary leader is an assumption of ancestors and other godly forces which are considered to liaise, direct and inform the hereditary leader about how to lead the community. Fig. 5.2 below is a reproduction of a sketch drawn in the field indicating the different levels at which decisions are made and how leadership roles become undertaken by a cross-section of individuals up and down the social structure.

Fig. 5.2 levels of authority and decision-making (Mambila) – (Eyong, fieldnotes)



The above diagram shows decision making process. The process begins at the bottom with the wider extended families 'A'. This proceeds upwards to 'B' with heads of families and to 'C' represented by elders and notables. In the decision making process the hereditary leader seats with the elders and notables and momentarily joins in the discussions. However, he can stop further discussions and make summary dismissal but is not to demonstrate acquiescence. In this shared process, the community members at different regard their ancestors and gods and assume these to share in the decision making process. Thus, at the very top of their thinking is the primacy of metaphysical intervention. The intervention of ancestors and gods is considered as a key inspiration for leadership as illustrated at level D on the

diagram. The process was elicited by participant (ES11) at Esu community as follows:

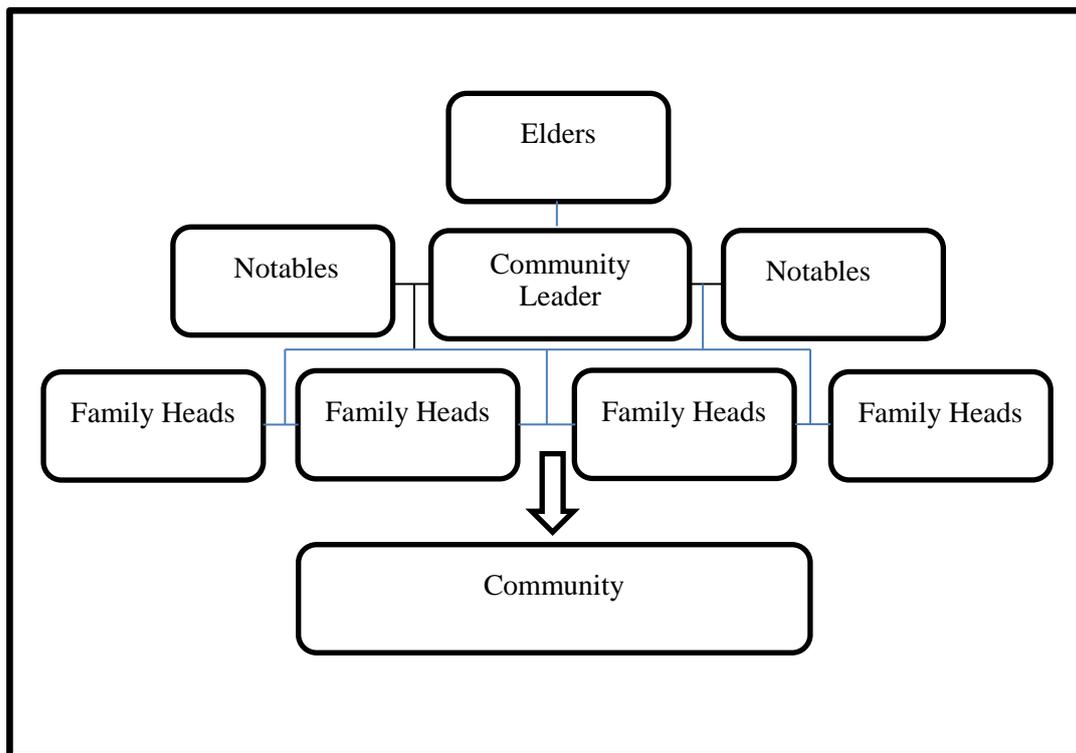
*“The ‘Ndaw-tse’ (indigenous parliament or house of representatives) functions like a parliament. The quarter heads and some nobles in the village constitute that house together with the ‘Batum’. It is that house that takes decisions. It is also the judicial arm of leadership.... All judicial issues are handled there... The ndaw-tse is the highest level of administration in the entire community council including all the 14 villages, the traditional council works according to the customary laws and the customary court... They discuss together and then come out with decisions... The decisions come from the families, then the quarters or villages – so everyone can first contribute before decisions are made”*

The above participant’s explanation corroborates Park’s description of leadership and decision-making amongst the local Mandingo tribes along the Atlantic coast of West Africa (present day Senegal and Gambia). Park’s diary entry recorded leadership practice as he had observed it as a practice in which within:

*“The power of the sovereign is however by no means unlimited. In all affairs of importance, the king calls an assembly of the principal men or elder, by whose councils he is directed, and without whose advice he can neither declare war, nor conclude peace (Park 1796 in Dent 1984:13).*

However, contrary to the above, communities within the Cross River region, presented a different decision making structure. Here rather than beginning from the bottom, a group constituted of representatives of families, elders and the appointed community leaders and notables took most of the decisions for the communities. Such decisions were arrived at after elaborate open collective deliberation. In these deliberations, the voices and opinions of the elders of the communities rather than those of notables or the appointed leader tend to bear more weight and is often the most considered. Thus, elders tend to wield more power and respect in communities within Cross River region than is the case Mambila. Unlike in communities within Mambila region, the perception in Cross River is that the gods and ancestors speak to the leaders and communities through the most elderly. This explains why their thoughts and decisions appear to be considered the most especially for issues in the deeper cultures and traditions of the people. A representative diagram depicting the case for Cross River region is illustrated in Fig. 5.3 below.

### 5.3 Decision-Making structure in Cross River



The above diagram illustrates the importance of elders in the cross river region and the role of notables in leadership. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy to indicate that not all the elderly person's voices were influential. What this means is that although there are broadly culturally accepted practices, some leaders show considerable indifference to the established cultural and traditional customs. Sometimes they tend to accept decisions with acquiescence. This signals a growing change in leadership thinking as further explored in section 7.1.3, chapter seven.

#### 5.1.4 Leadership doing

The two key actions that emerged from the anthropological data in respect to actions that constitute leadership doing or what leaders actually do in leadership include the functions of: *'coordination'* and *problem-solving*. These two functions seemed to have dominated participant narratives over what is means to do leadership. Some excerpts from group discussions provide a sense of the manner in which these two functions are perceived to be central in leadership function in context. First, participant (TAGD2) in Takum community said leadership action was:

*“To coordinate, direct and explain to people how to follow the norms and cultural values of the community”*

Another participant (EYI1) at Eyumojock described his primary duty saying;

*“My work as one of the leaders of the community is to coordinate some common initiative groups...”*

With regards to the function of problem-solving, participant (ESI1) at Esu explained:

*“The leader uses the traditional method to settle problems”*

At Ussa, a participant (USGD1) at Ussa explained saying:

*“Leadership is given to he who is able to resolve perennial conflicts or any problem in the community”*

Others (OKGD4) at Okoyong explained saying:

*“Leadership is about seeking solutions to problems and socialising together”*

Similar expressions that highlight problem-solving as a key leadership activity were participant (ETGD6) at Etung and (TKI1) in Takum ICCs.

The above narratives corroborate observations recorded in fieldnotes to the effect that most community gathered for problem-solving purposes as was witnessed in many of the meetings attended during fieldwork. The relevance of problem-solving and coordination as two key leadership actions tend to corroborate the views of Mintzberg (1990) and Northouse (2014) that problem-solving is one of the most important leadership function. Therefore, although, the kinds of issues and problems faced by leaders within an indigenous community context may be different from challenges for leadership in the Western context, there are similar actions depicting leadership in action in an indigenous community context.

### **5.1.5 Other cultural aspects of leadership**

#### *A) The role of the cultural leader*

What was also evident in the definition of leadership as it emerged from observations recorded was that leadership was defined in terms of the multiple roles that are undertaken at different times. These roles interchange between problem solving,

advising, farming and family. Central to assuming the role of leadership is the necessity for the appointed leader to exhibit the expected cultural and traditional behaviour both in public and in private. Therefore, though the role of the leader involved coordination, advisory and directional activities, these are mainly directed towards maintaining and following the local cultural and traditional customs. Thus, leadership ability and leadership doing is defined in relation to the ability of the appointed leaders and notables involved in leadership to keep to traditional routines and ways of doing. It follows that the definition of leadership takes account not just of the individual but also of other items found in the ecological environment such as animals and plants, the sun, rain and so on.

#### B) *Nature of leadership in action*

The local indigenous leadership traditions seem to impose relationality and privileges emotional connection, empathy and closer social interaction amongst people. Hence, the nature of leadership was defined more in terms of people orientation, conviviality and collective inter-dependence. The relevance of relationality and conviviality was highlighted by participant (AKI1) at Akum indigenous community as follows:

*“We are all one people from the time of history, how we were created, we speak the same language, we eat the same food and we have lived here for many generations. So when you brother asks you for something you just do it without asking why. So our culture is that you have to love everyone and you must respect the person that the whole community has selected as the leader ...eerr... We see ourselves as one people...and you cannot disobey your brother, everyone is related and we do everything together as one people... so leadership is possible because we are related to one another though we come from different villages – we are a family”*

It follows from the relational nature of leadership that humane consideration of leaders, community and everyone in the community for one another emerged as an important, if not central aspect of leadership in both regions. This was demonstrated by show of empathy generosity, sharing and care for all in an extensive inter-connected way. In doing so the fundamental of the local culture emerged as the guiding principle that gets everyone involved and acting in the same way rather than the leadership. This suggests that the communities could indeed function without appointed leaders. Leadership is something that is inherent in the local culture and everyone in the community is inherently involved in it.

### C) Leadership and indigenous culture

An important and quite obvious finding that emerged from the field is a practice the intervention of 'age' or 'elderhood' in leadership within an indigenous community. The predominance of age was evident as it emerged as a dominant discourse in interpretations of key aspects of the cultures of the local tribes in both regions. The reason why age tends to be closely related to leadership was uncovered in the field. The explanation built through various discussions suggests that age begets wisdom. The elderly pass-on the tradition to the younger generation. In other words, the elders represent books in so far as they serve as points of reference for information and continuity. Without elderly persons knowledge of the past might be lost. Hence they sit closest to the appointed leaders in most session of the ICCs. At the communities of Okoyong, Etung, Ikom and Mamfe in Cross River region the sacred ritual of throwing the Kola nut<sup>13</sup> was always undertaken by the eldest male of the community. Similarly, the eldest male had the honour of pouring out the last dredge of palm wine as libation<sup>14</sup> to the ancestors calling for wisdom and protection and providence. These cultural repertoire conducted by elders are higher roles in leadership which some of the appointed leaders are unqualified to undertake. The relevance of age in the local culture was explained by participant (OKGD1) at Okoyong as follows:

*"Leadership, here at Okoyong is entrusted to elderly people because grey hair is given by the gods. In our culture we think that aged people are more prone to having this kind of wisdom, so we give leadership to people of age, that was in the past....when it comes to tradition, it is still the elderly persons who carry out such functions"*

Another participant (MAI1) in Mamfe community explained:

*"It is only the elderly man, an old man who can call on these ancestors from the land of the ancestors to talk to them and they (the ancestral gods) to talk with him. Ancestors always listen to the elderly. Yes, and that is why it is only the elderly who has to pour libation wherever he is...That is why you the elder and not the young one is appointed to leadership. He leads the entire community with,*

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<sup>13</sup> Kola nut is a tropical fruit which breaks into many slices usually six or seven, eaten in special occasions or used to welcome guest in the culture of most tribes in West and Central Africa. It is thought in the Igbo tradition of West Africa that he who brings cola nut brings life (Achebe, 1958), Things Fall Apart.

<sup>14</sup> The ritual of libation is an ancient practice in African culture and traditions. It is observed by pouring palm wine or spirit on the ground, calling the names of past family or community leaders, offering prayers and supplication to the gods and ancestors for help.

*authority of age, connection to the ancestors and he can best competently handle the traditional and the cultural practices such as sacrifices, Ekpe and so on. No one can challenge the leadership of the eldest, you only follow or when he cannot more reason the next oldest can take over”*

The above quotes highlight a commonly held significance of age and its role in leadership from a cultural perspective.

#### D) *Duration of leadership tenure*

The final issue to highlight in the perception and definition of leadership relates to the duration of leadership tenure. A key view of leadership duration in all the communities is that leadership role is meant to last for as long as an appointed leader lives. In other words there is no end point at which an appointed leader has to step down or stop to be the leader of the community. Hence an appointed indigenous community leader cannot be removed or relieved his role of appointed leader especially in communities in Mambila where hereditary rule of succession is practiced. When asked what would happen if the leader of a community in Mambilla region was found unsuitable or unacceptable due to misconduct the response provided by participant (WUGD4) in Wum community was as follows;

*‘if you are a leader and are doing bad things in the community, we will sit as we are sitting now and say, this leader is doing bad things, what do we do? Let us join and pray to the gods to remove him.... we say to our ancestors - this leader that you gave to us, remove him. This is a bad leader for us...One day, we will just hear that he is dead ... due to the prayers we made saying that he is a bad leader [...] We cannot change a community leader until he dies because we did not elect him... It is a natural law in our tradition’.*

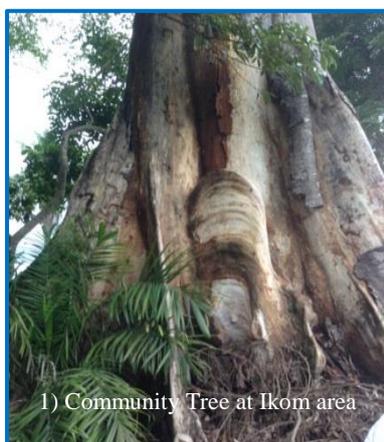
The above explanation supports the general perception especially in communities in the Mambilla that the removal of the indigenous community leader is a matter for the ancestors and gods. This way of considering a position of leadership as destined for life has been observed in political leadership in Africa. African political leaders are always reluctant to leave political office even after poor performance and extensively long stay in government. However whilst this practice would seem a general practice, a slight difference can be found in the traditions of communities within Cross River where the community leader can be removed by elders, notables and heads of families. Therefore, although the two regions are indigenous in nature and composition they each present peculiar practices.

## 5.2 Symbolism and artefacts of leadership

Apart from the above oral articulation of leadership in context the anthropological data surfaced a number of physical relics in the form of symbols and artefacts that embody unspoken and unwritten meanings of leadership. These symbols artefacts tell the story of leadership from the cultural perspective drawing on historical customs, traditions, myths, stories and religious beliefs of the local tribes and clans in the two regions. An unexpected revelation that surfaced from the data was that trees, animals, traditional outfits and ornaments embody leadership meaning. Hence leadership is given meaning in the communities in relation to the immediate environment in which the local people live. The various symbols that encapsulate leadership meaning are vividly presented below with explanations as common in photographic social anthropological practice (Hammond, 1998).

### 5.2.1 The community tree and leadership

In eight (Ikom, Etung, Wum, Weh, Esu, Akum, Eyumojock, Obubra) of the twelve communities studied, trees (photographs 1-6 below) emerged as an enabling item for effective leadership. In the each of the eight communities there were a particular tress planted by the community which serves as a vehicle of communication between the appointed leaders and the entire community. It is assumed that through the community tree, the leader is able to interact with the external world of gods and ancestors in the process of which he is able to effectively lead the community.



1) Community Tree at Ikom area

Photograph (1) and (2) below are pictures of the community tree for the community local community in Ikom area. The tree serves the important function of enabling the local leader and elders to solve such problems as an outbreak of disease or unexplained death. In such a case, the community leader summons the elders to the shrine where sacrifices are performed to the gods with the hope that the ancestors will provide a solution.



Photograph (2) shows a younger tree planted to replace an older one in photograph (1) above. The community tree has been an enabling element of leadership in indigenous communities for many centuries. Community leaders continue to consult the trees for effective leadership. Thus, the community tree remains an essential aspect of leadership thinking in the local community.

The meaning and relevance of the above community tree for leadership was explained by the curator (IKSH1) in the community shrine of Ikom who explained saying;

*“In our culture this tree represents a source of spiritual power. We believe that our gods, spirits and ancestors reside here inside or around this tree. For you to be a leader you have to be presented to this tree. This is where the leader can come and get in touch with the gods and the spirits that guide us as a tribe... Our leader comes here to consult the knowledge of our ancestors and then he is told what to do... Without this tree in you cannot be the lead the people”*

The above quote reveals that the tree also serves as a means of authenticating or confirming the legitimacy of the appointed leader as well as the perceived approval of the ancestors of their leadership. When required, the leader takes an oath before the gods to lead the community according to the cultural and tradition of the community. It is through this process that the leader gains the wisdom to effectively undertake leadership. Also, it is after the appointed leader has gone through the process of connecting to the gods and ancestors that the followers and entire community become accepts to support the leadership of the appointee. The relevance of the community tree was also evident in communities within Mambila region – specifically in the communities of Wum, Weh, and Esu in Mambila region (photographs 3, 4 and 5).

That trees emerged as part of leadership in both regions was quite unexpected and showed the extent to which African cultures tend to be similar in certain aspects. In

one community in Mambila region a participant (WUI1) explained the relevance of the community tree in community leadership saying:

*“This compound and this tree you see, the leaves bring the birth of children. Sometimes a caterpillar (insect) will fall from this tree and I will say... take it to any woman who is finding it difficult to get pregnant and after the woman has taken the insect, they normally get pregnant. This tree has many uses which I as the leader of this community I put to use when the need arises. At certain times when women want children and they are not coming, I will call all the community to come here. The women will cut the leaves of this tree because they are eager, there is that eagerness for them to be pregnant [...] after, we perform the rituals and they take the leaves home, they will be pregnant and many children are born”*

The photographs below locate each of the trees referred to while the side-notes explain the relevance and meanings associated with each.



Photographs 3 and 4 were taken at the community ground in Wum next to the palace of the community leader. Around this tree the community leader summons all constituent sections of community, families, quarters and their leaders to invoke the blessing of the ancestors and Gods of the land.



The trees are believed to be superstitious and used by the community leader to heal diseases, cause the birth of children or even help hunters to a good kill of games when it becomes necessary.



Photograph 5 was taken at the community was taken at the community of Esu. In much similar ways as above, the leader of the community uses the trees to invoke blessing and also to release the wrath of the gods on anyone who goes against the rules of the community or who undermines his authority.

Moving further in the community of Weh a participant (WEI1) explained that the branch of the community tree is used by the leader to summon members of the community to the traditional council or to the palace of the leader. To invite a member to answer to the leader's summon the branch of the community tree is placed on the door steps of the person in question. This tells the individual that he/she must report to the leader. Furthermore, at Esu community a participant (ESI1) explained with conviction and certainty that the spirits of the gods of the land reside in the trees at the community courtyard (photograph 5). In summary indigenous community leaders make use of the community tree to spiritually legitimise their leadership. The community trees are perceived to retain spiritual forces and is a key leader-follower dynamic.

Whist the community tree plays a role in community leadership in some communities, in some communities (Obubra, Takum, Ussa and Akum) it did not seem to exist, neither was it even mentioned in a few communities. The follow-up third phase of fieldwork explored the reason why the community tree was not mentioned. It emerged that the practice had been discontinued overtime. The fact that some aspects of culture are discontinued in some locations highlights the social and cultural evolution change process of indigenous communities. Another symbol which emerged in relation to leadership relates to an animal that previously inhabited the Mambila and Cross River regions.

### **5.2.2 The Leopard and leadership**

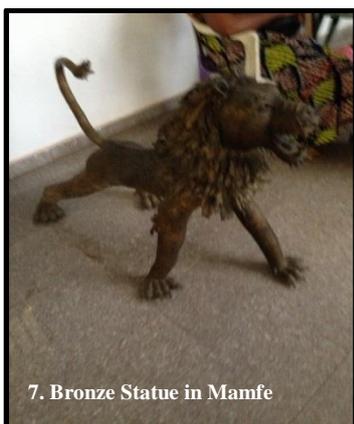
An intriguing finding about leadership in both regions was the discovery of the role and relevance of the symbol of the leopard in leadership. From the pilot study it had

become apparent that the symbol of the leopard was central to leadership thinking in the culture and traditions of the local indigenous people. The leopard is associated with leadership in the communities of; Weh, Wum, Esu, Akum, Okoyong, Mamfe, Eyumojock, Ikom Etung, and Obubra. In these communities, the symbol of the leopard emerged as an important representation of the authority to lead and a script leadership. Meanings and constructions were drawn on the behaviour, natural characteristics and attributes of the leopard to explain its relevance as a metaphor for leadership. The relevance and place of the leopard in leadership in the local culture is conspicuous in the daily lives and activities of leaders and are displayed in the internal and external décor of leaders and notables as illustrated by the following photographs. The pictures below were taken during fieldwork and show the degree of physical presence of the symbol of the leopard in the form of its skin, sculpture and emblem or flag amongst the local people.



6. Leopard skin in chief's palace

Photograph (6) was taken at the palace of the chief in the Mamfe indigenous community area. It is placed in front of the leader during an official community gathering. It represents the legitimacy of the community leader and confirms that the leader has undertaken to employ the wisdom of the leopard and its other positive attributes and behaviours in the leadership of the community.



7. Bronze Statue in Mamfe

Photograph (7) is a bronze statue of the leopard. This is also kept by notables of the community to remind them of the leadership functions they have to perform at all time as members of the community.



Photograph 8 shows the emblem of the cultural governing institution of Ekpe with the leopard as its symbol. The flag is usually raised in every important gathering of the Members of the Ekpe institution to demonstrate its authority and to remind members of its principle and teachings about community leadership.

The symbol or image of the leopard plays an important role in reminding both leaders and members of the community about what leadership is about. Particularly it reminds leaders about what is expected of them and how they their followers and the entire community might be expected to respond to their leadership behaviour and responsibility.

The above explanations and illustrative picture closely match the findings of (Ruel, 1969:66) amongst the Bayang tribes in Cross River region noting that: *“there was a strong relationship between the symbol of the leopard and leadership”* in the way leadership was perceived in the area. The metaphor of the leopard signifies the traits and attributes of; intelligence, protection, resourcefulness, agility, speed, caution and multi-task capabilities. All of these are in the views of the local people expected to be central aspects of community leadership both for appointed and alternate leaders. This perception was expressed at the community of Etung by participant (ETI2) - a senior leader of the Ekpe institution. His explanation was as follows:

*“The leopard is the symbol our Ekpe tradition and leadership in ‘Ejagham’ culture and in the whole of Cross River area is because it is one of the rare animals which has the ability to do many things. You bring it to the river, it can swim, you put a tree it climbs like a monkey and it is the leopard is the fastest. It is quiet, playful and never looks for trouble. Our forefathers saw these incredible qualities of the leopard and used it as the way to evaluate good or bad leadership. Since that time anything about Ekpe which is the secret and authority of our Ejagham culture is about the leopard. The leopard is very fast, before you shake a single leaf, it is gone. It is alert and ready. Before a prey realises it is around it has already made a kill. So through this fastness and intelligence, we want our leaders to be like the leopard”*

The above account underscores the reason why the leopard is highly esteemed and metaphorically associated with the meaning of leadership specifically in the Cross River region.

The symbol of the leopard was also apparent in communities in the Mambilla region. However, it portrayed a slightly different meaning. Contrary to the Cross River region where any person in the community could keep the leopard skin or any other form of the animal's symbol, in the Mambilla it was evident that only the appointed hereditary leaders were privileged to possess and display the symbol of the skin of the leopard in particular. Also, unlike in the Cross River where the symbol is used to define leadership, a contrast in communities within Mambilla region (Esu, Weh, Wum, and Akum), is that the symbol is utilised to communicate the ultimate power, legitimacy and authority of the hereditary leader. Thus, by possessing and displaying the leopard skin, the leader stands out as distinct in status and different from other notables and general members in the community. This symbol of power, legitimacy and distinctiveness is typified in the manner in which the leopard skin is displayed in the interior of the home and palaces of community leaders as illustrated by the photographs below.



This photograph (ph. 9) shows a picture of the skin of a leopard spread wide before the throne of the community leader in the community of Wum. The head faces the throne of the leader who sits on the throne separate from the rest of the members of the community to demonstrate his special status.

A participant in Wum indigenous community council (WUGD1) explained the meaning of the symbol of the leopard in the 'Aghem' tribe along the lines of the following statement;

*"The meaning is that if they do not say that you are a 'man' who is a leader, like this chief who is here, you cannot have that Leopard skin. He is the only one who has that Leopard skin in the whole Aghem clan because he is the one above all*

*the other chiefs in Aghem. He is a leader, he is the only one who can have that Leopard skin because he is leader and he controls all the Aghem chiefs [...] It is something that is hard to get, since I was born I have never seen a leopard and I will die without seeing it. It means difference and something like special person”*

In the communities of Weh, Akum and Esu, similar meanings were expressed. However, the displays were different as shown in photograph 10 below.



Photograph (10) in Weh indigenous community council, the skin of a leopard is placed as a back-rest on the throne. The leader sits on the leopard skin and rests his back on it too to show his power and distinctive status as the appointed leader of the community. Therefore although the skin of the leopard may be displayed differently, as a symbol, it conveys the same meaning.

Although the symbol of the leopard was more generally associated with leadership in many communities, it was not the case in the communities of Takum and Ussa in the Nigerian side of the Mambila region. Thus, the association of the symbol of the leopard to leadership cannot be said to be general in all communities. Nevertheless, the discovery of the symbol of the leopard in the majority of communities across the two regions explains its popularity in many African cultures. For instance many African leaders traditionally dress themselves in leopard skin fashion. The cases of former president of Zaire (presently: Democratic Republic of Congo) Mombutu Sese Seko, Nelson Mandela and the Zulu kings are obvious examples.

### **5.2.3 The leadership stool, throne or chair**

The seat or throne of the indigenous community leader emerged prominently as another symbol of leadership across the field. The stools are made from different materials. Three photographs of examples of indigenous leader thrones or stool are shown below. All three photographs were taken at different locations in the field

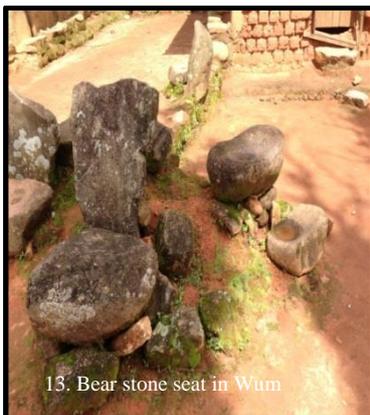
Thrones or seats of Leaders



Photograph (11) taken at the palace in Cross River region is a typical leader chair or the throne of an indigenous leader. This one is made from dark wood and sculptured with the carvings of different animals and objects. Generally, the thrones of indigenous leaders are considered to be spiritually prepared to protect the leader from witches and other leaders.



Photograph (12) shows another design of the throne. It is made of wood and decorated with beads. This kind of seat is used by a junior leader. Generally, the size, complexity, and extent of decoration indicate the status or level of the leader.



Photograph (13) shows a bear stone seat for the community leader of Wum indigenous community council. This stone seat has been used by the previous community leaders for hundreds of years. On this stone seat, the leader can communicate with the ancestors and ask for their favour for the community needs.

When talking to the indigenous people, it becomes evident that there is a perception that the throne or the chair of the appointed leader is perceived not to be ordinary. Rather, the throne is thought to be sacred. Hence, none other than the appointed leader is allowed to sit on it. Should any other person sit on the leader's stool, they do so at their own peril as it is believed that sitting on the throne is tantamount to showing disregard to both the appointed leader of the community in person and the

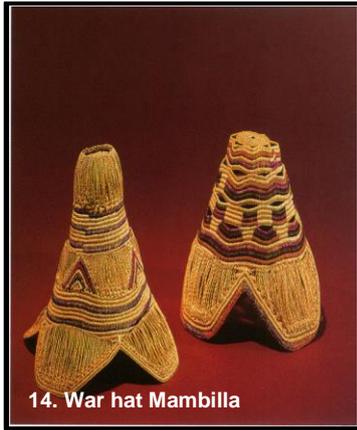
leadership of the community in general. Spiritually it is thought that any person who dares to seat on the leader's throne is spiritually weighing or challenging the leader through witchcraft and superstition. Such an audacious and arrogant behaviour is thought to carry the wrath of severe misfortune from the gods of each community. This point was emphasised by participant (ETGD4) a female leader of a women's wing of the community explaining with the following statement:

*'As leader of my women age group, if my seat is placed where I have to sit down, no other person can sit on that particular seat. If you sit down there, it is seen as a big thing ... people will say you have sat on my chair it means there is another meaning which one cannot see with eyes, we believe that the leader's chair has powers [...] Because when I was made chief, the people brought different types of branches of trees, put it on my head and did many spiritual rituals, things that are very strong with the chair where I have to seat for my official gathering. So the chair is the symbol of my power and authority and it is what gives me power, wisdom and fear and respect from my community.'*

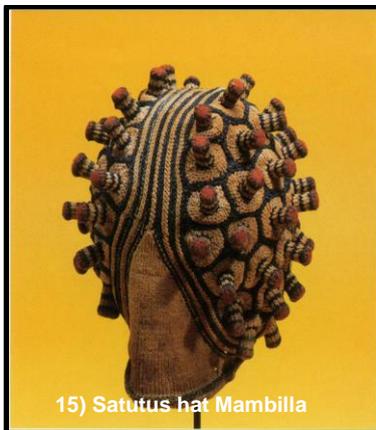
This explanation resonates across the research and results from the spiritual and superstitious preparation of items to be used by appointed leaders such as clothing, throne and other paraphernalia are subjected before their enthronement.

#### **5.2.4 Headwear, staff and dressing ornaments**

Another apparent set of symbols of leadership uncovered in the communities is the local traditional outfits of the local people or what can be called 'the indigenous fashion'. The study found that the local traditional dressing communicates a sense of indigenous leadership. In this respect, three main items of fashion were found to be most commonly associated with leadership. They include; the headwear, the staff and some accompanying ornaments such as beads, scarf, bird feathers and neck wrappers. These items primarily vaunt the exuberance and splendour of the local historical cultural traditions of the tribes and clans that make-up the communities. At the same time, they communicate some of the founding mythologies, beliefs systems and philosophical conventions which have been built and maintained by the tribes for many centuries. A sample of such headwear in their many designs and types found in various communities within the research field is presented below. Each tells its story, embodies its leadership mythology and is used by leaders for different purposes and occasions. See photographs 13, 14 and 15 below.



The traditional headwear pictured in photograph 14 is commonly worn in communities within Mambilla region. Historically, this headwear would have been worn by leaders during war time. These are designed to provide protection for the head and face of the bearer. It is made from the stem of a popular and common plant in the grassland areas of the northwest of Cameroon.



Headwear number 15 is more sophisticated and often denotes notable status or some kind of higher position in the community or leadership rank within the wider indigenous community. It is made of wool and fibre and other local weeds and is mostly worn on important functions by notables of the community. More generally it is a status communicating item of fashion with implication for the kinds of leadership role that the bearer is allowed to undertake.



Photograph (16) is a kind of hat worn only by members of the Ekpe association in Cross river and the wider communities and tribes along the Atlantic coast in west and central parts of Africa. It is decorated with wild bird feathers, most significantly the red feathers of the parrot and spikes from the Elephant's tail. The decoration determines the rank and status of the bearer. Usually, the appointed leader would have his headwear decorated with more feathers and beads.

Generally, headwear is used to rank members of the indigenous communities according to their social status as the following description exemplifies from a participant (MAI2) from the community of Mamfe.

*“In our tradition, the leaders are identified by the kind of cap on his head. So the hat or what we call ‘nta-kefor’ symbolises the responsibility that the leader bears on behalf of his people. Like in the Ekpe group, the cap of the sesekous is quite different from ordinary members. The leaders stay in front of the dance and their cap sometimes spiritually helps them to lead the rest of the dancers”*

In much the same way, another participant at Etung in Cross River (ET11) explained further saying;

*“The cap of the leader of the community carries some red feathers. The number of red feathers on the cap shows the level of the person in the traditional way... all leaders are not the same so from the cap you can know who the big leader is and who the small leaders are... the one with feathers, will be the senior one and the other person whose cap has no feathers will be the smaller leader. The chief cap also shows that he is the head of the community and everyone must show him respect and do what he says’. The cap and the other things can also be full of powers for protection and the power to rule the people”*

The two quotes above present the headwear simply as a means of status differentiation and image promotion. However, within this simple expression, the superstitious dimension of the hat emerges as a source of spiritual power for the leader. In a much broader meaning beyond the physical object which is the headwear. Indigenous people from across the field associate the leader’s headwear with an element of spiritual power. The element of superstition and power around the leader’s headwear was more vividly explained in communities in Mambilla. The participant (US11) at the community of Ussa explained the spiritual dimension of the leader’s headwear saying:

*“The cap of the Ukwesh is sacred; it shows that he is different from any other person in the community. When he wears the cap people know that he is the true Ukwesh and everyone in the community has to respect him. When the ‘Ukwesh’ (leader of the Kuteb community) puts on the cap it means that he has accepted to carry all the people on his head and to sacrifice his life for the community. Whether it is good or bad he has to stand for his people. Some of the caps have animals like the lion, tiger and so on. This means that he is the protector of the people and every time that he puts on his cap, he reminds himself of that responsibility. So the cap means that the*

*leader has accepted to bear the troubles of his people on his head. Before you are given the cap, it will be blessed by the people and the ancestors and no other person can put it on... If you an ordinary person put that cap on your head, you can become a mad man”.*

At the community of Etung a participant (ETI2) explained that;

*“This staff if I hold it everybody knows I am the ‘Ntufam’ (head of Ekpe in Ejagham language Cross River) you cannot hold it if you are not the Ntufam. Before I enter the Ekpe house everybody knows my position and my seat. If there is anything they don’t understand I tell them because I know it. I hold this staff and it is the staff of knowledge and wisdom...These are different levels of knowledge and accomplishments. So we can say that through my staff I show that I am the leader or I have attained a higher level of Ekpe and there are certain things which I should know more than the others”*

The above explanations clearly position the symbol of headwear as an identifier of rank and status as well as a source of power for the community leader. In addition to the headwear, some of the accompanying elements of traditional African fashion; particularly, the traditional staff or walking stick and other decorations and ornaments such as beads also communicate similar differentiating and spiritual empowering functions.

### **5.3 Rituals, mythology and legends**

A key anthropological finding that emerged on leadership in the indigenous African communities is the centrality of local belief systems in the way leadership is talked about and practiced. Thus, spirituality emerged as an important consideration in leadership thinking in context. At the centre of this spirituality there is a deep-rooted acceptance that ancestors and gods play an active and lively role in leadership at all times. The leadership acts across the regions suggested a firm assumption that ancestors actively play a ‘teaching’ and ‘guiding’ role in the leadership of the communities. The general perception is that this role is enacted through spiritual interaction. It is assumed that ancestors are able to communicate and inform what decisions the leadership of each community makes and the right process to follow for different questions. To maintain contact with gods and ancestors, the appointed

indigenous leaders and various personalities in the community whose duty it is to consult with these godly forces are called upon to perform ritual rites and offer sacrifices of various kinds for each occasion. These actions are assumed to empower community leaders and other persons who share power and leadership. This intervention helps to ensure effective community leadership. Thus, the decisions which leaders take are considered to be inspired by transcendental interventions of ancestors and gods. Such imaginary spiritual forces are also thought to be beholders of providence and perceived to shield and protect the indigenous communities. This central belief has enormous influence in leadership perception and explains why certain rituals and cultural conventions have continued to be performed and observed for many generations. However, there are slight differences in the rituals performed and the meanings attached to such rituals between the two regions and across the various communities. All in all, spirituality emerged as a dominant influence in the meanings and constructions of leadership in all twelve communities. The influence of belief systems appeared to be firmly embedded in participants' interpretation and discussions. The main foundations of local beliefs were encapsulated in stories told about historical mythologies, century-old tales, and acts rooting back to the great migration of the tribes from their ancient worlds. The following quote from a participant (EY11) in Cross River region succinctly addresses the centrality of the relationship between the living and the ancestors in the leadership of the community. When asked why the continuous mention of ancestors, the participant explained saying:

*"In our culture our ancestors are our helpers. This is why we share with them when we eat in the community and in the family, we also pour out drinks as libation to our ancestors when we drink. In everything we do our ancestors are remembered and informed by pouring some wine on the ground and talking with them. Besides these ancestors, we have gods who protect us....items that represent these gods are kept in the family compound and sacrifices offered to them at certain times. You can be a chief, but is the ancestors and gods are not with you...you cannot lead your people. You cannot turn your back on your ancestors because if they turn their backs on us, we cannot survive"*

The above narrative illustrates reiterates the deeply embedded connection between African cultural systems and philosophy and indigenous leadership practice. For this reason, the local indigenous people often consider certain individuals in the community who are thought to have direct links with the gods as a source of protection. Hence, many community leaders and notables in the communities desire

constant attachment with ancestors and gods for their lives and for effective leadership of the community (Agada, 2013; Azouzu, 2004; Temple, 2012). This belief has been sustained by a myriad of myths, stories and magical or spiritual prowess told over generations. These have given rise to the current discourses and practices of leadership in context.

### **5.3.1 Stories and myths relating to leadership**

A common story repeated in conversations in many communities in Mambila region in particular was that the 'patriarchs'<sup>15</sup> of each community deployed magical powers to lead each clan to its present settlement. The story goes that during these long journeys<sup>16</sup> (assumed to be the great migration from Egypt, Sudan and across the Sahara desert), rituals were performed and sacrifices were offered to certain gods. The sacrifices appeased the gods, and they (the gods) accepted to assist the pioneer leaders to successfully lead their communities to their present locations. Through this historical relationship with the gods, the pioneer patriarch of each community assumed the status of an immortal being. Hence, both the gods and ancestors have been celebrated for generations with similar kinds of rituals and sacrifices. It is assumed that it is the continuation of this practice has kept the communities together and will continue to do so as long as the belief, rituals and traditions continued. To this extent, an important aspect of leadership in the communities is that the artefacts and relics used by patriarchs during the years of movement are preserved in the most diligent and sacred manner. The assumption is that these items still retain the same magical powers. An example of such relic - a spear-like bronze artefact is found in the court yard of some community leaders in the Mambila regions in small huts around the court of the leaders. Interestingly, the stories told over generations continue to resonate with the local people and influence the local culture, particularly the manner in which leadership is practiced and how leaders are chosen. An illustration of this influence is the continuous practice of

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<sup>15</sup> The male head of a family or tribal line or a person regarded as the father or the founder of an order or class. (dictionary.com:12:06:14). It is used here in the sense of the male head of an indigenous community.

<sup>16</sup> It is broadly thought that there are two groups of African populations in west and central Africa. One group is the resident population which has not moved from their locations - mostly clans/tribes around the forest and coastal areas. The other group may have migrated southwards from Ancient Egypt, through Sudan and across the Saharan desert. This group settled in the largely uninhabited, mostly volcanic mountain and desert areas of West and Central Africa between Nigeria and Cameroon. The Takari tribe in the Mambila region would belong to the migrant group while communities in Cross River region form part of the resident group. (see: Mohtar, UNESCO (1980) Africa Rediscovered.

paternal genealogical blood-line succession practice which continues to be the legitimate succession practice in communities in Mambila region. The mythology associated with this practice is that the patriarchs would have sworn the lives of their sons as heirs upon their demise in the various wars and battles fought along the way during those long journeys. Thus, it is expected that once the patriarch died, the magical powers automatically transferred to his one of his biological sons who would benefit from the same magical powers to continue to lead the group. Any change to another family meant immediate doom as such a person would be weak and unfortified with the magical powers required to succeed in such a treacherous journey. Photograph 17 below shows a hut where some of the relics are preserved in the community of Wum.



Photograph 17 shows the hut housing some community relics left by patriarch of the community of Wum.

Thus hut also is also used as a place where the community leader talks with the ancestors. It is also where the leader declares war. Further, it is believed that no matter the gravity of injuries the leader receives in a battle field he will be could not succumb to death if he is able to enter this hut and perform some rituals and offer sacrifices to the gods.

The continuous resonance of the above mythology enacted in rituals and other acts in the communities within the Mambila region has built a sense of cultural identity, pride and sense of self as different from others amongst the local people. These myths and stories have instituted a perception of metaphysical manifestation in the general culture to the extent it is now thought that without these vices individuals will be unable to undertake effective leadership in the communities (Agada, 2012; Azouzu; 2004; Temple, 2011).

Nevertheless, contrasting the above entrenched belief system and cultic repertoire is the interposition of Christianity in both regions and the Islamic religion in some sections of communities in the Mambila region. These foreign religions attempt enforce a new regime within the local communities in the sense of rejecting the

above fundamentals of traditional beliefs systems and way of life. It was therefore apparent in the field that indigenous perception of leadership is increasingly confronted by the teachings of Christianity and Islam. Hence some individuals do not quite follow the local indigenous practices and abstain from such practices. Besides the effects of the above foreign religions, it was also apparent that some of the local people had become sceptical of the intervention of ancestors and gods in influencing the outcomes of community life and its leadership in actuality. A small number of the local people are beginning to consider these activities as cultural and traditional practices rather than actual invocation of the intervention of the ancestors. The following participant in Mamfe community (MAI1) hinted at this noting that:

*“These days, things are different, perhaps it happened in the olden days with our forefathers....with us now we just do it and hope that something will happen...we are not really sure anymore, it is our culture so we just do it... some people believe it but I am not a 100% sure”*

The above quote and observations in the field suggests that these practices may have evolved to become customary and cultural manifestations rather than activities strictly intent in invoking spiritual manifestation. On reflection, there one can suspect that these ceremonies and metaphysical expectations mainly address the goals of identity construction and politics from the community leaders and notables who utilise these to their advantage. It would seem that these historical traditions, stories and mythologies may now be used as a means to retain power and prevent indigenous community revolt or agitation against the established custom and order. Whilst the above suspicion remains, there are those in the communities (especially of the older generation) who genuinely believe in the local indigenous religious systems and its assumed benefits. This can be seen from the degree of seriousness and devoutness with which they carry out the main rituals and sacrifices associated the mythologies and historical accounts.

### **5.3.2 The rituals of leadership**

The most common ritual which is normally performed by leaders, elders or notables in communities in Cross River and Mambilla regions is the act of pouring palm wine on the ground to invoke the presence of ancestors or to share food and drinks with

them. The reason for this ritual is for the ancestors and gods to continue to provide for the tribe in community wellbeing in many other ways including:

- 1) Soil fertility for crop cultivation.
- 2) High fertility of women for high births.
- 3) Spiritual protection and source of providence.
- 4) Victory in case of war from adversaries.
- 5) Wisdom for leadership decision making and governance.
- 6) Protection against misfortune e.g. diseases, malady etc.

When asked whether the local people could prove that ancestors actually provided the above a participant (WUGD1) in Wum community was resolute saying:

*“When the Fon (Leader) wants to make any libation, in his prayer, he calls his great-great grandfathers who have ruled this throne. He is the twelfth from the time of paternal succession. If he has the opportunity, he names the other eleven asking them to support him in what he is doing here and guide him or direct him to give the wisdom to be able to rule us [,,,] Till the end of time we cannot cut relationship with the ancestors. If you do that won't you die”?*

The above quote bears testimony to the firm conviction within indigenous communities that leadership effectiveness and indeed community survival depends to a large extent on the intervention of ancestors and gods. For this reason, leaders are prepared in very special ways to spiritually strengthen them and establish the much needed connection to the ancestors. Through this process they are able to gain power and wisdom for leadership. The popular rituals which are normally performed on leaders - specifically in communities within the Mambila region are explored below.

### **5.3.3 Rituals for the installation of a leader**

The process of installing a leader in communities in Mambilla region is fairly similar in all six communities in the region. The process begins with the ruling family presenting the candidate to the community. The appointed leader is then exposed to a day of suffering when the candidate is stripped-bear with each member of the community allowed to through filth, dirt and even spittle upon the appointee leader.

This process is intended to humiliate the appointee in order to instil a sense of humility and service to the community. The process also strengthens and empowers the appointee for leadership. After this process of dehumanisation, the candidate is made to live in one of the sacred huts housing the remains of previous leaders of the community for a number of days. Here the leader is initiated into the secret institutions and groups of sages and magicians who 'spiritually open the eyes of the appointee to his blindness and ignorance to the spiritual world such that he is able to communicate with ancestors and gods. To these gods and ancestors he will return time after time to demand favour; wisdom, advice and solutions to the problems of the community.

The actual enthronement is usually a community-wide event in which the entire community and neighbouring communities take part. To confirm the appointed leader, (more so in communities in the Cross River region) two slides of Kola nut are used as a dice and thrown on the ground by an appointed elder or a king-maker. If the inner sides of the both parts of the nut both show their inner sides, it is read as 'laughter', meaning confirmation by the gods and ancestors. However, if the two inner sides of the kola nut fall flat revealing their outer skin, it is read as displeasure and rejection by the ancestors. If only one of the slides shows the inner side, this is read as partial acceptance. In such a case more rituals and sacrifices will be performed and the process repeated until the inner sides of the two slides fall upwards. Only after the two inner sides of the kola nut have been thrown and the inner sides have revealed the inner faces can the appointed community leader be accepted and recognised.

What is quite interesting in the installation process is that the entire community takes part in empowering the community leader. The involvement of the community means that more people become part of the empowerment process and thus share in the process of community leadership. Through such involvement, a shared working relationship is built in which the leader recognises the role of the community. Also, the community authenticates the legitimacy of the appointed leader and by so doing accepts to be willing and happy followers and contributors in the leadership of the community. This way power is shared between the leader and members of the wider community who take various roles in community leadership.

### 5.3.4 The burial rites of leaders

In the communities of; Akum, Weh, Wum, Esu within the Mambilla region, special rites and rituals are usually performed at the demise of an appointed community leader. Before laying the deceased leader to rest, the skeleton of the previous leader is exhumed cleaned and coated with camwood<sup>17</sup>. This camwood treatment is believed to refresh and reinvigorate the previous leader such that he is able to respond to the voices of the community when called upon. The remains of the leader just deceased is then laid on the now camwood-treated skeleton of the former leader. The reasons explained for this way of burial and the necessity to keep all the skeletons of previous leaders physically connected to one another was explained in the following narrative from a participant (ES11) in the community of Esu saying:

*“The body of the leader who died before this present one who is to be buried is exhumed and coated with camwood carefully... that...is, like anointing the bones to give back the honour that it deserves to prove that he was given a befitting burial. And so, with that, the bones need to be re-anointed and they are placed back there with the present person that they are burying so that the bones have contact with this next corpse...this is the same for all the leaders who have died in our community since our forefathers came here...they are all buried in the same house... inside that house at the Chiefs place which was shown to you”.*

The above narrative reiterates the importance of post-mortem ritual and physical connection of the skeletons of past leaders. This burial process would seem to corroborate previous discussions about the necessity for spiritual continuity through ancestral genealogical lineage or hereditary. This burial ritual underpins a philosophy of life after death. The rituals further reinforce the perception that leadership is underpinned by conformity to the local beliefs, culture and traditions of the community. In this respect it is assumed that leadership would be ineffective if the local cultural and traditional beliefs and practices were ignored or wrongly conducted. Because of the firm belief in the above historical rituals a psychological

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<sup>17</sup> Camwood is a shrubby, hard-wooded African tree. It also known as African sandalwood and the bark of the tree is commonly used to make a red dye used for many skin and medicinal applications in sub-Saharan African countries. It is the bark of the tree that is ground into a dusty form and then mixed with water and other herbs to decorate the bones of deceased leaders in some tribes in parts of Cameroon and Nigeria – SSA.

superman-like perception tends to surround the image of the appointed community leader. A popular perception deriving from such customs is the notion that every appointed leader possesses extraordinary capabilities.

### **5.3.5 The image of the indigenous leader**

The ritual practices explored above in relation to leadership tend to enforce a super-human image around leaders who become perceived as able to perform magic. This next excerpt from a group discussion at the communities of Ussa within Mambilla region is one of many similar narratives in which participants gave the impression that their community leaders was super-natural.

*“There are things associated with leadership in [name] land which has to do with the spiritual world. For instance, if you go to ‘[name]’ palace, there are standard traditional officials. [name] is the paramount Majesty. If you go to his palace you can witness certain things. Sometimes if he wants to throw out saliva (spittle) he does it in a very special way.... If he says let this thing should happen now, he will do it and it will happen”*

What the above narrative and several others recorded and witnessed in the field bring to light is the very sophisticated nature of spirituality as well as the depth at which local belief system influence the constructions of leadership in the indigenous understudy. It is therefore not surprising that spirituality emerged as an important and cardinal aspect of leadership in the entire research process.

### **5.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has explored the meaning, thinking, nature of and practice of leadership in twelve indigenous communities in Cross River and Mambilla regions from the Social Anthropological perspective. Through ethnographic approaches and the self-experience and senses of the researcher as a native of part of the research field, some important learning has emerged about leadership in context. An important learning about leadership in the socio-cultural context of the two regions is that leadership is not just perceived as what people do in organisations. Leadership in this context is constructed as human action in relation to the immediate environment. Hence, in thinking about leadership, trees, animals and historical events that relate

to the local environment are included. This association of human action and environment draws attention to the seemingly abiding relationship that seems to exist between the 'self' and the 'environment' in and African indigenous context.

Similarly, it is evident from the data that leadership is articulated both as the actions of the appointed community leader and as an unfolding and continuous process that involves the role of others in various reproductions and configurations rather than a fixed orderly practice or phenomenon. The multiple ways of conceptualising and practicing leadership exhibit both individualistic and inclusive and relational concepts of leadership based on leader individual actions and inter-relationships between leaders and other members of the community.

Perhaps more importantly the chapter uncovered foundations of leadership thinking and practice in the local, socio-cultural context. Central to this is the understanding that leadership is mostly about, spirituality, symbolism, religion and the local African philosophical mind-set or worldview. Further, the chapter informs a key necessity of indigenous community leadership which is that of being able to follow the local cultural and traditional beliefs and practices. With regards to empowerment, the chapter makes apparent the notion that the power and duty for community leadership is legitimised and culturally supported by members of the community without which leadership authority may be impossible. In this process, age and other relevant competences of the local customs, culture and traditions become important in establishing effective community leadership. Whilst leadership is about the local culture, tradition and histories, the prime role of leadership remains that of maintaining a coherent, social and harmonious community spirit in which every member of the community feels a sense of belonging and cultural identity. The theoretical debates and issues raised within this chapter are further explored in the discussion chapter seven.

## **Chapter six: Findings - Organisational approach**

Chapter five presented findings from the social anthropological perspective. This is the second of two findings chapters and presents findings from an organisational perspective employing discursive leadership approaches. Discursive leadership explores what people see, think and talk about leadership in an organisational setting (Fairhurst, 2008; Ford, 2006). Thus, a greater part of the empirical data informing the findings presented in this chapter were generated through unstructured interviews and group discussions with employees, managers and heads of local government councils (LGCs). Unlike in the indigenous community councils which are more concerned with maintaining the local customs, cultures and traditions and managing micro-community projects, LGCs are formal council organisations that provide public services to local indigenous communities. LGCs function in much the same way a city authority or council would operate in UK – contextual differences recognised. The LGCs in the two regions of focus are headed by elected chairpersons. The chairpersons are normally the most influential authority in decision making and in the functioning of the councils. He/she is responsible for the day to day management of the activities of the council along with employees and some government appointed civil servants. As expected in constructionist research, the data revealed a range of multiple, complex, diverse and at times ambiguous meanings, imaginations and thoughts about leadership in context (Ford, 2006). However, a number of common dominant discourses emerged providing narratives and constructions of leadership reflective of the context. The main findings are grouped under four major themes each of which includes sub-themes. Four first order themes emerged from the organisational perspective including:

1. Leadership conceptualisation and meanings,
2. Unethical leadership practice
3. Leadership in practice,
4. Leadership and change.

## **6.1 Leadership conceptualisation and meanings**

This theme explores ways in which leadership is conceptualised and meanings accorded to leadership in context. Three sub-themes can be delineated under this broad theme namely:

- Meanings of leadership,
- Conceptualisation of leadership,
- Factors that influence meanings and conceptualisation.

### **6.1.1 Meanings of leadership: What is leadership?**

A variety of summary thoughts and meanings surfaced from the discussions and interviews. Table 6.1 below provides an illustration of some of the thoughts, articulations and meanings provided by participants.

Table 6.1 summary definitions and meanings of leadership (source: Eyong, fieldwork)

Participant	Description	Researcher's interpretation
Etung LGC (ET11)	The leader is one who...or a Leader is anyone who knows what to do and how to do it and how to lead people to do what he knows how to do. And leadership is organising people and sensitising them on what to do at every given time.... direct the crowd on how to go..	Leadership is based on the knowledge and ability to organise people and achieve community goals. A process of and individual directing and sensitising..
Wum LGC (WUI2)	Leadership is about making sure that the LGC is well run, that all the projects are realised and making sure that workers are treated with respect and work in a good environment of love and understanding.	Leadership is about respect for followers and achieving results
Mamfe LGC (MAI 2)	Leadership is about being the head, listening to what people want and organising the people to achieve the things that the people want. Leadership is having a vision, foresight, power and ability to make people to work with you.	Leadership is gauging organisational expectation and being able to meet those expectations while respecting followers.
Ussa LGC (USGD1)	When you are mentioned as a leader, people respect you ...especially when you protect their interest...there is also economic viability, somebody that is lazy cannot be made a leader in our community. You cannot just sit down, having no focus, having no vision and then planning to be a leader that is impossible	Leadership embodies respect, is about protecting the interest of the people and requires vision, economic viability, is for a hardworking person.
TAI (1, 2, 3)	“ the person who directs you is the leader” “the head is a person who takes control..” “that can be able to solve problems of others”	Leadership as problem-solving, control and influence in directing.
USI (1 )	“a leader should also have a philanthropic ...this thing.. try to sacrifice for others. If you are a leader and you are always selfish, you will end up selling fish..”	Leadership as philanthropy and helping
EY11	“it means somebody who is placed at the helm of any organisation, any group, any set-up that is,, maybe to be controlled by someone” “Not a person that will be self-imposing but who has the qualities of working with a team, working with your collaborators.	Leadership as headmanship and as involving some sort of control but not self-imposing.
Ikom LGC IKGD (1,3,5)	Before you become a leader, you must have served... it is by serving that you learn to lead ... it is by serving that people get to know that you can be a leader.	Leadership as involving prior experience of followership

It is apparent from the different narratives presented in table 6.1 above that the phenomenon of leadership evokes different meanings, perceptions and constructions in the minds of and in the experiences of participants in the various LGCs.

- To the participant at Etung, LGC, leadership is the ability to organise people and achieve community goals. It is also a process of directing and sensitising followers about what to do to achieve the goals of the organisation.
- The participant in Wum sees leadership as requiring respect for followers and achieving results.
- In Mamfe the participant thought that leadership was more about being able to gauge the expectation of followers.
- The participant at Ussa LGC expressed the view that leadership was more about and protection of the interest of the people and that it required vision, economic viability and that leadership was for hardworking people
- Yet in Takum the view was that leadership is about a process of problem-solving, control, influence and directing.

Other views expressed elsewhere were that:

- Leadership requires a degree of philanthropy, the willingness to help and be empathic towards others.
- Leadership is headmanship and involves an acceptable level of control in a sociable and communal way but without self-imposing.
- Leadership requires prior experience as a follower.

The various views, constructions and definitions provided by participants in the different LGCs clearly indicate that the phenomenon of leadership embodies a multiplicity of meanings. Similarly, leadership is conceptualised in multiple ways. What this diversity of meanings seem to suggest is that there could be no unique perception or definition of leadership specific to the African, sub-Saharan Africa, Cameroonian or Nigeria working environment. Rather, it reiterates the theory that the manner in which leadership is constructed depends on the local cultural and situational context and the experience of the actor or the narrator. The multiple, diverse and contrasting outcome presented above lends support to a complexity theory (see e.g. Alimo-Metcalfe et al., 2000; Ford, 2006, Metcalfe et al., 2000; Jackson and Parry, 2011). In particular, the above pluralistic definition and construction corroborate Alimo-Metcalfe et al., (2000) who uncovered more definitions of leadership than the thirty UK-based organisations studied. Hence, irrespective of the context in which leadership is studied, this study shows that the

meanings and constructions ascribed to leadership are always diverse, multiple and complex. Moving beyond definitions and perceptions of leadership the context revealed a number of dominant discourses as further explored below.

### **6.1.2 Leadership as performance**

In six of the eight LGCs participants appeared to perceive or describe leadership in relation to the performance or achievement of the chairperson or leader of the LGC. A clear example came from participant (USI1) at LGC (7) by means of an evaluation of the achievement of past leaders of the LGC. This participant explained saying:

*“Leadership is about what you can do for the local government area...we had the last one (local government Chairman) [name] who didn’t do anything, the other [name] for two terms of office, he didn’t do anything...Now compare this to the present local government chairman.... He has opened the streets from... [-]... to that ‘T’ junction.... when he came we didn’t have light because of transformer....this man (current leader of the LGC) removed (from council budget) 500 thousand (Nigerian Naira) and ordered a transformer and they installed it in his presence...now we are enjoying light. A leader like that who does these things and produce results for everyone to see shows good leadership” (my clarification in brackets).*

The above participant’s construction of leadership is much more result, achievement or performance-oriented. To this participant, outcome determines leadership. Based on this participant’s construction of leadership it would seem that the immediate needs of people in context influences what leadership meaning. In this case the ability of the leader of the council to provide roads, bridges, houses, portable water, and healthcare to inhabitants of the area constructed a sense of leadership meaning. Therefore, one way in which leadership is constructed within the LGCs is the degree to which leaders are able to meet the immediate needs of the local inhabitants. What is interesting here is that the participant also constructs leadership as dependent more on one individual, the head of the LGC. This leader-centred construction would seem to mirror mainstream leader-centric concepts of leadership as evident in such theories as: transformational, charismatic and visionary (chapter two, section 2.3.1). Further, the definition of leadership in relation to performance also corroborates the popular perception of leadership as a panacea and solution to various tribulations facing contemporary society (Bolden et al., 2011: Ford et al., 2008). This performance-based construction of leadership suggests that this participant was not very much concerned with the ‘how’ or why of leadership. Rather, it is the ‘what’ that

leadership could bring to the local people that really seemed to matter. Therefore in terms of thinking about approaches to leadership or leadership styles, the need to achieve outcomes as a leader seems to override appreciations of particular leadership ethos or influence of culture within the LGC. Seeing from this perspective, it is fair to construct leadership from this perspective as more of the end justifying the means rather than leadership as a means to an end.

The notion of leadership as a means to an end was common across all the LGCs. A succinct expression of this dominant way of thinking about leadership was provided by participant (EY11) at LGC (3) - a chairperson in one of the LGCs explaining as follows:

*“What is more important which people want to see is not how you work with your colleagues or connections outside of the council, our people are more interested in what I am able to do for them, you know this is a public office and people want to see you extend electric cables, dig wells and build pipe-born water, they don’t care how I am able to get the funds from Government or FEICOM. Leadership here is about what you have done...you pride your leadership on that....that is how they will judge you, so you have to fight and do something... by any means”*

Again the above narrative emphasises the relevance of performance in the definition and conception of leadership. Therefore, indeed leadership meaning emerged as the result of what the leaders of the LGCs can achieve for the local indigenous populations while in office.

### **6.1.3 Factors influencing leadership**

At least three dominant factors emerged as important in shaping constructions of leadership in the LGCs. The most dominant of these were: the local cultural hegemonies, Africa’s political relationship with the West (colonialism) and current socio-political events. The local indigenous community culture influences leadership thinking in the sense that some local ideas and ways of enacting and discussing leadership are usually carried into the LGC working environment by employees. An example observed in most of the LGCs was the necessity for leaders to conform to the local culture by showing their due respect to some employees of a certain advanced age. This expected behaviour derives from the local cultural norms and values which impose upon younger people to respect their elderly persons irrespective of their role or level of hierarchy in the organisation. This cultural

imposition of culture within formal working spaces was reiterated by participant (TAI1) in LGC (7) saying:

*“You know there are some other things we observe as taboo in our own culture even in government office. These things are our culture or the way we do things in our families at home... it is what our forefathers have been doing since many centuries. You cannot change these things even in this Local Government... Even the chairman of the Council has to respect elders in the council whether they occupy a high position or not. He has to bow down to them to greet them and behave in a way that people approve”*

The cultural imposition expressed by the above participants can broadly be seen as contrary normal organisational work practices where leader-follower relationships are mainly based on hierarchy and legitimate power rather than age. The fact that indigenous cultural practices are imposed within the formal – Western- styles LGCs work spaces is a demonstration of the influence brought by the local context. What was also observable is that, the LGCs being a Western-styled created organisation also tries to influence local work processes and ways of leading as explained by a senior employee (WUI2) in LGC (7) saying:

*“There are certain things that require the Western way of governing in these modern days. Although most of what we do here...since this council is a government organisation...emm...we receive funds from the Government, FEICOM, (government body) NGOs and also collect local taxes – so we need our staff to come to work on time, complete their work and respect the heads of departments. If any of our staffs fails to do this....eeemmm... there is punishments and even dismissal... So we function like any public service organisation in the country and the government lays the guidelines that we follow. The Western style of leadership helps to make people disciplined and serious at work. We cannot operate like a village council or a private business or even an NGO where things are done in the cultural way”*

This participant’s explanation and those of the former highlight the dual nature of contemporary leadership thinking in more formal organisations in context. If dual systems or leadership and organising are in operation in the local African indigenous context, then one could not talk of African leadership without implying a considerable degree of Western influence especially in formal organisations such as LGCs. Given, the inevitability of this co-habitation of Western and Afro-centric leadership thinking, leadership in the LGCs tends to be articulated, understood and practiced in consideration of both the local cultural and traditional principles and Western ideals. This kind of arrangement was vividly explained in a group discussion at Ikom LGC with participant (IKGD4) saying:

*“Here at this council, we have the traditional rulers who are in charge of traditional and cultural matters in the local government area...Then coming to the office as we are here, you equally have leaders who are in charge to manage the affairs of the office and the local government council projects, employees, finances and all that concerns the LGC....So in a way...errr... we do serve both the cultural issues through the cultural way. When we cannot solve them, we refer such cases to the department of cultural affairs which deals with matter of the local traditional laws, customs and culture.”*

The above arrangement in which the LGCs address aspects of the local tradition was also found to apply in Wum LGG (7) in the Mambila region with participant (WUI2) explaining that:

*“There are certain things which can only be solved through the traditional culture of the Aghem, Weh or Esu people. For those kinds of problems our chairman cannot do anything...those kinds of issues are handled by some personnel here in this our office who know about these traditions and it is their duty to lead in those areas – for example if somebody disobeys the masquerade (cultural dance with masks) how do you deal with that in the LGC? Emm... we send that to the cultural authorities to deal with it traditionally. However, our main focus is to realise our projects and this has nothing to do with the local traditional way of leadership...although even in this office we still respect the local traditions of the people here”*

Again, the above quotes support the inherent complexity of co-habitation and hybridity in leadership construction in the context.

A third influence that emerged from the data relates to local and national politics and is a result of social movements of people between communities. Talking to a range of participants it was evident that there was a growing sense of redundancy and diminishing role of indigenous leadership ideals in the changing national political and administrative arrangements in both Cameroon and Nigeria. Participants' narratives seemed to reject culturally-influenced leadership thinking as out of place and irrelevant in the new political dispensation in the two countries. For instance, participant (USGD4) at Ussa LGC, re-narrating an event of the visit of a local government official to the local indigenous community leaders observed as follows:

*“So they asked the traditional ruler to talk.....he could not speak English, he only told the informant (translator) that please tell him we are grateful. When the traditional leader cannot speak English and cannot be part of the modern time, what will that cultural knowledge (of leadership) help at this time when everything including finance is with the state and Federal Government? Leadership is about*

*having the education and connection, being smart and brave and able to go to Abuja...emmm... talk to people. Errr...fight in politics. If the traditional leader only sits here - you will not have even one Naira”.*

Another participant (USGD3) further highlighting the weakened power position and influence of indigenous community leaders questioned the rationale of indigenous leadership approaches and usefulness at the current time in a group discussion saying:

*“You know as a leader you are supposed to be the one who says, cut like this, they cut... but if a leader goes to where they will cut and give him; are you a real leader? When it comes to cultural heritage and other things the public service leaders will say; speak - but culture does not produce anything, hence basing leadership on culture is useless”*

The above expression makes apparent the influence of a progressive movement from indigenous cultural leadership discourse to a concurrent articulation of leadership relative to the new national politics and governance in both countries. This influence would seem to indicate a deep infiltration of national politics into leadership thinking in indigenous communities. The net effect is a stigmatisation and dilution of the local cultural ways of thinking and practicing leadership. Hence, a third dimension which seems to have been added to the Western imported and local Afro-centric cohabitation is what this thesis captions as: ‘neo-political discourse’. Drawing on this dynamism, complexity and multi-factored influences and tension, this thesis would argue that theorising leadership in a formal organisation within an indigenous African context as a smooth hybrid of Western and African cultural influences may be overly simplistic and misleading.

#### **6.1.4 Theme Summary**

This theme explored meanings, constructions and perceptions of leadership within the LGCs as well as some of the factors that influence leadership discourse and practices. The exploration has illuminated three main points:

- First, leadership is defined in multiple, diverse and contrasting ways.
- Second, leadership is articulated in relation to the performance or achievement of the leaders of the LGCs. Particularly, the extent to which leaders are able to deliver on projects that address local community-wide needs such as roads, bridges and so on.

- Third, leadership thinking and discourse is influenced Afro-centric, Western and new-political ideology with a tendency towards diminishing the relevance of indigenous leadership.

## **6.2 Unethical practices in leadership in the LGCs**

This theme explores some of the key unethical issues in leadership practice in the LGCs. Sub-themes under this theme include: Corruption, tribalism and favouritism and motivations for leadership

### **6.2.1 The problem of corruption in LGCs**

The issue of corruption in the leadership of LGCs was a common discourse and probably the most worrying concern of participants in all LGCs. The most popular ways in which corruption was expressed was in the form of leaders engaging in acts of financial misappropriation, embezzlement of council funds and bribery. To this extent, the question of corrupt practice emerged as an important aspect of leadership in context. Participant (TAGD6) expressed dismay over the rampant misappropriation of funds by the leadership of LGCs saying;

*“This is happening now because our world is now corrupt...Our people say ‘when the mouth has eaten the eyes become very shy’ So the leaders collect something and when it comes to the public, the eyes will become very shy and then the injustice is effected - this is (kunyaaaa- Kunyaaa) (laughter)...then you know that they (the leaders) have engaged in this corrupt behaviour of embezzlement”*

A similar narrative highlighting the problem of corruption was expressed by participant (ETGD4) at LGC (2) who declared saying:

*“Our present leaders are so greedy for money and corrupt. They want to be rich by all cause because they have been made the leaders”*

Yet another participant (WUI2) told a story of a case saying:

*“One time the former chairman made a private arrangement with a contractor to hire two caterpillars to grade the road leading to [name] unfortunately for him, one of the graders broke down during the work.... It is still there and you surely saw it abandoned by the roadside as you entered the town. It is after this incident that we got to know that even the caterpillars belonged to the chairman and he had billed the council millions for that small work which was not even completed in the end... so you see, the people only come to politics to make money, they are not interested in the suffering of the local people”*

The above accounts and the many more expressed in the field draw attention to the sporadic nature of corrupt practices in the leadership of LGCs and would seem to concur with the generally expressed conduct of leaders in political office in most west and central African countries (Ali, 2015; Owoye and Bissessar, 2014; Taylor, 2015). Compellingly, the ramification of unethical practice in the two regions was evident as most of the public social infrastructure such as: hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, portable water etc. are in a very deplorable and required good leadership and community involvement to address. The resultant consequence of corrupt practices was clearly the inability of the leadership of the council authorities to improve the living standards of the local people.

Surprisingly, though, the prevalent unethical practice was overtly discussed as though it was normal practice. In fact, participants laughed, joked and felt amused – when articulating the nature of corrupt practices such as embezzlement and bribery as using coded language such as '*Kunya-Kunya*', '*roja-roja*', '*applico*', '*choko*' and so on. The overt manner in which corrupt practices were discussed suggests that such practices have become regular, largely expected and normalised.

### **6.2.2 Tribalism and favouritism**

Tribalistic and favouritism was another aspect of unethical leadership practice that emerged as dominant in participant discussions. Tribalism and favouritism was mostly expressed in relation to the manner in which the leaders of the LGCs engaged with the process of employment. In the majority of LGCs, council leaders single-handedly decided who, how and when to employ. For this reason, most leaders benefited from the freedom to recruit friends, family/tribal kinsmen and political allies at strategic positions. In one case, the community leader used employment to compensate some individuals who had supported an election campaign. The leaders of the council had no clear employment procedure. Rather, the heads of the council seemed to have the freedom to employ as they found necessary. Participant (TAGD3) in LGC (5) explained a typical employment scenario and a case in which a leader employed some individuals for political reasons saying:

*“The chairman has the right to do employment of the junior staff on his own. Like now we have some people, they call them casual labourers who were employed by the chairman. There were lots of people running round without jobs, so he had to assist so that they will be able to get something...emmm...the little thing they get from there err.... they can manage to feed their families (laughter), but these people are political thugs who help during election and who are deployed as enforcement officers who collect tax and provide revenue and do other kinds of work for the chairman”*

On further exploration it emerged that this was a common practice - perhaps more so in councils within Nigeria than in Cameroon. Except for the larger LGCs which operate a more established HR department, it emerged that a great majority of employees in the smaller LGCs were directly employed by the leader without any effort to match professional skills to job role. Thus, in the smaller LGCs, and to a lesser extent in the larger LGCs, employees tended to be relations, kinsmen or political allies of the elected LGC chairperson. Hence, the practice of tribalism and favouritism by leaders and top managers was a dominant discourse. Participant (TAGD6) in LGC (7) lamented against this employment practice saying:

*“Even in employment, a person will read law and is supposed to work in justice...because he knows somebody...he can be given a position in finance to be a financial controller...emm... (mixture of laughter and grim)...that is the way it happens here... you see”*

The above tribalistic and preferential leadership style reflected in the employment extends to other areas such as advancement, contract allocation, remuneration and other benefits. In spite of the recognition of wide-spread unethical practices – as mentioned above, these behaviour were not seriously addressed. Thus, there is a clear disparity between leader discourses and employee discourses about leadership within the LGCs. The general expectation of the local people is to have leaders who are able to put council resources into effective use for the general interest of the council area. On the contrary, it seems that the goal or motivation of some leaders is seemingly to take advantage of the opportunity to make financial and material gains.

### **6.2.3 Motivations to take up leadership**

Empirical data revealed evidence of conflicting motivations or reasons for which individuals in the community decided to take up leadership in the LGCs. First there was the main goal of delivering local social needs such as the construction and

maintenance of roads, Schools, Bridges etc. This motivation was always foremost expressed in election campaigns. Then there was self-satisfaction goal to make personal gains through financial misappropriation. Thus, broadly it emerged that in seeking the leadership of LGCs, aspirants exhibit covert and overt behaviours. The overt is what the local people are told will be achieved while the covert is not usually known. This latter motivation appeared to be the most dominant. In the first place, it was apparent that leaders had to recover the investments made during the electoral campaign and secondarily to provide possibilities for fellow kinsmen and fellow comrades of the winning party. The above motivation and subsequent desires explains the strategic ways in which contracts are awarded (such as articulated by participant WUI2 above). The need to recover investments also influences how funds are allocated. These motives and process is explained by participant (USGD2) at LGC (8) as follows:

*“In political elections when somebody goes out to campaign he will make promises but when he wins he will not keep to his word. The person will say err... when I was campaigning I spent money. So I will compensate myself...so you see...they will try to recover the money that they spent. Sometimes they do something for the area but only a small percentage of what was promised. So democracy has changed...err...a new way of leadership has been introduced”*

However, whilst the above narrative encapsulates the popular practice and motivation for leadership in two LGCs, participants acknowledged corrupt practices but nonetheless felt satisfied with the achievement of the LGC under the current leaders. This feeling of part satisfaction was expressed with positive comments by participant (MA11) in LGC (1) as follows:

*“Through our hard work and vision for [LGC] of our leaders we have been able to construct new council offices. We have also maintained the roads and provided medication to the local hospital. We have extended the project of rural electrifications and through FEICOM funding we will be able to provide portable water to three villages. So you can see that even with the limited funds our leaders are doing something for the people. The goal of my our leaders and all the workers of the council is to improve the lives of our people and that is what we are trying to do, but sometimes the people want more but we only do what is possible”*

The above participant's positive expression suggests that whilst there is an overwhelming recognition of corrupt practices and self-interest behaviours, such practices vary across the LGCs. There is also a suggestion of over-expectation from the local populations which might suggest that whatever the leadership of the

councils is able to achieve is always perceived as insufficient. Thus, although corrupt practices may be prevalent, the exact extent of such practices may never be ascertained.

#### **6.2.4 Summary of theme**

This Theme explored the prevalence of unethical leadership practices in LGCs in the regions under study. The exploration has led to the observation that:

- First, the prevalence of corrupt practices is evident in participant narrative about leadership. This unethical practice tends to hamper the ability of the leaders of LGCs to meet the goals and objectives of providing community social services.
- Tribalism and favouritism seems to pervade leadership practice with leaders engaged in various forms of strategic self-serving decisions in the employment, promotion and remuneration of staff. In this process, leaders favour their kinsmen, family members and political allies.
- Lastly, a key motivation for leadership is to recover funds spent in elections and to make financial gains. However, this practice varies between councils with some leaders motivated by delivering LGC goals. Also, local demands tend to be excessive, thus making suspicions of embezzlement a constant discourse.

### **6.3 Leadership Practice**

This theme illuminates on the day to day leadership practices or actions of leadership within the LGCs. First the working environment is examined and the various actors identified. In the process challenges to leadership practice are highlighted and ways in which the LGCs have attempted to address such challenges are elicited. Sub-themes that emerge under this theme include: leadership doing, the nature of leadership and approaches to leadership.

#### **6.3.1 Leadership doing**

Multiple narratives, descriptions and discourses were utilised as activities or actions that constitute the act of leadership in the LGCs. However, a number of common acts emerged more prominently including: coordinating, assisting, training, guiding

and motivating. The act of leading was described as a meandering social process whereby, some appointed individuals undertake to provide direction, exert some degree of influence and coordinate the activities of others to achieve the goals of the LGC. At times these activities are instinctive without prior arrangement and taken by unappointed individuals. However, more generally, specific leadership 'acts' were undertaken by individuals in particular job functions. In LGC (2) for instance the act of leading was described by Participant (EY11) as follows:

*"Normally, I have been here longer and I know what is requested - so I always take time to transfer some of my knowledge to the new staff so that they know what we expect from them. So,,eer...I can say I lead by example that is...err...first doing things in the right way so that the others see how I do things and copy. Also, I organise small seminars... sometimes just an informal talk to say; do this, do it this way...emm.. to guide the younger ones. I also coordinate certain office activities such as filing, report writing, even office arrangement and cleaning. So many ways you know...just to motivate the staff and make it possible to do our job and do it well"*

Another participant a senior resource person at LGC (4) added that leadership was not just a matter for those at the top of the organisation or those holding posts of responsibility by observing that:

*"Leadership here happens in two ways, sometimes it is we the senior people who coordinate and direct the other people who are down below like the secretaries, cleaners or even the gatemen. I for one, I make sure that when I see something that is not right, I approach the person to say: this thing you did like this is not correct, please next time do it like this, this is how it is done. So by teaching and showing them you are motivating them to feel comfortable with their work....But this is not only from us at the top, the Chairman or Mayor. Sometimes it is the junior people who point to our mistakes and some things that we have not done right. In that case, they also take part in leadership"*

Teaching, coaching and social interaction emerge as key acts of leadership in this above narrative. It would seem that less power distance is exhibited in ways that junior employees feel very much at ease with their managers. This humbling behaviour by the leadership of the LGC with subordinates and vice-versa appears to create a working environment in which there is a general 'willingness to obey', show respect to authority in much the same way as one would do to elderly persons in the local cultural context. This cultural way of responding to leadership and in the process facilitating leadership was explained by participant (TAGD5) in LGC (7) saying:

*“Here at this council, I am under the head of department so I have to show loyalty to him and obey him and whatever he asks me to do... at any time he can wake me up to perform a function and I have to do it for him because he is the head and we respect both age and hierarchy in our culture”*

Again, what emerges is the willingness by subordinates to obey their leaders and recognise the need to be at their service for the general success of the council. Another participant (ETGD4) in LGC (3) traces this subtle and fluent leader-follower concordance from the local cultural and traditional leader-follower relationship in which the later undertakes to wilfully follow the former saying:

*“One important thing in our culture is respect, and we greet people who are our seniors. You will greet them morning, afternoon. It is said that: ‘a child who greets people will eat even from the hands of a greedy person’... From where I come from, we respect elders...we respect our chief, our woman chief. We socialise, laugh, make jokes, tell stories and live like brothers and sisters, when one loses a relation or if one of us is sick, we feel involved ... we are like one ... but most important we respect. It is this respect for our chief in the village or family that we bring into work here at the council. So, we respect our chairman who is our master (Ogah) here in this council. If you insult a chief in our village in those days ‘emm’...they will chase you out of the village”*

The two explanations above highlight yet again another sense in which local cultures, traditions, and way of life influence leader-follower relationship even in a formal organisational context such as the LGC. Therefore, whilst there was evidence of the pursuit of individual goal through corrupt practices and asymmetries of power between leaders and followers as earlier articulated, there was nonetheless a clear demonstration of good understanding and sound inter-personal social engagement of leaders with their subordinates.

### **6.3.2 The nature of leadership within LGCs**

A contrasting feature that emerged when exploring the nature of leadership within the LGCs was that in spite of the politics, tribalism and corrupt practices that was ascribed to leader behaviour, at a more hands-on and collective level, there was evidence of humanistic and sociable inter-relationship between leaders and followers and between colleagues. For instance, there was a general ease for top managers to engage in conversations, demand for service and interact with employees in a friendly and amicable way. It could be observed in work processes within the

councils that leaders were always eager to listen to the personal worries of their subordinates. Subordinates were also able to access and discuss both organisational and personal matters with leaders with far less bureaucratic and power barriers. Hence a social, friendly and lively working relationship created such vibrancy and fluency of communication as expressed by participant (MAI2) of LGC (1) who explained the nature of social relationship with leaders as:

*“We enjoy very good leadership here in this council, our chairman - the mayor is very friendly and inspires everyone in the council. He comes to our office, sits down for a conversation, sometimes he even ask me for solution to some of the problems and when we at the secretariat make a suggestion, he immediately implements that solution. The chairman and all the heads really have a very positive influence on us... They motivate us, provide training, show understanding, and they are close to us, we laugh, joke and socialise with them - we work as a team”*

To the above participant’s explanation reflects a general working ethos observed in most of the councils. Considering the previous findings in section 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 above alluding to the prevalence of corruption and other forms of unethical leadership behaviours, it is controversial how such contrasting and discontinuous chasms revert at the social level presenting an interesting paradoxical and contrasting concomitancy of various realities. On the one hand leadership in characterised by corrupt, dishonest and tribalistic and self-interest-seeking and on the other it emerges as sociable, human and friendly. A probable explanation of this controversy is perhaps the difference between personal action in leadership and the collective process of leadership. In the former, individual interest become projected while in the former, the collective social process unfolds, temporarily shading the latter. Another, explanation may be the unfolding of the local social and cultural values systems which as articulate above may be giving rise to the natural humane and sociable behaviours, thus confronting and moderating the reality of political, personal and tribal interests.

### **6.3.3 Approach to leadership in LGCs**

Following from the above tension and controversy arising from multiple influences a theory of a ‘mixture of configurations of leadership styles echoing visions and narratives of leadership styles akin to: collectivist, relational, individualistic and leader-centred leadership styles characterise leadership practice within the LGCs.

The individualistic and leader-focused discourse could be seen in light of the fact that participants constantly describe leadership in relation to the heads of department, managers or the elected chairperson of the council. A classic encapsulation of this leader-focused narrative was provided by a participant (TAGD5) from Takum LGC who explained saying:

*“Leadership in our own thinking here... assumes that it is the head of any place. That is to say, like a local government secretariat, you have a chairman. That chairman is the main leader. All other people only support him because he gives them authority. There cannot be two leaders or many leaders otherwise there will be trouble... this one will say this and that one will say this. It will be war. They say... there cannot be two captains on a ship. After all only one candidate won the election so why must there be two leaders? The leader has the knife and the yam he decides when, where and how much of the yam he wants to cut. He is followed by other people like the chief of services or senior managers of the various departments but everyone is under the Chairman of the LGC”*

Another participant (IK11) at LGC (4) described the nature of leadership in the LGC as essentially a shared responsibility saying:

*“The way I see leadership here in the council is that many people are involved in it. You have the Chairman and vice Chairmen who are at the top of the organisation. They are the ones who lead everybody in the organisation. They set out the vision and the projects and then the head of all the departments take the lead to try to implement the projects. You also have supervisors, heads of services, even at the level of security and the water people and general labourers....there are leaders at these levels too. So I can say leadership takes place at many levels in all the offices”*

Yet another participant (US11) at LGC (8) whilst staying under the premise of positional leadership also articulated the shared nature of leadership by adding that:

*“You cannot just stand up and say I am a leader. Somebody must make you a leader for you to have the right to lead. The person to give you that authority must be a senior person like in the this our department it is either the head of department, the deputy, the secretary or any senior staff. So everybody can be a leader at different times but there are people who are leaders all the time. Those who are leaders all the time even out of work are those that have been appointed. The rest is just maybe sometime they can say you do this, or be in charge of this. After that you have no power of leadership”*

What is common in the above narratives is that all three participants articulate or conceptualise leadership practice by naming the various roles or offices of the appointed leaders of the LGCs. At the same time, all three recognise the shared and

processual nature of leadership. It would seem therefore that in practice, leadership in the LGCs adopt several approaches none of which is unique to the context.

#### **6.3.4 Summary of section**

This section has explored discursive perceptions built from co-constructions of conceptualisations, practices and the nature of leadership in the LGCs. Under these sub-themes it has emerged that:

- There is a suspicion of unethical practices such as corruption, bribery and embezzlement of LGCs funds and that the prevalence of such practices prevents LGCs from meeting their projective objectives.
- In spite of the supposedly prevailing unethical practices the nature of leadership was humanistic and sociable characterised by friendly inter-relationship between leaders and followers and between colleagues. This simultaneous unethical and amicable, social and humanistic nature of leadership was found to be contrasting and controversial.
- That in practice leadership in the LGCs depicts several concomitant configurations including shared, relational, and leader-centred constructions.

Thus, on the whole, leadership practice in the LGCs is underlined by competing influence, contradictory behaviours, and multiple interests.

#### **6.4 Chapter summary**

The findings presented in this chapter indicate that the phenomenon of leadership is articulated and conceptualised in multiple and diverse ways. This plurality is influenced by the local culture, Western influence and socio-political changes taking place in the two countries. The outcome of these influences is the concomitant expression and exhibition of several complex configurations of practices, styles and approaches including leader-centred, individualistic, shared, relational and at times autocratic leadership styles.

In the midst of the above influences, individual interest emerged, featuring the prevalence of corrupt practices. Hence, there is a general suspicion that the motivation for leadership is mainly for personal enrichment goal and to favour ones kinsmen and political allies rather than wider organisational goals. Thus, a major

challenge for leadership in the majority of the LGCs is that of ensuring ethical practice in ways that discourage favouritism what this thesis would style as: 'nepotistic leadership'<sup>18</sup>.

Whilst, these issues were important at the level of the individual leader, collectively the virtues of respect, humility, sociability and humanity emerged as a working ethos in the councils. These virtues mainly result from the local culture and tradition (as explored in the social anthropological perspective in chapter five) privileging these social values.

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<sup>18</sup> Nepotistic leadership as used in this context refers the leadership practice where leaders or those with power or influence show inappropriate favouritism to relatives, kinsmen or close friends and political allies.

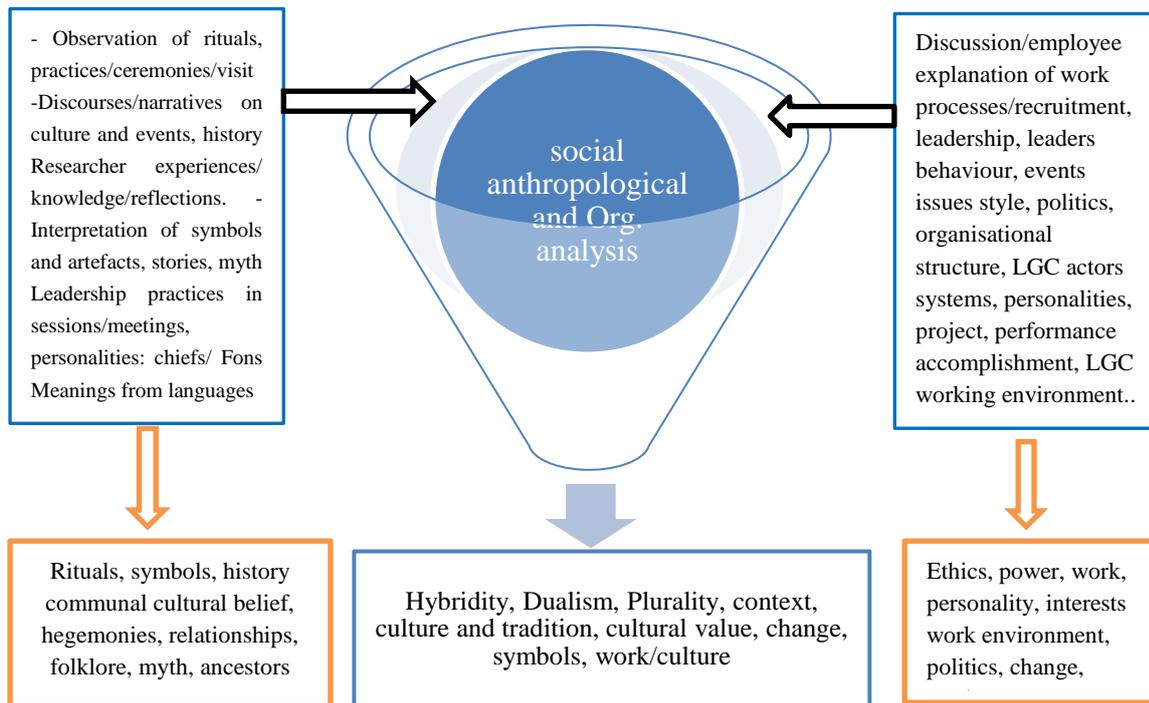
## Chapter seven: Discussion of findings

The overall aim of this study was to explore leadership in the specific socio-cultural context of the selected indigenous communities within the Cross River and Mambila regions of Cameroon and Nigeria. The objective was to gain a better understanding of practices, thinking and meanings of leadership in context. As an exploratory study, an inductive approach was adopted with a determination to engage in an on-going debate and in the process abduction the emerging meanings and constructions. The constructionist approach enabled the co-creation of knowledge through interaction with the local actors in their social world. In anticipation of diversity in participant types, organisational formation and local sub-cultures and traditions, a transdisciplinary approach involving the complementary use of social anthropological and organisational research approach was adopted. Having presented the findings of the overall research in the previous two chapters, this chapter discusses the key issues raised in those chapters in relation the overarching research questions which were:

- *What does the phenomenon of 'leadership' mean to the indigenous communities and people of Cross River and Mambila regions in west and central Africa?*
- *How is leadership articulated and practiced within the local indigenous cultural council institution and in the more formal local government councils in the regions?*

The chapter is structured into three parts. The first part discusses the integrated themes from both the organisational perspective and the social anthropological perspective. The second part discusses findings specific to the organisational perspective, while the third part will discuss findings that surfaced more from the social anthropological perspective. Fig. 7.1 below provides an illustration of the process of thematic integration. The diagram also identifies themes that appeared to have emerged either from the social anthropological or organisational perspective and illustrates how these were separated. The combined process of data collection, analysis, integration, separation and discussion of the empirical findings constructed a social, anthropological and discursive knowledge of indigenous African leadership as envisaged in the thesis title as it emerged during the research process.

Fig. 7.1 Development and integration of themes (source: Eyang)



The above diagram represents in graphical of the main issues and the three principal sets of themes that emerged from the analysis of data from the social anthropological and organisation research approaches combined. Common themes from both research perspectives are outlined at the centre of the funnel. At the bottom-left side of the diagram are themes that surfaced more from the social anthropological analysis. At the bottom-right are located the themes that were more evident from the organisational perspective are located.

### 7.1 Part 1: Discussions of Common Findings from both perspectives

This first part of the chapter discusses common themes that emerged as common in both the social anthropological and organisational perspectives. The process of integrating the two perspectives as explained broadly in chapter four, section 4.7.3 and further illustrated in Fig. 7.1 above led to three higher order themes including:

- Leadership meanings: the 'What(s)', 'Where(s)' and 'How(s)' ,
- Factors that influence the construction of meaning in context
- Change and sources of change in leadership thinking

### 7.1.1 Meanings of leadership in context

#### *Leadership as slippery and elusive*

The first general finding about the nature of leadership in context was that there could be no single meaning, construction or definition of leadership unique to the two African regions. Rather, meanings and constructions of leadership emerged as multiple fragmented practices, discourses and constructions some of which were contradictory and even confusing (Ford, 2006). The fact that no single meaning or definition of leadership could be arrived at corroborated Bennis' (1959) description of leadership as 'slippery' and 'changing' as researchers seek to understand it. Further it is also reminiscent of the conclusions of a transdisciplinary group of leading leadership scholars in the US in 2006 who after five years were unable arrive at a definition. In a book generated from that effort, titled: "*The Quest for a General Theory of Leadership*" Goethals and Sorenson (2007), the conclusion was that it was indeed not possible to arrive at a common definition of leadership. More so, the group argued that one does not necessarily need to have a common theory of leadership for the findings of research into leadership to be credible or legitimate. This conclusion would seem to lend support to the perception that there is no such 'holy grail' definition or characterisation of leadership out there waiting to be found (Ford et al., 2008).

In light of the above it is worth noting the relevance of qualitative inquiry in terms of the opportunities it afforded the research to explore the various ways in which leadership is constructed. In particular the discursive approaches employed enabled the researcher to access the subjectivities of culture, self and identity while surfacing some underlying ambiguity and ambivalence in participant narratives (Ford, 2006; Fairhurst; 2007; Grint, 2005). Furthermore, discursive approaches served as a means to make sense of multiple realities and to observe how the various leadership practices and discourses compete for legitimacy, space and consideration (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010).

What also emerged from the diverse findings was the importance of language in leadership meaning given that meanings were created through the use of language with each language providing quite different construction and expression. This would

seem to support the perception that language shapes both leadership narrative and its practice (Fairhurst, 2007). It follows that when leadership is explored in different language and socio-cultural contexts diversity and plurality of meanings and construction is inevitable.

### *The contextual and cultural contingency of leadership*

If follows from the above that culture and context emerged as central influencing factors in the construction of leadership meaning from both research approaches. For instance, differences were found in the local micro-cultures, traditions and histories from one local tribe, community and region to the other. A succinct example of this (chapter five, section 5.2 and chapter six, section 6.2) was the difference in the discourse and practice of corruption in the local traditional councils which emerged as quite distinct between the ICCs and LGCs. In the former, there was little or no talk of corrupt practices. Rather, leadership was described and practiced in more humanistic and ethical terms. In the later by contrast, discourses highlighted the prevalence of self-seeking corrupt practices. Similarly, differences were also found in the ways in which leadership was symbolically communicated as explained in detail in section 7.3.2 below.

This influence of context and culture in the construction of leadership could be worth reflecting upon. For instance, how different might leadership meanings and discourses have been in the context of a UK council authority. Could a similar research conducted in the city councils authority councils of boroughs of Leeds, Bristol, Bath, Somerset, etc. provided similar meanings? Certainly, the rituals associated with the burial and enthronement rights of the indigenous leaders in Mambila would be quite different from those in the listed UK councils. Thinking about the local indigenous belief systems? These could most certainly not be the case in the UK socio-cultural context as different rituals and practices underpin the notion belief. Thus, context emerged as a key factor that influences leadership practices and how leadership is talked about from one region to the other. The relevance of context in leadership practice has been highlighted in an array of qualitative research work including: Bryman et al., (1986), Ford (2010) Jackson and Perry (2011). For instance in an illustration of the manner in leadership identity, meaning and

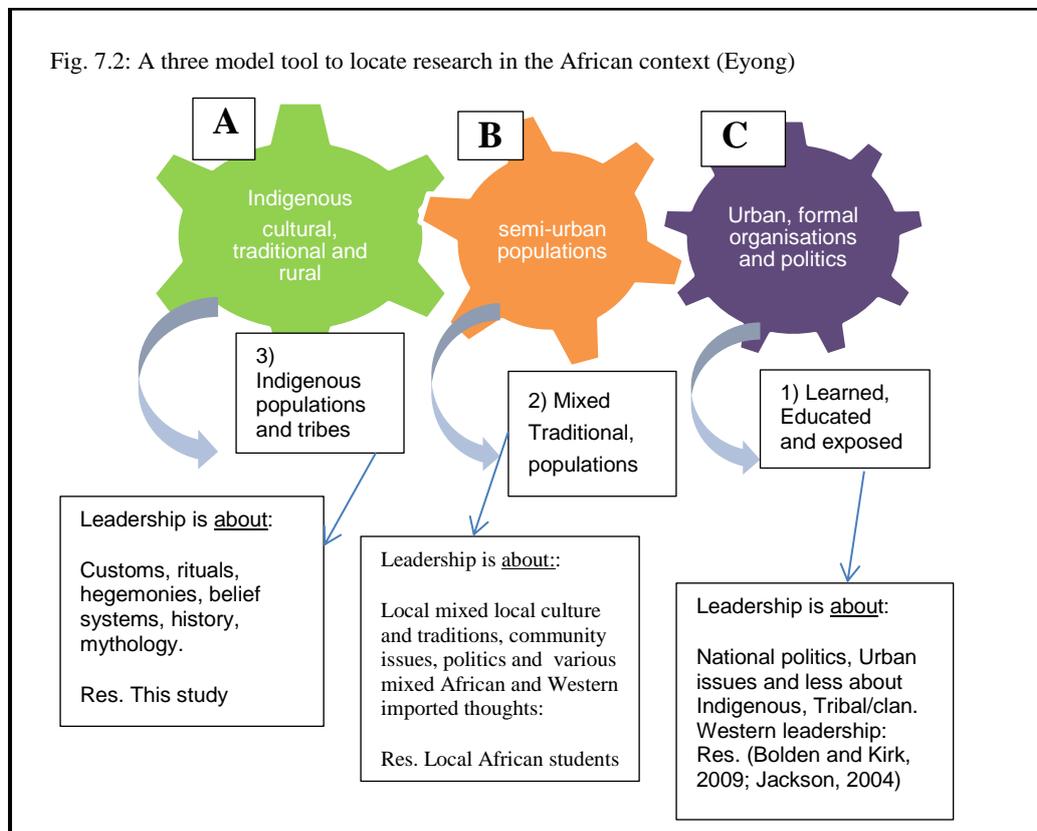
understanding is influenced and shaped by context and culture Ford (2010) argued that:

*“Contextual location and partiality of accounts of leadership, and the recognition that our sense of selves are not only entwined within context and the situations in which they are performed, but also within the hegemonic discourses and culturally shaped narrative conventions” (p. 47).*

Ford’s reflection above underpins the idea that how we think and talk about leadership are reflections of our local histories, traditions and cultural identities or selves. In the context of this research, it was this localised cultural and contextual difference that influenced constructions and narratives of leadership. For instance, within communities in Cameroon different sets of discourses were presented to those in Nigeria. Even more interestingly, beyond boundaries of the two countries, each tribal demarcation, region and community presented a different set of meanings. As unique in the case of Africa where tribes stretch into many countries, it was the sub-tribe or culture rather than the country that presented broader similarities. This observation challenges the relevance of some cross cultural studies notably: Hofstede (2001) and House et al (2004) (explored in chapter two) that theorise culture at country and continental level against the seeming claim that all regions and communities within a country act and think the same. Considering that the micro socio-cultural provided heterogeneous constructions and narratives about leadership in context, such national and homogenous theories of leadership may be misleading or simplistic. The rather heterogeneous nature of the findings of this study lends support to the view that ‘uniformist’ and ‘universalist’ framing of leadership may discount and downplay diversity within countries such as Cameroon and Nigeria (Nwankwo, 2015).

In seeking to avoid the pitfalls of narrow theorising in the theorising of leadership, this research draws from experience during fieldwork in the African context to propose a three factor Model to help locate future research in the Africa context. The model illustrated in fig. 7.2 below demarcates the African research environment into three locations and three participant type. In terms of location there three types A, B and C are delineated namely: urban cities, the semi- urban and the rural indigenous tribal communities. For participant types, three groups of participant types are

mapped including: the educated city dwellers, the ‘go between’ urban and rural and tribal indigenous community dweller or villager). Each of these locations and participant and location type of participant present a different narrative as further explained below.



The above diagram draws on experience in the field and examination of previous work in Africa to identify and map out two relevant factors that are necessary to appropriately locate research in the African context namely location A, B and C and participant type 1,2,3. This should avoid possible misleading generalisation of findings as applicable across the entire population. In location ‘A’ the research field is mainly African tribes and indigenous communities which operate local traditional and cultural leadership practices. Participants will be local tribal clan men and women with little exposure to urban centres. Here, there is more likelihood for the researcher to explore deep-rooted indigenous African perceptions of leadership and a more anthropological approach will help to make a better sense of traditional historical Afro-centric discourse of leadership. However, assess is usually difficult due to the difficulty of the terrain, bad roads, no bridges and few medical facilities. An example of research in this location is this study.

Location type 'B' is a semi-urban mainly small towns attached to local villages but with a central semi-urban town which may be made up of a single tribe of a small number of tribes. These kinds of locations are inhabited by people from different tribes but dominated by one majority or major tribe. Participants here are likely to be those who live between the town and their local villages. Sometimes the village may have grown into a small town. Depending on the size and composition of the population, participants will be individuals from either the dominant tribe or a variety of various smaller tribes. Participants will also be partly educated or at least there will be a larger proportion of formally educated persons. Descriptions, practices and discourses of leadership are likely to be a mixture of local tribal perceptions of leadership and more general Western ideas.

Location 'C' represents urban cities in Africa such as Lagos, Douala or Accra. These urban cities hosts exposed Africans, some of whom have little connection with their indigenous tribal customs and traditions. Leadership discourse within this location type will be closest to the more general Western accounts of leadership with very little influence of traditional cultural, historical and tribal knowledge or experience. Prototypical locations are international companies in the urban areas where interviews and group discussions are likely to yield responses and narratives that may not be too different from any organisation in the West. There could be some differences in expressions in respect to the peculiar African environmental and home culture differences. Participants here will be educated elite Africans working in well or part-structured organisations. Their expressions of leadership would be more of Western thinking and little from tribal, cultural foundational knowledge. Depending on each of the above location and types of participant the prospective researcher will be able to locate their research focus. At the very least they will have knowledge of the kinds of participants to expect, the kinds of information that could be achieved and the difficulties involved in assessing participants as elucidated in the diagram. It is worth noting that the model is only intended as a guide rather than a pure model as there are various levels of overlapping between locations and participants types. However, generally, differences between the locations and participant type will have higher probability to result to significant differences in the perception, construction and practice of leadership between the different locations and participant types. What the model does is provide fluid boundaries rather than firm differences. It is

hoped that the model will help locate work in the field and also provide a hint as to the kinds of methods and methodologies that suits each context. Locating this study and other extant empirical work in the field in the above model, three virtual sets or types of discourses emerge including:

- An Afro-centric discourse
- A trans-cultural discourse and
- The Neo-contextual discourse

The Afro-centric discourse is typical within cultural and traditional organisations and communities that function on the basis of indigenous customs and tribal cultural leadership such as typical in location type 'A' of the framework. This study is located within this location. At location 'B', within semi-urban populations a trans-cultural discourse becomes prevalent. Here leadership meaning and discourse becomes more of an overlay of multiple local tribal influences, interfaced with issues around local politics, local culture and local issues. The prominence of Western influences tends to be more pronounced in the third location 'C' within organisations in urban cities. In this location leadership discourse becomes more of a hybrid of Western and Afro-centric practices. Examples of work which could be located in 'C' include (Bolden and Kirk, 2009) and (Jackson, 2004). It is not surprising that these works emphasise hybridity, dualism and cohabitation.

### **7.1.2 Hybridity, Dualism and co-habitation**

#### *Afro-centric leadership as co-habitation, hybrid and dual mind-set*

Related to the multiple, elusive and contextually contingent nature of leadership from both analyses, the notions of co-habitation, dualism and hybridity emerged as sub-themes in participant narratives. The findings illuminate ways in which leadership in the African context is underpinned by both local African practices and Western mainstream ideology and practices. For instance, when articulating leadership, participants in the more formal Western-styled LGCs employed words such as controlling, directing, influencing, achieving goals and objectives which are deemed to be associated with Western functionalist (Bolden and Kirk, 2011). At the same time within the traditional and culturally founded councils, there was more talk of

traditional and historical practices and belief systems as well as an acknowledgement of changes brought about by both colonialism and globalisation (see sections 5.11, chapter five and section, 6.1.1, chapter six). Therefore, what the findings illuminate is that there are specific discourses and meanings of leadership akin to local customs and traditions. At the same time, there are meanings and narratives of Western provenance in the formal leadership. The resulting construction of leadership in context is therefore an inter-weaving, co-habitation between indigenous African perceptions of leadership and practices emanating from Western philosophy.

The above co-habitation corroborates the view that indigenous communities live in a constant dilemma of two worlds or and tend to hold multiple world-views (Kenny and Fraser, 2012; Owusu-Sarpong, 2003). In the context of this study this dilemma came across as a struggle to hold on to Afro-centric ways of doing and cultural practices on the one hand and on the other hand that of embracing the encroaching foreign ideas and 'ways of doing' that seems a compelling necessity in the changing circumstances. An example of this dilemma particularly in indigenous tribal communities is the place and role of formal Western education. In this respect the indigenous tribes and cultures are faced with such decisions as: what to teach their children and what language they should speak with their children. This also goes for leadership in respect to whether they should abandon indigenous leadership ideals in pursuit of national political leadership. These were concerns uncovered during fieldwork that highlight this dilemma. Thus, it was clear from both data sets that, contrary to the simple and seemingly static state of hybridity of the colonised and the subaltern Bhabha, (1994) leadership practice in context is far more complex. Thus, in trying to make sense of leadership from both analyses, what emerges could be likened to Lacan's philosophy of 'mimicry' which he explains as:

*"Something...distinct from what might be called an 'itself' that is behind; the effect of which is camouflage...not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled – like the technique of camouflage" (Lacan in Bhabha, 1994:121).*

Described from Lacan's philosophical perspective as above, leadership in context could simply be considered a 'camouflage' of what should have been but which

never really is. The metaphor of a 'chameleon' best encapsulates the nature of the Western- African co-habitation. Meanings and discourses change styles and colours, masks and the blends to the immediate environment resulting to practices which are neither local African nor Western imported. This is particularly so for leadership within the more formal LGCs.

### **7.1.3 Change and effect of change**

#### *Indigenous African leadership as an on-going change process*

A third theme surfacing from both analyses is change. In both regions participants' narratives and observation of the daily lives of people illuminates an active and continuous process of change. A key indication of change is the constant reference to the past with such expressions as: 'in the olden days', 'in the days of our forefathers', 'long time ago' and so on. Also, in a number of communities some individuals expressed doubt regarding the effectiveness of indigenous beliefs which indicates a change from previous generations which firmly believed the myths, stories and local religious perceptions and assumptions (Park, 1777). Across the communities it was evident the many of the tribal people have embraced Christianity and have become less involved in the historical belief systems of their tribes and clans. Furthermore, it was evident that some of the ancient relics and paraphernalia that were previously used to invoke the spirits of the gods appease ancestors or used for cultic and social group activities were no longer produced or used. Others were modified whilst some cultic institution are now extinct.

It follows from the above changes that compared to indigenous African society and leadership in west and central Africa as described in Mungo Park's (1777- 1790) diaries, it is clear that there has been significant changes over time in the social and cultural evolution process of the indigenous African communities studied. An analysis of Park's descriptions of indigenous African leadership in (1777) and leadership in the local communities more generally, reveals that whereas most of the fundamental aspects of leadership have been maintained – including: humanity, inter-dependence and collective decision making processes, there has been a change towards individualism. The case of some leaders even within the local community councils deviating from the customary, traditional and cultural values to

dictate their views and will upon others and some elders is a clear testimony to this change. Thus, there seems to be a steady change from servant, paternalistic and patriarchal leadership to a mixture of indigenous and foreign leadership practices. Other historical accounts of leadership reveal that leadership within indigenous African societies and kingdoms was more about leaders serving the wider interest of the people thus displaying a people-oriented leadership ethos (Davidson, 1954; Mansfield, 1903; Mokhtar, 1990). However, though current practices within the traditional community institutions continue to exhibit people-oriented and local belief-influenced practices, in some instances discourses and practices do not seem to 'entirely'<sup>19</sup> reflect this practice. The fact that even within indigenous cultures which may be deemed to be conservative, leadership thinking and practices is changing over time would seem to concur with the view that cultures and traditions do evolve and change across generations (Gronn, 2011; Aguilar and Ghirlanda, 2015). At the same time the fact that some of the fundamental aspects of leadership have been maintained lends support to the Darwinian theories of social and cultural evolution (e.g. Henrich, 2015).

What this study, further illuminates in respect to this process of evolution is that the nature of change is different across the communities. For instance it was evident that communities closest to urban areas appeared to have witnessed and embraced more of the change than those farthest from urban areas. Thus, whilst leadership practices and the local culture may have evolved and changed, this change is not equally spread. Based on this knowledge it is possible to respond to the debate engaged with in chapter three, section 3.3.2 in respect to the possible effects of the sustained colonialist deprecation and subjugation of local indigenous African leadership and management ideals (Inyang, 2008). The combined findings illuminate the view that colonialism has certainly influenced leadership thinking in the African context – particularly in formal institutions. However, it has not completely eliminated Afro-centric perceptions and practices. The findings also indicate that colonialism has undoubtedly hampered the development of indigenous management and leadership concepts (Inyang, 2008). However, these practices remain dominant in

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<sup>19</sup> Entirely is put in inverted commas to highlight the fact that not all participants and leaders express leadership in the same way as the dominant practices and narratives which reflect what this study uncovered and what has previously been theorised in extant studies.

the rural tribal areas and continue to be applied in day to day leadership in the local cultural and traditional institutions. To this extent, more research is required to explore the concept of organising from an indigenous African institutional context.

The more concerning observation is that in addition to hampering the evolution of Afro-centric leadership practices, colonialism may have created and installed in the African psyche the perception that 'Western' ideals are better while indigenous African culture and traditional ways of leading is bad and inferior. The result is the constant 'othering', narrative of 'either' - 'or' and a constant feeling of victimisation and vulnerability that seems to have gripped the African. As a consequence, some Africans tend to consider cultures and traditions of indigenous Afro-centric origin as uncivilised. Rather they adopt Western culture (dance, music, fashion, politics, organising, technology etc.) as the civilised way of life. This oppressive power system and psychological construction and the inevitable performative effect it generates tends exert a constant pressure for change in Afro-centric leadership and organising. What may be needed to moderate this evolution is more pan-Africanist postcolonial research aimed at revalorising the African brand in way that it may become re-branded and considered better if not as an additional asset that presents the African a sense of difference, identity and self in pride.

Following from the above, this thesis would seem to agree with the postcolonial African argument that in theorising African leadership or leadership in the African context, the researcher must consider and factor-in the effects of Western influences imported during colonial intervention (Haruna, 2009; Nkomo, 2006; Swart et al., 2014; Wanasika et al., 2011). However, the question is more about what to include in such an Afro-centric concept. There is a danger of factoring aspects that do not help the African to rebrand itself in the right way. Already, Wanasika et al., (2011) have argued that a key negative legacy of Western colonial intervention in African leadership thinking and practice is the culture of 'corruption, poverty, tribalism and violence' (p. 234). In relation to extant African leadership literature and making particular reference to the philosophy of Ubuntu (explored in chapter three, section 3.1.1), it would seem that by remaining static, Ubuntu leadership philosophy may indeed be out of its time (Nkomo, 2006; Nkomo, 2011; Sigger et al., 2010). Thus, the job of the African indigenous leadership researcher is that of experiencing and providing an insider perspective of leadership in context from the depth of community

lifestyle as built from both the historical reality of Africa and its contemporary Western influences. However, it is the view of this thesis that any African theorising of leadership needs to be strategic rather than militant or wholly absorbent.

#### **7.1.4 Summary of part one**

In this section common findings that emerged from both the social anthropological and organisational perspectives were discussed in relation to some key issues that arise from the literature on leadership studies. The key points highlighted include:

- That observation that leadership remains pluralistic, slippery and elusive in nature without any precise definition, form or shape but very much dependent on the cultural and social context in which it is examined. This outcome corroborates research findings and theories of leadership within critical leadership studies (CLS).
- That theorising culture and leadership at country level undermines the micro and sub-cultures existing between various groups within a country. Hence the assumption of Africa as a single country and homogenous entity is inaccurate and misleading. Rather than the simple homogenous practices and preferences at national level, leadership in the context is more complex, diverse and ambivalent.
- That the manner in which leadership is talked about, conceptualised and leadership practiced in the twelve communities is influenced by Western practices that may have been adopted during colonial times. However, it has emerged that although there is a co-habitation of Western and Afrocentric leadership practices, this hybrid far from stable and static. Rather, it is very complex. However, within indigenous traditional councils there is less Western influence. Hence it is possible to arrive at three dominant thoughts and expressions on leadership in the African context - the local cultural discourse, the trans-cultural discourse and the neo-contextual political discourse.

#### **7.2 Part 2: Organisational Analysis**

This section discusses outcomes that were more apparent in data from an organisational analysis based on data mainly collected through unstructured

interviewing and group discussion. Three main themes namely: ethics, Western influence and power are explored.

### **7.2.1 Ethics and leadership within LGCs**

The main worrying aspect of leadership that was ubiquitous and consistently alluded to by a majority of participants is about the credibility and honesty of leaders in the majority of LGCs. The issue of corruption seems a normal, prevalent and unabating practice in leadership in the African context. As elicited in chapter three, previous research in African political and organisational leadership has consistently highlighted practices of corruption, tribalism and nepotism<sup>20</sup>. More recent research into corrupt practices in leadership has reiterated the continuous, deepening and spreading nature of such practices (Owoye and Bissessar, 2014). In an earlier research Bissessar (2009) found that a significant percentage of African countries that were classed as middle corrupt countries rose to the status of highly corrupt countries between 1996 and 2006. Similarly, Ayittey, (2002) and Lawal (2007) estimated that the amount of funds made from corruption in Africa was about half of Africa's overall foreign debt. Whilst the prevalence of corrupt practices is such a concern to participants, what is more striking is the manner in which such corrupt practices were openly discussed and shared in the LGCs. This culture of openly discussing the subject of corruption suggests that such practices were an accepted part of leadership in context. This overt discourse would seem to lend support to the popular charge that corruption is persistent and endemic in leadership practice in the African context (Owoye and Bissessar, 2014).

The prevailing unethical practices highlighted by the above studies and which also surfaced within this research has been theorised in the wider leadership literature as bad or destructive leadership in leadership studies (Knights and Willmott, 2012, Fairhurst and Grant, 2010) or toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Watson, 2007) (explored in chapter two, sections 2.4.5). That - corruption in leadership was openly spoken about by leaders and employees in the majority of LGCs without

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<sup>20</sup> Nepotism is the practice among those with power or influence of favouring relatives or friends, especially by giving to them jobs and other privileges. The word is derived from the French word *népotisme*, and previously from the Italian *nepotismo*, from *nipote* 'nephew' (with reference to privileges bestowed on the 'nephews' of popes, who were in many cases their illegitimate sons) - oxforddictionaries.com

remorse, shame or a sense of law-breaking felt different from the way in which corruption is often talked about in a UK public service organisation context. Though corrupt practices are unacceptable in the UK (Tourish, 2014), it has been observed that most often, corrupt practices in the UK tend to be swept under the carpet as people tend to be reticent, adopting instead a culture of whistle-blowing (Lipman-Blumen, 2006). The case of corruption by means of illegal spending of public funds involving a number of UK MPs is a case in point that demonstrates the covert nature of discussion about corrupt leadership practices in the public domain (Allen and Birch, 2015). It would therefore seem that Western countries – notably in this case the UK appears to take a rather covert approach to discussing unethical practices (Carr and Lewis, 2010). It has been argued that this prevailing covert approach is a result of the inadequacies of the existing legislation on corrupt practices notably: the UK Bribery and the UN Convention against corruption (UNCAC, 2004). In the African context, by contrast, a more overt approach to discussing corrupt practices seems to be the norm. It is speculated that perhaps the patriarchal culture whereby certain personalities such as patriarchs or elders of families, communities enjoy disproportionate rights of ownership and use of community resources might explain this relaxed approach to corruption as is the case in Africa (Bhabha, 1994).

What is more interesting is that whereas unethical practice is a prevalent discourse in the LGCs, the traditional councils post quite different practice that emphasise the highest ethical standards. The indigenous traditional councils uphold humanist, sociable and communal leadership ideal with no talk of unethical practice. If one is to consider the equally moral and ethical leadership practice expressed within the philosophy of Ubuntu and explorer analysis on indigenous African leadership at an earlier pre-colonial period (e.g. Park, 1777), it would seem that corruption and other unethical practices is foreign to indigenous African ideals (Wanasika, 2011). In the light of the above dichotomy, this makes a number of suppositions for further reflection:

- 1) Could it be that the key tenets of culturally informed leadership thinking (high consideration for humanity, interrelatedness and people-oriented and social) become significantly eclipsed and muted by the tribal, clan and self-seeking desires in public office?

- 2) Why do the local people deviate from the local cultural and traditional perceptions and practices of leadership when leading in a public organisational context?
- 3) Could this deviation from an indigenous African cultural ethic into unethical leadership practices be related to the historical inter-community wars and antagonism between African tribes, communities and nation-states? These questions open up vistas for further exploration and no single research of this nature could claim to provide complete understanding.

Relating to the prevalence of corruption is the issue of tribalism. As elucidated in the section, 6.2.2 in chapter six above, employees in various levels of the LGCs also tended to exhibit tribal loyalty to people from a similar tribe or clan denoted by the constant use of the word 'we' referring to one's tribe against 'them' comparing to other tribes. Thus, rather than building a sense of collective cross-community working ethic, there was always a lingering sense of ethnic division, cultural tension, politics, agency and strategies for identity construction. Thus, the notions of identity construction (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Collinson, 2003) is also evident in organisational spaces in an indigenous African context. The divisions, differences and tribal positioning would also seem to concur with the suggestion that ethno-tribal patriotism and loyalty to one's tribe is a common phenomenon in leadership in public governance in Africa. This might explain why the notion of country or nation or leadership for the wider good of the country remains secondary in leadership practice in most African states (Mamdani, 2014).

Relating the prevailing ethnicity in public leadership to the accusation Bolden (2013) that Ubuntu leadership philosophy has failed to live up to its promise in South Africa, an important illumination generated by this study is the inability of the moral, ethical, humanist and people-oriented reality of Afro-centric indigenous leadership thinking to transcend beyond tribal boundaries. Also, the prevailing ethnicity seriously questions the assertion that African managers and leaders are highly skilled in dealing with cultural diversity and in managing multiple stakeholders' (Jackson, 2004: xi). Additionally, the prevalence of both unethical and tribalistic practices would seem to negate the conclusion that leadership in the African context is similar to leadership in the West and elsewhere in the world (Bolden and Kirk, 2009). To this extent, this

thesis argues that whilst, the two most popular empirical studies in leadership and management have done well to inform leadership they clearly miss out certain fundamentals of leadership of the African context such as ethnicity, spirituality and unethical practice. This could be mainly because of their focus in formal urban working environments which could be located in segment 'C' of the proposed three level illustrated in (Fig. 7.2) of this thesis. Making use of this model could have located the work in ways that provide the context of the works in much better ways.

### **7.2.2 Influence of Western Perceptions of leadership**

This section evaluates the second theme from organisational analysis – the influence of Western ideology, philosophy and practices in leadership within the LGCs. As indicated above, the influence of Western practices in context is not in doubt. However, the discussion explores in detail how such influences unfold within LGCs in context in terms of:

- Structure and decision making,
- Goal and appraisal of leadership
- Conceptualisation of leadership

The first obvious influence of Western leadership and organisational concepts that was evident in the LGC is the hierarchical system and one style fits all organisational architecture that operates in all councils. This hierarchical structure naturally enforces an individualistic and leader-centred and top-bottom decision making practice. Such more Western organisational architecture and decision making processes have become the adopted form of practice and organising in all eight LGCs. That, Western, and particularly Anglo-Saxon organisational structures have become the preferred leadership practice in an indigenous African community context raises a number of questions:

1. What stops the local politicians from implementing Traditional indigenous leadership in LGCs?
2. Why can LGCs not be led according to the local cultures and traditions which the local populations can more readily identify with?
3. Why must these two institutional frameworks operate side by side and compete for space in an indigenous African context?

A possible response to the above questions could be that during the long term subjugation and deprecation of indigenous African culture and systems by Western colonialist (Inyang, 2009), the local African cultures and traditions and ideals may have succumbed to the persistent political binary narrative of civilised versus uncivilised. This sense of inferiority is captured in the field from participant discourses in such statements as, *'the white man's education'*, *'Bakkara's laws'*, *'Oyibo's way'*, *'University education'*, *'new world of today'*, *'white man sense'* and so on. These expressions indicate a reluctant acceptance of Western approaches and ways of doing. At the same time such expressions are followed by a sense of nostalgia and regret to let go of a previous way of doing which seems markedly better in terms of morality, ethics and humanity. By letting this past to sweep past participants seem nostalgic about their sense of belonging, identity and uniqueness, yet frustrated, bewildered and powerlessness to buck the trend. However, in the midst of this there seems to be a general acknowledgement of the inevitability of change. Hence this participant from the community of Okoyong (OKGD5) explained saying:

*"Nowadays we give leadership to the youths who have had Western education because they are more able to meet and discuss and work with people from other cultures and tribes"*

This quotes reveals that that Western leadership concepts and practices are not considered to be completely bad or unworkable that that there are positive aspects of individualism and functionalism. Whilst individualism and corrupt practices is regretted, there is nonetheless a sense in which participants think that Western leadership concepts and practices serve better purposes.

Further, evidence of Western influence is apparent in the definitions of leadership and descriptions of how leaders should relate with subordinates or with other employees in the LGCs. Common words utilised include such expressions as: control, direct, influence, change, transform, teach and so on. These words seem to define leadership come across as 'individualistic' and 'heroic' rather than collective or context specific. The overriding perception is that leadership is a function carried out by the chairperson of the council alone or at least that much depended on the leader of the council. This would seem to be very similar to mainstream accounts of

leadership as often portrayed in such concepts as transformational, charismatic and visionary leadership as well as popular definitions of leadership. For instance, House et. al (2002) defined leadership as:

*“The ability of individual leaders to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organisation”*. House et al., (p. 5).

Similarly, Northouse (2010) defined leadership as

*“A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”* Northouse (p. 3).

The above definitions and the expressions of participants in the LGCs are very similar which shows the extent to which Western expressions and ideas on leadership have been adopted by the local people.

In addition to the above heroic and individualistic discourse, what the organisational analysis also revealed is that leadership effectiveness is assessed on the basis of performance (chapter five, section, 6.1.2). This production and result-based perception of leadership has all the hallmarks of functionalist thinking which is central to mainstream Western perceptions of leadership (Ford et al., 2008). It also bears the hallmarks of heroic and leader-centered accounts of leadership reminiscent of Western mainstream constructions of leadership where the leader is perceived as bearer of all the answers and represents the solution to all organisational problems (Bolden and et al., 2011). These leadership practices and ways of conceptualising leadership which has been adopted by the local people who work in the formal councils clearly demonstrate significant influence of Western ideology, philosophy and practice.

The above extent of Western influence draws attention to the notion of ‘cultural osmosis’<sup>21</sup> referred to in chapter three, section 3.3.2. Exploring from through the lens of cultural osmosis one consequence of the persistence subjugation and dominance

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<sup>21</sup> Cultural osmosis is used here to denote the process of gradual or unconscious assimilation of ideas, knowledge, culture etc. by a stronger political group, race or people in the course of which a particular private reputation or way of doing is made to become the preferred, commonly used or the most public (Eyong)

of Western ideas and in Africa is that it may have irreversibly re-constructed the subaltern Africa voice, system and way of doing to the point that it has become difficult to hold its own in competing spaces (Kayira, 2015). Thus, it may well be that the Western language and culture has assimilated the African way of life. The seeming cultural and ideological assimilation has encouraged a number of writers to contemplate whether one could really talk of African leadership or leadership in Africa. For instance in their empirical work on narratives about leadership in the African context, Bolden and Kirk (2009) raised three questions to challenge writers aspiring to an Afro-centric leadership theorising and practice. They argued that there may be no Afro-centric leadership, that even if it existed it would be difficult to research and get to know it. Further, that even if such concepts existed, it may not resonate with the current state of Africa. Relating this to the call for African renaissance decried by African politicians, scholars and researchers within the pan Africanist school of (as elicited in chapter three). A reflection on this would suggest that if indeed Afro-centric leadership thinking has been a victim of cultural assimilation, then there is no doubt that a significant dent has been stamped on the aspirations of such Afro-centric re-awakening. In particular, it may be difficult to solely rely on solving African problems with African solutions as aspired in popular declarations (e.g. Mbeki, 2005; Obiakor, 2004).

My experience in the field would seem to lend support to the reservation and caution expressed by Bolden and Kirk (2009) than the optimism and aspirations of Thabo Mbeki and Festus Obiakor and Desmond Tutu. In every sense it would be difficult for Afrocentric leadership practices to be redeemed and utilised in formal organisations after such considerable Western influence. Indeed even if such systems were to be implemented it is possible that there will be many an African who would be opposed to it. The neo-contextual discourse of leadership uncovered in the field attests to this rejection. In fact there is a danger in view of the emerging change that even indigenous communities may sooner than later adopt more individualistic and hierarchical leadership structures. Should this happen then Gronn's (2011) argument that societies eventually evolve from collective structure into more hierarchical systems controlled by individual warriors and elites would have been proven?

The unfolding change in the local indigenous communities is beginning to give rise to Africans holding multiple contradictory identities, conflicting loyalties. For instance it

was common to find mobile phones even in the most remote communities, these changes engender new behaviours especially in formal settings (Appiah, 1992). These new identities were apparent in the LGCs where it was observable that some participants were more Afro-centric while others provided a more Western construction and articulation of leadership. A classic example of disparate perspectives was witnessed in the community of Wum during fieldwork. In a group discussion the younger participants argued for the local culture to be documented and written in books while the older participants were categorically against any form of writing. The older participants maintained that rituals and symbols were the historically established way of passing down information from one generation to another such that they could not be changed. However, the younger generation highlighted the danger of distortion in the writing process.

The above argument is reminiscent of the confusion and dilemma faced by the African countries, their people and their institutions. Already Afro-centric leadership practices constantly exhibit dictatorial, autocratic and other leadership practices that do not conform to the norms, values and customs of the local people. To this extent, this study would argue that both indigenous African cultural and traditional practices and Westerns ideas will continue to influence leadership practices in the LGCs. Thus, it is inevitable that the cultural and ideological tensions explored next will continue to be a reality of leadership within the LGCs.

### **7.2.3 The concept of power within LGCs**

The organisational analyses illuminates on a third sub-theme which is the manner in which the notion of power and authority is utilised, responded to and confronted by local cultural and contextual contingencies. Unlike in indigenous community councils where power is expressed in relation to the local culture and tradition within the LGCs there is a constant tussle between cultural perceptions of power and legitimate power. This tension was evident even after an electoral process and investiture of legitimately elected leaders giving rise to parallel bases of power. A common practice observed in the LGCs is that leaders are culturally compelled to show respect to older employees and local titled employees in the LGCs even when they were junior staff such as cleaners and security men. Further, such persons were treated with more respect and in most cases they would be exempt from certain

commands and duties. In a number of LGCs, this respect was demonstrated by means of avoiding a hand shake or lowering one's self when greeting such personalities. The fact that senior staff members have to bow before their junior colleagues at work demonstrate a tense co-habitation between local customs and the popular Western hierarchical and top-bottom mind-set. It also presents a contextually and culturally shaped power arrangement which is different from the manner in which power has been theorised in the West. For instance, Weber (1947) defined power in the Western organisational context as:

*"The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be to carry his/her own will despite the resistance, and regardless on the basis on which this probability rests"* (cited in Bacharach and Lawler, 1980:16).

Similarly, in a highly cited work in sociology titled: Exchange and Power in social life, Blau (1964:116) describes power as:

*"The ability of persons as groups to impose their will on others despite resistance...through deterrence; either in the form of withholding regularly supplied rewards or in the form of punishment in as much as the former as well as the latter constitute negative sanction"* (Kreisberg, 1992:153)

Furthermore, (Bierstedt, 1950:733) described the notion of power with the statement:

*"Power represents a closure of alternative...power is the prior capacity which makes the application of force possible...Power is the ability to employ force...the ability to introduce force into a social situation...power is always successful"*

The above traditional definitions describe power as something that either belongs to the individuals or to a small number of people for the purpose of forcing others to do what they would otherwise be unwilling to do (Jackie et al., 2015). The assumption of the above definitions is that once the head of an organisation assumes legitimate power, employees or followers must simply comply, else the leader would use the vested authority and disciplinary procedures to enforce compliance or dismissal. However, contrary to the above perception of power, what this study illuminates in context is the existence of alternative sources of power in an indigenous context. What we learn from this context is that legitimate power does not afford absolute, individual of linear hierarchical power. Rather, legitimate and democratically inherited power is constantly being challenged, dominated and negotiated between the beholders and demands and exigencies local culture and traditions. More recent

Poststructural analyses of power in organisations extend power bases beyond the legitimate beholders into more collective and mobile framing see e.g. Braynion (2004) and Baldwin (2012). This study adds to this knowledge by illuminating how cultural and traditional social values are able to displace and destabilise the imposition of linear hierarchical power frameworks even within formal organisations located in an indigenous community environment. The findings also extend French and Raven's (1959) five power sources theory (articulated in section 2.2.2) by including cultural and traditional titles and age as additional sources of power in the context of an indigenous African community.

#### **7.2.4 Summary of part two**

This section explored findings that emerging from the organisational analyses. The main conclusions are:

- That, unethical practices are prevalent in leadership practices in the majority of LGCs due in part to ethic divisions, political strategies and self-enriching desires.
- That there is significant influence of Western leadership principles and practices in the discourse and practice of leadership in the LGCs. However, whilst, the local participants regret this influence and dominance, they still recognise the necessity for change and appreciate certain aspects of Western leadership practices.
- That, leadership thinking and practice in the councils is influenced by Western ideology and philosophy but are in constant tension, competition and challenge from the local traditions and culture.
- That the local culture and traditional social value system is another source of power within the council and challenges legitimate power.

Thus, the resulting narrative, discourse and practice of leadership in the LGCs come across from an organisational perspective as complex rather than simplistic.

#### **7.3 Part three: Discussion of social anthropological findings**

This section discusses findings that emerged more from the social anthropological analysis. It is structured into three main sections. The first explores the social

anthropological findings in relation mainstream accounts of leadership while the second explores the findings in relation to the emergent concepts of relational and inclusive leadership. The third section presents new insights developed by the thesis.

### **7.3.1 Indigenous constructions and mainstream accounts**

As articulated in chapter two, section 2.2, one of the main arguments of mainstream accounts of leadership such as transformational, charismatic, and visionary leadership (Bass, 1985; Conger and Kanungo, 1998), is that leadership can be conceptualised and practiced in the same way anywhere in the world. Another important aspect of mainstream thinking is that leadership is more about the actions of an appointed or legitimate leader and followers have little or no role to play in its enactment (Northouse, 2010). It has also been argued that mainstream accounts tend to be functionalist. In other words, leadership (especially the earlier trait, contingency and situational leadership ideas) are framed in ways that suggests that leadership is more about leaders achieving effective, higher efficiencies and improved productivity and competitiveness (Yukl, 2005). Contrary to these general principles, leadership in context is quite different. Instead of leader-centred and functionalist, the local African culture and traditions and social value systems constructs leadership as more of a community-wide undertaking in which many persons in the communities take part at various times and for different functions. Thus, contrary to the leader-centred framing of mainstream accounts of leadership, leadership practice in context is more about followers and the community than about the appointed leader. The concept of leadership is communal with appointed leaders mainly playing a figurative role (Chapter five, section 5.1.3). These findings would seem to support more inclusive and collective ideas and theories of leadership as elicited in chapter two even as there are differences and peculiarities as elicited in section 7.2 below. Also, leadership is not about achieving production and competitive goals. Rather, leadership meaning is dominated by the desire to replicate historical, beliefs, customs and ways of life with the more important goal and intent of maintaining such cultural and traditional practices, philosophy and ideology.

Drawing on experience in the field, a reflection that comes to mind when comparing mainstream approaches to leadership to the indigenous context is the fact that,

mainstream accounts tend to separate the world of work and the person. This separation is highlighted by the seeming existence of a boundary between leaders and followers with the responsibilities of leadership bestowed on the leader and not on the follower. This way of thinking about leadership is a contrast to the case of the indigenous African communities studied. In the context of the local communities under study, the appointed leader and the rest of the community are culturally bound as one. Hence, the leader exists as part of a multi-directional reciprocity of influence and responsibility. In thinking about this unity of the individual appointed leader and the community, attention is drawn to the relationship between the self and other (e.g. Gergen, 1999). In the case of leadership thinking in the indigenous communities studied, the notion of individual is entrenched and intertwined with the collective whereas in the Western context the individual tends to behave as if separated from the organisation or community. This sense of the 'self' as a part of or in union with 'others' is a fundamental principle and a guiding perception in leadership and work seem to mark a stark difference with mainstream theorising of leadership.

Previous work in leadership reflecting on the above unity of the self and the community in the African context (e.g. Bolden and Kirk (2010) draw attention to the notion of Western '*Cartesian dualism*' – supposed to have been popularised by the philosopher Descartes. It is stated that in the West the body is thought to be separated from the soul. Extended into society and organisation this philosophy has tended to theorise a separation between the individual and the society or community in which he/she lives or works. Contrary to this separation, Bolden and Kirk observed that in the African context there was a much closer inter-relationships and interdependence between the individual and the community giving rise to less 'otherness' (p. 81). Another difference is the cultural scripting of leadership meaning which extends construction to include non-human action and plants and animals in the wider environment. It would therefore seem that an Afrocentric perception of leadership as explored in context takes a more holistic view on leadership than Western mainstream constructs. On the basis of this difference, it is evident that Western mainstream leadership models cannot effectively be applied in the African context (Inyang, 2009; Kamoche, 2011; Nkomo, 2011; Wanasika et al., 2011).

### **7.3.2 Indigenous African and emergent leadership**

This section explores the social anthropological findings of the study in relation to emerging leadership theories. The overarching construction of leadership from the local traditional and culturally formed councils is leadership based on a strong humanist ethos that promotes empathy, care, solidarity and social cohesion (chapter five, section 5.1.3). This would seem to mimic such emergent leadership concepts as inclusive, collective and relational leadership. However, new knowledge uncovered in context present these emergent visions of leadership differently.

First, whilst, the necessity of inclusivity is something that organisations try to build or nurture in their work and organisational processes, in the indigenous communities studied the notion of inclusivity is ingrained in the local traditions and customs. In other words, the notion of inclusivity and collective leadership is not learned. Rather, it tends to be culturally systemic and embedded in the day to day activities of the local people. This cultural knowledge naturally gives rise to a smooth shared, collaborative, participative and multi-directional involvement in the enactment of leadership (bottom-top, top-down, lateral, egalitarian, personal etc.) in the decision making process (chapter five, section 5.1.3). Such open systems and approaches enable the participation of people from various levels of the community who all partake in decision-making and feeling of involvement in the affairs of the ICC.

A key concern of recent emergent leadership concepts is that they are hardly even practiced in real life. An important learning which can be derived from the indigenous African studied here is for organisation and contemporary emergent leadership theorists to inculcate participation and collaboration cultures in the day to day culture of organisations as a constant and on-going strategic goal rather than short-term projects and strategies. This way, the employee does not see themselves as separate individuals be as involved in the ownership of the organisation.

#### *Relational leadership and indigenous leadership*

As articulated in chapter five, indigenous leadership in context is essentially relational and is based on a higher degree of social interconnectedness between members of each community in ways that bridge the gap between the 'individual' and the 'collective'. Within emergent leadership studies, it has been argued that

leadership has taken a 'relational turn' Uhl-bien and Ospina, (2012). The goal of relational leadership thinking particularly from the constructionist, perspective has mainly been to sensitise leaders to the importance of relationships as a means of opening 'possibilities for morally-responsible leadership' (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011:1425). To this extent, the focus of relational leadership has mainly been to empower leaders to be architects or creators of more sociable, amicable and ethical working relationships. However, in real life the practice of relational leadership has been found to be less evident (Fletcher, 2002; Sinclair, 2007; Sorenson and Hickman, 2002). Thus, a contribution which the present anthropological analysis brings to relational leadership is how relational leadership is put in practice in a more vivid and observable way. Experience from the field and the ethnographic data reveal that the manner in which relational leadership is practiced in the traditional cultural council context is encapsulated in a common proverb used in the local communities. The proverb goes like:

*"A child is only one person's only when it is still in her mother's womb"* (Anonymous from fieldwork).

In other words, one is born to a community rather to one's own parents or family only. Once a child is born, it becomes part of the community and it is the responsibility of everyone in the community to look after the child (chapter five, section 5.1.1). This deep sense of community interrelationship means that within the communities, one's children or parents are considered by others in almost the same way as they would normally consider theirs. To this extent, human relationships are built on the basis of the understanding that one individual cannot lead the community or organisation. Rather leadership is about building relationships that lead the community. In other word, the community leads itself through established relationships. The nature of such inter-relationship is not that the follower depends on the leader. Rather, leadership in practice is much more about equality, reciprocity and humility. Again all of this is founded on a history of respect and observance of historical cultural hegemonies that is a fabric of the socio-cultural environment.

However, a key aspect of this relational leadership practice is that it goes beyond simply inter-personal relationship into 'conviviality'<sup>22</sup>.

The sense of conviviality particularly amongst the grassland tribes in the North west of Cameroon (Nyamjoh, 2002), coupled with a communally aligned humanist and social and moral value systems makes relational leadership permanent and more clearly observable. Amplified and regulated by the local common belief system, the combination of morality, humanity and inter-dependence leads to a kind of relational practice which this thesis would refer to as: 'convivial relationality'. Thus, indigenous relational leadership in practice is enabled by a combination of factors that demand that appointed, auxiliary leaders and the community at large observe the dictates of the local traditions. The tradition entails sharing of community resources, (ideas, skills, and responsibility) maintaining historical relationships, pursuing common spiritual purposes and ensuring that no one is left behind or disenfranchised.

Whilst, this thesis does not suppose that the way relational leadership is practiced in the local indigenous communities is replicable in every context, it provides new ways of thinking of enacting relational leadership. In this respect, an important learning is that relational leadership could be more visible and active if it needs to be spiced with a lot of consistent organisational-wide socialisation processes involving everyone in the organisation. A further learning from this context is that relationality is not just a process of building relational networks. Rather, it is inherently concerned with collective empowerment, based on the benefits of deeper social interconnectedness. One of such benefits is the achievement of social cohesion and shared value systems. Perhaps re-constructing relational leadership as an integral part of an organisation's modus operandi, more visible relational leadership can be achieved in contemporary organisations.

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<sup>22</sup> The word conviviality is used here to denote the social activities such as dancing, singing and drumming that created a sense of solidarity amongst the local people. It normally involves constant feasting, socialisation and merry making and is common amongst indigenous communities and groupings and helps to maintain a sense of permanent inter-relationships, collectivity and relationality.

### 7.3.3 New Insight of the thesis

The novel insight brought by this research project has been an illumination into leadership within the indigenous communities of focus in ways not often expressed in leadership literature. The three main aspects of leadership that encapsulate the unique framing and fundamental thinking of the local people in the two indigenous regions include the notions of:

- Leadership as a transcendental empowered by ancestors
- Leadership as empowered by rituals and sacrifices.
- Leadership as enabled by trees and known from animals,

Prior to this study, leadership had mainly been theorised as more of an undertaking or a process that involves living persons in a working environment (Bolden, 2011; Ford et al., 2008; Northouse, 2010). However, this study has extended our perception of leadership in an indigenous African traditional and cultural context as involving trees, animals and non-living ancestors. This new insight draws attention to the influence of culture and traditions in leadership thinking indigenous locations and institutions. The findings also highlight the relevance of local historical hegemony and customs in leadership thinking. These influences shape leader-follower and leader-community dynamics in more ways than previously thought. The key learning here is that leadership can be fundamentally different in practice, perception and in discourse in different places. As this research has shown, within the local indigenous communities, it is this sense of common history, common genealogy and common language that ties leaders to followers and the entire community to leaders. From this historical connection inter-relationships are built, tribal loyalties are reinforced and common social value systems sustained and preserved. Similarly, it is through historical interrelationships and tribal linkages that the central element of belief system intervenes to make leadership possible and effective. Therefore the local cultural and social evolution has evolved a strong belief system which has become central to the people's recognition, approval and acceptance of leadership. Each person thus identifies themselves as members of a common descendency. Against this background a new way of conceptualising leadership advanced by this

thesis is the notion of leadership as transcendental and metaphysical<sup>23</sup>. Leadership in context is known from spiritual frames against a metaphysical ontology based on the assumption that leadership is partly made possible through the invocation of ancestors and gods of an earlier époque. Hence leadership is enacted through well-rehearsed cultural practices, rituals, and sacrifices from generations dating thousands of years back. Through mythologies, legends and repertoires across generations, these practices and world-view have been preserved and cherished leading to the construction of leadership as transcendental and partly non-human (section 5.2.3, chapter five). Although in practice, leadership takes a more collective, inter-dependent, sociable and humane temperament, these behaviours and responses from active participants in the dramaturgical power order of the communities, it is the belief system that ties the various manifestations together.

However, it is not to say that spirituality has not previously been theorised and associated to leadership in extant literature. Indeed within emergent leadership thinking, spirituality has more recently emerged as an important aspect of ethical leadership. The notion of spiritual leadership draws on the teachings of popular moral codes and books such as the Bible. For instance, Fry et al. (2011) suggest that there is positive correlation between spirituality and leadership and that spirituality promotes ethical leadership practices in terms of enabling such virtues as: integrity, honesty, and humility. Therefore the insight illuminated by the present thesis adds to this knowledge by contributing an Afrocentric dimension into this body of knowledge. That knowledge is that in this context ancestors are assumed to assist leaders with decision making and in providing the necessities of the indigenous community. Thus, spirituality is not much about the teachings of the Bible or popular acceptable moral and ethical behaviours in work places as the current literature presents it. Rather, it is the general thinking that by connecting to ancestors, the leadership of the community is able to procure such beneficence as: fertile soils, increased child birth, eradication of diseases or find answers to uncertain and spiritual questions in a rather complex universe. Thus, the notion of spirituality in context places the role of leadership beyond the abilities of the living human into the

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<sup>23</sup> The meaning of Metaphysics as used here refers to a commitment to spiritual and cosmic forces and a belief in mystical or supernatural forces which defy any scientific analysis or explanation” (Omogbe, 1990: 26–27)

hands of superior beings – ancestors and gods. Hence, the manifestation of various cultural and traditional rites, rituals and sacrifices during the burial and enthronement of community leaders in some communities – particularly within communities in the Mambila region (chapter five, section 5.3)

The second novel insight into leadership in context is the importance of rituals and sacrifices in leadership. This would seem a primitive perception of leadership in the eyes of a Western researcher but is of great importance to the local people without which the concept of leadership will make no sense. In the culture and traditions of these people, leadership is enabled by the degree to which leaders and other members of the community are able to rightfully conduct local rituals, sacrifices and incantations to be able to tap into the forces that enable effective community leadership. Thus, Temple (2012) argues that the foundation of leadership thinking in the African context has more to do with an expectation of metaphysical intervention. In this respect, rituals are the means through which the metaphysicality of leadership is brought to life. Also, it is assumed that metaphysical intervention keeps the traditional community orderly, peaceful, prosperous and organised. Thus, Azouzu (2004) state in relation to African philosophy on spirituality that:

*“Metaphysics remained and still remains relevant yet in a manner that contrasts with the understanding of metaphysics as a tool for science motivated explanation of reality. Here metaphysics takes the form of a set or body of belief and practices in relation to the ultimate reality” (P.3).*

Preceding Azouzu's views above, previous research has highlighted the metaphysical nature of leadership in the African context and the semiotic meanings embodied in African artefacts (e.g. Mansfield, 1908; Koloss, 1985; Partridge, 1903). The prevalence of metaphysical thinking is common in the African philosophical worldview as Azouzu sustains above and as more recently ascertained in African political leadership (e.g. Temple, 2012b). Perhaps this study has moved understanding further than these generalisations by actually going to these inaccessible areas to live these experiences and manifestation in order to understand what is done, how and why in that process of spiritual and metaphysical manifestation. This kind of in-depth empirical information is often missed in extant writings for various reasons. However, in the course of this study these issues were discussed with participants in much deeper ways given the researcher's indigenous

African origin. Being a local native of one of the Cross River provided the kind of insider access and openness which would be difficult for an outsider – say a European ethnographer to access. This insider advantage in a cultural and traditional setting draws attention to the benefit of Africans, researching the African context. This experience would seem to concur with the expressed thoughts that it may be wise for research on leadership in the African context to be conducted by Africans themselves as they are more likely to understand and inform to context better than foreign Westerners (e.g. Bolden and Kirk, 2009; Rotberg, 2013). The level of access gained by the researcher in this case also supports the view that researchers who explore their own origins are more likely to have greater access to knowledge than foreigners exploring the same context and depending on local translations (Wolf, 1992).

The third novel insight is somewhat related to the transcendental, spiritual and metaphysical perception of leadership articulated above. However, it illuminates more on the meanings and constructions of leadership as embodied and known through the attributes of animals and trees (section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 of chapter five). Previous study in the areas of African social anthropology in similar location amongst the Bayang tribes in the Cross river region identified the leopard as a symbol of leadership (Park, 1795; Ruel, 1969) and role of trees in African leadership thinking (Park, 1795). However, this study adds to this knowledge by unpacking the reason and history behind these choices of symbols and the meanings they hold in minds of the local people. These insights are important as they expose us to the deeper reality of leadership construction in context and also unravel and explain some of the deep-seated practices and beliefs which are in many ways contrary to the popular wisdoms and narratives. This way we may begin to think of leadership beyond what has been theorised as leadership in the Western context.

#### **7.3.4 A tale of two research Approaches**

A reflection of the transdisciplinary approach adopted for the study leads me to think that the most interesting aspect of the research design adopted for this study has been the concomitant deployment of organisational and anthropological approaches within the study. An important benefit of this approach is that it enabled the study to explore leadership in context in a holistic and yet deeper way that perhaps it would

have been possible to do when had a mono-lens approach been adopted. Another aspect of the research design was the decision to explore two distinct regions and council types rather than just one. This two case approach enabled the research to gain knowledge in a formal organisational setting and within a prototypical cultural and traditional leadership context. This methodical design could be seen as a precedent in empirical leadership research in the African context. The social anthropological approach emerged as more convenient and perhaps more suitable when researching indigenous African leadership from a cultural perspective. Particularly, through ethnography, it was possible to shed light on the traditional and cultural ways in which symbols, artefacts and mythologies are utilised to convey leadership meanings. It also enabled an appreciation of key enablers of effective leadership in the local traditional context such as the community tree, leadership as embodied by the symbol of a leopard and the significance of rituals in enabling leadership. In making sense of these deeper meanings of leadership, the use of 'pictorial anthropological' approaches involving on-the field live photographs was of the most importance. The photographs taken in the field and which are incorporated within the text (section 5.2, chapter five) provide a lively and vivid construction of leadership beyond what could be articulated in writing (Collier, 1986, Lydon, 2014; Pink, 2003). The photographs navigate the different and complex linguistic, cultural, traditional and spiritual complexities through the power of visual imagery, thus, enabling another dimension of leadership sense making in context.

Besides the photographs, the study of meanings and constructions of leadership in the local language led to the discovery of different words and expressions that denote leadership in the different languages.

Complementing the above anthropological benefits, organisational approaches helped the researcher to understand how things work in the LGCs in an African indigenous location. For instance, aspects of leadership in practice such as recruitment practices, ethical practice, organisational structure and power systems within LGCs and how participants dealt with the exigencies of the local traditions and work culture. The integration of these two ways of exploring and making sense of leadership in context led to a rich set of meanings, constructions and tensions, providing deeper and wider construction of leadership. The combined knowledge advance a perception of leadership in which the notions of: blending, hybridity,

configuration, plurality and on-going contradictions feature heavily in the analysis as illustrated in Fig. 7.3 below.

Fig. 7.3 synthesis of anthropological and organisation findings

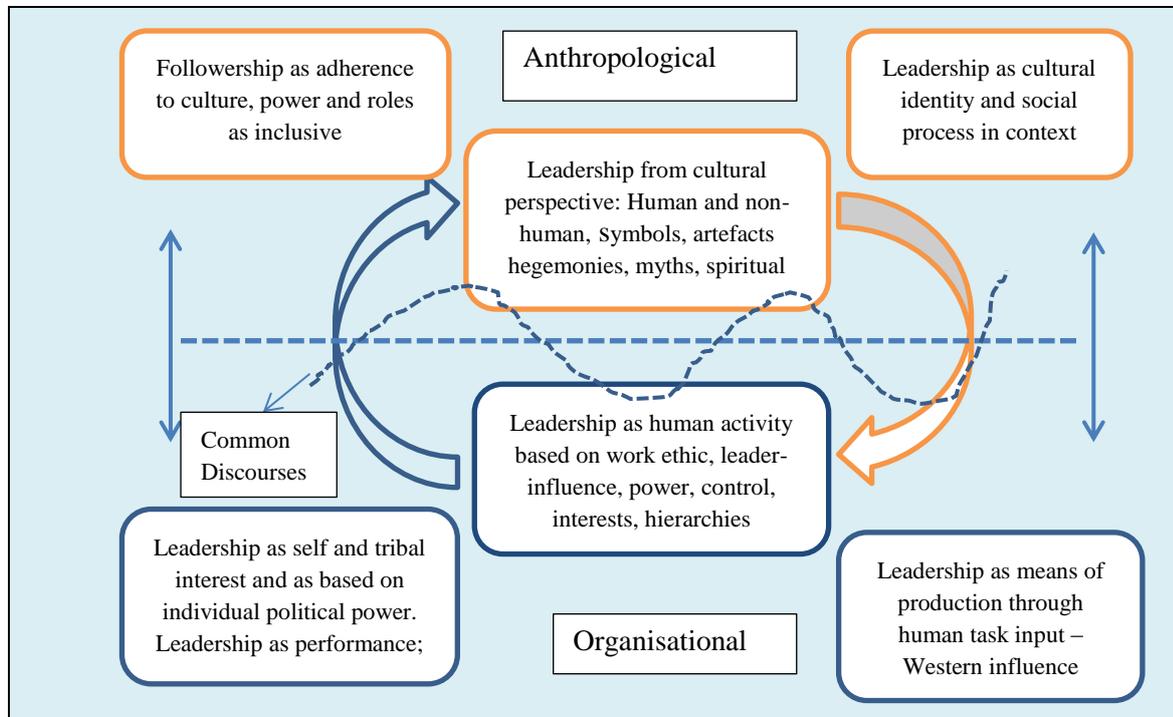


Fig. 7.3 Transdisciplinary explanation of leadership (source: Eyong)

The above diagram is a rather simplistic representation of the analysis of leadership in context. What became clearer during fieldwork and the subsequent analysis of data was the perception that leadership is not just limited to the tripartite of leaders, followers and goal, situation or context (Crevani et al., 2010; Drath et al., 2008; Raeling, 2011). Rather, it involves other indices such as (in this context) participants from a different world and living organisms within the immediate natural environment shared by people. A possible theoretical adjustment resulting from this finding is that in the context of the indigenous communities studied, the meaning of leadership extends beyond Grint's (2005) 'four ways of understanding leadership' reviewed in section 2.4.4, chapter two. Incorporating the knowledge developed within this thesis into Grint's four ways typology, an extended model of understanding leadership specific to the context of this study is proposed factoring the non-human aspects of leadership. This is illustrated in Fig. 7.4 below.

Augmented ways of understanding leadership (Eyong, building on Grint, 2005)

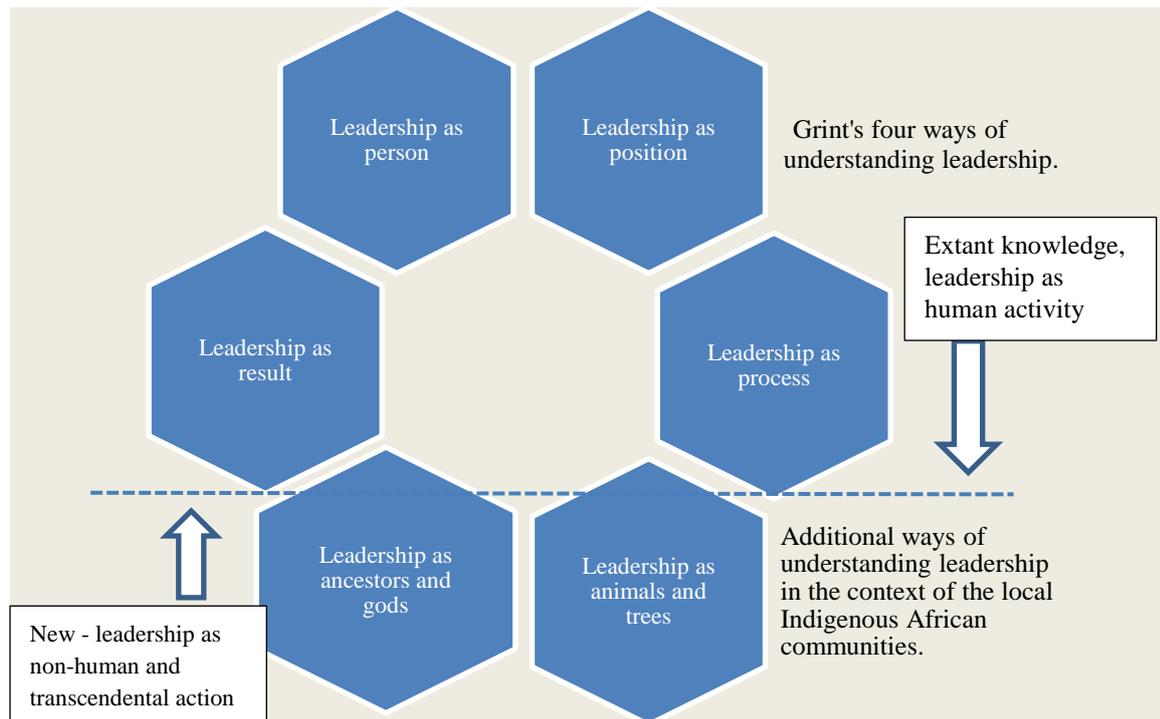


Fig. 7.4 above would seem to confirm the perception of the notion of leadership as an essentially contested phenomenon Grint (2005). In the Western context the notions of leadership effectiveness as involving transcendental intervention or as informed by animals and trees would be contested. This contestable nature of leadership further reiterates the complexity theories of leadership while reinforcing the more critical argument of leadership as multiple discourses (Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014). To this extent, it would be a theoretical overstatement to claim an entirely unique leadership practice and discourse peculiar to a particular cultural and traditional context in aesthetics, manifestation and in practice. There will always be some common dimensions of leadership that are similar to practices in other cultures and traditions in other parts of the world.

In respect to developing leadership for the wider humanity, this thesis would argue that the recognition of the effects of globalisation and its challenges to every part of the world is as relevant as upholding the moral, humane and people-oriented philosophy that is central to Afro-centric leadership thinking. In this respect, the question as to whether, Africa should adopt particular leadership approaches may be unwise in the sense that such ideals may not fit the present dispensation. At the

same time a verbatim adoption of Western mainstream approaches to leadership is likely to be problematic. It would seem therefore that to the 'African Renaissance' and pan-Africanist post-colonialist, the choice that seems more plausible the notion of blending. Through blending some of the virtues of indigenous leadership could be merged with exogenous leadership ideas derived not only from the Western ideology but also from across the wider worlds of Asia, Latino, BRICS and other emerging economic, cultural and ideological influences. The notion of blending will augur well with a generalisation of leadership that develops adopting new ways and cultures whilst maintaining its underlying culture, tradition and contextual realities. The evolutionary approach would seem to mimic a constructionist perspective of leadership along the lines that:

*“Leadership happens when a community develops and uses over time, shared agreement to create results that have collective value” and that such values are: “Grounded in culture and embedded in social structures such as power and stratification” (Ospina and Sorenson, 2006:88).*

Therefore, from a constructionist perspective leadership becomes a phenomenon developing from a process of social construction reflective of the many worlds in which we live. It would therefore seem that leadership is better known in its variability in the different cultures and societies we live presenting alternative wisdoms and insights.

### **7.3.5 Summary of part three**

The main issues raised and discussed in this section include the views that:

- Mainstream leadership concepts such as transformational, charismatic and visionary leadership would be unsuitable and mostly inappropriate within indigenous community councils given the collective, communal and people oriented nature of leadership in such communities.
- Practices and perceptions of leadership in the context of the local indigenous communities appear to be more aligned with emergent leadership approaches and concepts in Western writings. However although such concepts as: relational, inclusive and collective and contextually diverse leadership thinking is central to leadership in context, its foundations and influences are mainly hegemonic cultural practices and belief systems.

- It is also emerged that although the popular connotation of leadership emphasise corruption and other unethical practices this seemed to be limited to the more formal LGCs. In the traditional and cultural leadership thinking, unethical practices are evident leading to the suggestion that corrupt leadership practices may have been imported into Africa by Western colonialists.
- A reflection on a tale of two approaches, led to the conclusion that the transdisciplinary approach adopted enabled wider and deeper sense making of the phenomenon of leadership in context. In particular the social anthropological lens enabled the surfacing of non-human and transcendental ways of conceptualising.
- Finally, in relation to the notion of African renaissance a blended approach that draws on both Western and local indigenous perceptions and practices was advised rather than a blanket adoption of typical Western or typical indigenous African perceptions of leadership.

## **7.5 Summary: chapter seven**

In this chapter findings from anthropological and organisational analytic perspectives were discussed in relation to mainstream and emergent leadership concepts. The main argument developed in the chapter is that whilst there are specific aspects to leadership in the African context, a specific definition of leadership in context would be an elusive chase. The more general sense of leadership in context is a variety of subjective and pluralistic meanings, rhetoric and construction involving relational, shared or distributed and individualised perceptions of leadership. Hence, the notion of blended or configured hybridity of practices (Gronn, 2011) is upheld as encapsulating leadership practice - especially in the more formal LGCs. However, in this multiplicity of approaches, the novel conceptualisation and unique perception of leadership generated within the thesis is the non-human constructions of leadership and how leadership is known from animals and plants from the immediate natural environment. Another aspect of leadership explored as unique in context is the notion of transcendental intervention ancestors and gods in leadership. What also emerged is that leader-follower dynamics is mainly based on collective adherence to historical cultures and traditions which is reinforced by firm attachment to historical

belief systems embedded in mythologies and enacted in rituals. This difference and complexity of the African research context led to the design of a framework to locate research in the African context (fig. 7.2).

Furthermore, the notion of self in community has been reflected upon in the chapter with the dominant perception being that the local tribal people tend to be more closely and strongly attached to their community and see themselves in unity with or as inseparable from the others in the community. This proximity is reinforced by a range of social and convivial activities that amplify the social value system and cultural repertoires helping to generate active and visible relationality and inclusivity in leadership praxis.

The discussions engaged within this chapter and the findings present a social, anthropological and discursive study of leadership in context. They are social given that both research perspectives were carried in lively social environments. The findings are discursive on account of the fact that the process of data collection and analysis involved extensive interaction with actors through conversation, co-creation and exchange of ideas. The research findings are also anthropological in the sense that knowledge was generated from the researcher's lived experience in the participants' daily world and also include explorer ethnographic accounts and previous anthropological research.

## Chapter eight: Conclusion

*“We are of the opinion that it would require a long residence in this country and a perfect acquaintance with its language to enable a foreigner to form a correct judgement of its laws, manners, customs, and institutions as well as its religion and the form and nature of its government as we can only answer from what we see”*

*(John and Richard Lander, 1830 in Harlett, 1965:20) - The Niger Journal – exploration of River Niger in West Africa, 1830.*

This thesis has explored leadership in two African regions in west and central Africa. The focus was in twelve indigenous communities with the aim of gaining a better understanding of leadership in context against a backdrop of a dearth of research into leadership in the African context. Some of the key lingering questions at the start of this research were those hovering around the cultural and environmental commensurability of Western leadership theories in the African socio-cultural context (Inyang, 2008). Questions had also been advanced in respects to the dominance of Western and particularly Anglo-Saxon writings, theories and practices of leadership in contemporary scholarship (Jepson, 2010; Turnbull et al., 2012). These concerns raised suspicions of Western intellectual superiority, European ethnocentrism and Western neo-colonialism (Blunt and Jones; Steyaert and Janssen, 2013; Teo and Febbraro, 2003). Having gone through the four year PhD journey, this chapter assesses the overall outcome of the research in relation to the research aims, objectives and key research questions. In doing so it presents a subjective but encapsulating theory of indigenous African leadership that is specific context of communities within Cross River region and Mambila regions of Cameroon and Nigeria – the context of the empirical research. The chapter also identifies the contributions of the thesis to leadership scholarship as well as some possible implications for theory development and practice. The chapter ends with the identification of some general limitations, a reflection on fieldwork experience and recommendations for future research.

### 8.1 Review of Research question, aims and objectives

This thesis started with an extensive review of a wide range of studies and writings in leadership studies expanded upon the prior efforts of: (Ford et al., 2010; Jackson

and Parry, 2010 and Northouse, 2010). In the process of exploring the key debates and issues, a number of gaps such as articulated in chapters one, two and three which needed to be partly addressed were identified. Quite conspicuous in the review was the very limited number of studies conducted in the African context particularly so for empirical research in leadership within indigenous populations in the rural clans, tribes and regions of west and central Africa. The main reason for this is that some of these locations and communities tend to be difficult to access especially during the rainy season. This lack of knowledge on leadership in the specific indigenous context in Africa became the main research problem which the thesis set out to partly address. Another important revelation of the literature review was the clear dominance of Western writings, philosophy and ideology in the extant theorising of leadership. This overwhelming dominance gave the impression that leadership was something that mostly happened in Western countries. More worrying, was the fact research within mainstream leadership claimed that some of the theories in books and journals representing the conventional wisdom on leadership were universally applicable (Bass, 1997). However, these claims were a contrast to the researcher's experience of leadership in his local indigenous African village. This contrast led to the recognition of possible contextual, situational and environmental dissonance between leadership meaning in the Western context and leadership practice in the socio-cultural context of an indigenous African village community context. This dissonance was a key influence and a motivation for the researcher to undertake a thesis in indigenous African leadership with the overarching goal of making sense of constructions of leadership in context.

As much as the above conventional wisdom there was also an inspiring nascent and rapidly emergent group of research recently labelled Critical Leadership Studies (CLS) exploring leadership in new ways (Harding et al., 2011). This group of scholars conceptualise leadership as a complex, diverse and heterogeneous phenomenon and as hybrids and configurations of blended approaches influenced by environmental, contextual and cultural factors (Collinson, 2011; Ford et al., 2008; Gronn, 2011). This line of research inspired an engagement with an indigenous African context empirically in order to learn about leadership practices that are in accordance with the local traditions and culture of two indigenous regions including the researcher's own region of origin in the west and central parts of the African

continent. This became the focus of the thesis. At the end of this PhD journey, a theory of indigenous African leadership that encapsulates constructions of leadership in context is presented below. However, this theory only reflects the two regions. Due to the complexity of the African continent, it would be an illusion to claim that the knowledge generated within this thesis or the proposed theory is representative of leadership meaning in the entire African continent. If anything, the knowledge developed by this thesis is subjective and thus in line with the interpretivist paradigm of diversity, plurality and ambivalence. It follows that the theory presented below is not objective or definitive. Rather, it serves as a spring board or knowledge platform for further theory building, intellectual and academic reflection in the continuous social construction process of knowledge creation.

## **8.2 A theory of indigenous African leadership**

An important learning along the PhD journey has been an overwhelming confirmation that the immediate environment, culture and history are the three most powerful factors that frame reality Goffman (1974). On the basis of this general theory, it is not surprising that this doctoral piece of work has surfaced diverse meanings and narratives about leadership in ways that complexly reflect the many perceptions and constructions of leadership in the many communities that were studied. Taking the entire experience and empirical data generated in the field into account, a synthesised theory of leadership in context is presented as:

*A humane, communal and spiritual process through which an indigenous community is able to maintain, cultural hegemonies, preserve social coherence and achieve wider community goals drawing on the natural environment, historical social relationships and belief in metaphysical ancestral intervention.*

The above synthesised theory presents leadership in a way that is in many ways different from mainstream and emergent accounts in the majority of Western and particularly Anglo-Saxon books and journals. In many ways it challenges and interrogates mainstream accounts of leadership and to a lesser degree emergent

critical and inclusive writings as well. This summary theory is empirically supported and illuminates leadership as constructed in context and partly addresses the problem of a dearth of knowledge in the African context. To this extent, it is believed that the main research objective and aim which was that of creating a better understanding of leadership in an African indigenous context has been accomplished.

Relating the above summary theory to the review of literature in chapter three, section 3.3.5 exploring leadership in Maori culture it is evident that there are some striking similarities but also differences in the construction of leadership in the African communities studied within this thesis. One obvious similarity is that both cultures draw on the natural environment by way of portrayals of vegetation and plants to construct a sense of leadership meaning. Similarly, the notion of genealogy and spirituality emerge in both cultures as key aspects of leadership thinking. Furthermore, in both cultures leader-follower dynamics and community response to leadership is influenced by history, cultural hegemony and belief-systems. Additionally, the notion of community interdependence, the idea of leadership as family as well as the prevalence of communal leadership thinking suggest a common vision of leadership as caring and possibly paternalistic (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). This is evidenced by the observation that in both cultures, the role of leadership is one of service to the people along with others to maintain a sense of security, interdependence and cultural identity. Nevertheless, key differences are evident in such areas as the extent of spiritual influence and the power of mythologies and historical traditions in underpinning the discourse and practice of leadership. Also, different in the African context are the assumptions of the intervention of ancestors in leadership practice. Furthermore, there are differences in terms of the kinds of rituals and the consideration of an animal – in this case the 'leopard' in constructing a sense of leadership in the African context.

The above similarities and differences between Maori and African cultural contexts further reiterate the argument that every community, region, tribe or culture will exhibit peculiar narratives and practices reflecting the context and the dynamics in which leadership is explored (Collinson, 2011; Gronn, 2011, Ford, 2010; McSweeney, 2002). The comparison also reinforces the view that the Western perception of leadership (as explored in chapter two) will always have different

connotations from the manner in which the same phenomenon of leadership is conceptualised, dreamed and practiced in an indigenous context.

Following from the above, a 'postscript' of the researcher's recent research to be published in the journal 'Leadership' arises from further analysis of leadership meaning drawing on the local Aghem, Weh and Jukunoid languages in the Mambila region. The work employed the verbal reporting methods (VRM) which is popularly utilised in language and sociolinguistic research to analyse translations of the word 'leadership' in communities speaking these languages. This work entitled: '*Underpinnings of Indigenous African Leadership: Key Differences from Anglo-centric Thinking and writings*' revealed that the word leadership does not exist in the vocabularies of the local languages. Reflecting back on the use of the term 'leadership;' and the Western encapsulation and wisdom brought into the field when trying to understand the phenomenon of leadership in an indigenous African cultural context could perhaps be construed as a rather unfortunate outcome of this study. However, the positive side of this is the deeper tensions and inconsistencies that become evident when we take account of the context, location, relationships and the many other factors that we are encouraged by some critical leadership scholars to explore in our studies of leadership. It also perhaps forms a critique of much positivist research on leadership which has a greater tendency to fix the meaning of leaders and leadership rather than to allow for the more fluid, local contextual interpretations that more constructed accounts encourage. Furthermore, studies exploring the specific meanings embodied in such actions as the rituals, the languages, mythologies and other unique vices uncovered in context present further opportunities for detailed learning. These kinds of studies are recommended so as to encourage fresh ways to study leadership and to make sense of the multiple ways in which different cultures and peoples conceptualise and practice leadership. As this research has established, some ways of thinking and practicing leadership tend not to accord with Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-centric and Western wisdom more generally.

### **8.3. Contribution of the research**

It is contended that leadership may be the most researched subject in all of social sciences. At the same time it has been argued that it remains the least understood phenomenon on earth (Burns, 1978). To this extent, claiming to make a contribution

in a field that is already so heavily inundated with an abundance of ideas, definitions and theories would seem unrealistic without a peculiar context and a differentiated approach to researching leadership. Whilst there is so much research into leadership, an overwhelming majority of work has explored and informed leadership in the Western context. Hence it has been argued that there may be little more to learn about leadership in the Western context (Wood, 2005). This concentration in the West allows Storey (2004) to warn that the repetitive exploits of research in the Western context remarking:

*“The accumulation of weighty and extensive reports to date tends, in the main, to regurgitate a now familiar thesis – but it is a thesis which remains incomplete, insufficiently tested, inadequately debated and not properly scrutinised.”* (p. 6).

In account of the above, and in order to contribute new knowledge, this study was located in an indigenous African context to address issues such as the incomplete nature of leadership studies decried in the above quote as it is not a cliché that most parts of the African continent remain unresearched. Another dimension of difference was the adoption of a transdisciplinary approach. As articulated in chapter seven, this design provided learning beyond the usual approach of applying either organisational or anthropological approaches (see examples in chapter three, section 3.3.3). By adopting the transdisciplinary approach and focusing in indigenous African communities not previously explored, this study makes some modest but potentially important contributions to leadership theoretically and methodologically.

### **8.2.1 Methodological contribution**

The general allure of organisational research and writing has been to adopt an attitude of generalisation of the African context which has been adjudged to be misleading (Nkomo, 2006). Also, most extant knowledge has been more generally based on objective structuration, notions of facticity and claims of universal truths. However, it has been argued that such objective constructs often miss the very mundane, day to day aspects of life in different socio-cultural context which cannot be categorised or captured through a structured frame of mind or what has been expressed as ‘Western’ logocentric ideology and research methods Western (2013). The dominance of this research tradition resulting from experiential psychology has

been criticised as reductionist by anthropologists and other interpretivist researchers. For instance, pioneer anthropologist John Van Maanen wrote:

*“I am appalled at much of organization theory for its technocratic unimaginativeness. Our generalizations often display a mind-numbing banality and an inexplicable readiness to reduce the field to a set of unexamined, turgid, hypothetical thrusts designed to render organizations systematic and organization theory safe for science”* (Van Maanen, 1995, p. 139).

In response to this scholars have been highlighting the benefits of anthropological approaches within organisational research (Cunliffe 2000; Czarniawska; 2012; Jackson and Parry; 2010). However, researchers in leadership have seemingly found the concomitant deployment of organisational and anthropological perspectives an unappealing approach - safe for the excellent works of: (Jordan, 2012; Kondo, 2009; Learmonth, 2001; Watson, 1994). Although there has been a more recent surge in work exploring indigenous leadership has adopted an anthropological lens, most have been re-examinations of written and storied historical accounts rather than empirical research (see examples such as: Edwards, 2014 and Grint and Warner, 2006). Against this background this study engaged the African context differently by empirically deploying organisation and anthropological approaches concomitantly. The anthropological lens enabled by ethnographic approaches offered possibilities to navigate the deeper cultural, historical, belief-oriented knowledge on leadership in context (Okely, 2013). The organisational approach enabled a better understanding of work processes and problems within the formal LGCs leading to dreaming possible solutions. This combination helped to more vividly surface differences between indigenous perceptions of leadership and leadership practices in the more formal LGCs. Thus, a key contribution of this study is a methodological one in terms of demonstrating how combining anthropological and organisational lenses complementarily enables deeper and varied outcomes.

### **8.2.2 Theoretical contribution**

Indigenous communities, locations and tribes in west and central Africa remain under-researched within leadership studies (Bolden and Kirk, 2009). To the best of this researcher’s knowledge, this study is amongst the very few to have empirically

explored leadership practices and discourses within a prototypical indigenous African community council in west and central Africa. This research is also amongst the few to have engaged with interior tribal locations where historical traditional African practices continue to be applied in the day to day leadership of such communities. To this extent, the knowledge developed within this thesis contributes to leadership studies by expanding research into new un-explored contexts. By so doing the thesis partly addresses the inherent geographical and demographic imbalance in leadership studies and adds to the developing work of scholars within critical leadership studies (Brumback, 2015; Collinson 2011; Collinson and Tourish, 2014; Ford, 2010 etc.). It does so by introducing knowledge from the African context beyond the generally accepted contextual and cultural contingency theory of leadership into theorising leadership in the context from live the manifestations and discourses of active participants and partakers. Through this process, the non-human, spiritual and alternative-influence construction of leadership could be contributed into our understanding of leadership. In relation to research specific to the African context, the thesis adds to the pioneering work of (Bolden and Kirk, 2009, Jackson, 2004; Kuada, 2010; Inyang, 2008). It offers within this African body of work new empirical knowledge which could create further opportunities for reflection and further development of the field. Finally, the thesis contributes to knowledge by updating such Afro-centric concepts as Ubuntu to construct an empirically supported and contemporary theorising of leadership accounting for Africa's past and present.

### **8.2.3 Personal contribution**

My personal contribution has been the sacrifice of crossing dangerous rivers, hills and valleys in the very difficult and challenging terrains of West and Central Africa, living in rural villages in Cameroon and Nigeria to listen to the stories and experiences of the local people. In this process take the opportunity to learn about local perceptions and practices of leadership. This adventure into the interior of Africa enables me to give 'voice' to these local people who are often unheard and marginalised in social science theorising more generally (Said, 2002). Reflecting on this sacrifice, it would seem that I have acted as a vehicle through which the voices of these distant and inaccessible villages, people and cultures could be brought to the forefront of leadership theorising. Having undertaken this challenge through this

endeavour there is a deep feeling that some personal contribution has been made in advancing knowledge and in doing justice to the belonging of these people and their traditions in contemporary world.

### **8.3 Implication of the research**

A key motivation for undertaking this doctoral research project was to present empirically supported constructions of leadership in the context. To this extent, one of the goals of the research was to partly address the knowledge gap existing between Western leadership theories and the reality of indigenous African constructions and practices of leadership. It follows from the discussions engaged within the thesis and the synthesised contribution outlined above that this effort has extended research beyond previous boundaries. It has also improved knowledge on leadership beyond the previous popular connotations and writings on leadership in the African context most of which was baseless (Zoogah, 2009) or which focused in urban and political arena (Agulanna, 2006; Nkomo, 2006). To this extent, the new knowledge generated from previously unresearched areas in Africa might have a number of wider implications for research theory and practice.

#### **8.3.1 Implication for research methods**

It has been argued that whilst leadership research has progressively gained popularity within organisational studies, its origins can be traced in social sciences. Thus, the academic foundation of leadership is grounded in theories of social relations, group life, and the psychology of group in the wider field of psychology (Hogg et al., 2006). However, a vast majority of research in leadership studies has adopted organisational research approaches which seek to find organisational problems and seek solutions (Cunliffe, 2008a). However, whilst organisational research on its own might have informed organisation leadership in formal Western-styled organisations, its effectiveness as a research approach in exploring and getting to understand other institutional types and cultural frames of mind in non-Western societies is arguable. Hence there has been recent calls encouraging research in organisational leadership studies incorporating approaches from anthropology, philosophy, sociology, history and so on (Bryman, 2008; Jackson and Parry, 2010; Czarniawska, 2012). Therefore, an important methodical implication of

this study may be that it might spur or encourage future leadership researchers to adopt a transdisciplinary research design especially in culturally influenced institutions in non-Western contexts.

### **8.3.2 Implication for theory development**

Theoretically, this thesis has introduced new perceptions and insight into leadership that are not so common within the current literature on leadership studies. In particular, the perception of leadership as enabled by a tree and the notion of leadership as known through the symbol of the leopard. Further, there is the perception of leadership as non-human, metaphysical and dramaturgically non-linear. These are novel ways of theorising leadership that challenge popular and conventional wisdom within mainstream and emergent literature respectively. The knowledge developed within the thesis would appear unorthodox from a Western perspective as it is clearly different from concepts, theories and ideas that are often taught in Business Schools in UK for instance. Therefore, a key implication of the findings of this thesis is that it could enable students, teachers and organisations to begin to think of leadership more widely than previously. They could do so by considering the alternative notions and practices of leadership presented by this thesis in a completely different context. To this extent a key implication of the study is that it broadens the horizon of the current study boundaries. This extension might trigger fresh reflections about leadership beyond extant thinking and teaching from its provocative and challenging findings with the possibility of theoretically destabilising entrenched perceptions.

Furthermore, the findings might also have implication in the way symbols and artefacts and rituals may be utilised to enhance a sense of community and relationality in organisational work places. It is clear from this study that symbols, artefacts and rituals are important vehicles and platforms for common identification and collective representation of meanings, ideals and social value systems. These ways of conflating interest, generating collective understanding and creating strong bonds through common identifiers such as rituals, symbols cultural systems could be a resource to practice and theorise leadership differently to make good of some of the inherent benefit observed in context.

### 8.3.3 Implications for practice in Africa

The findings of this thesis could have implication for leadership practice by possibly engendering more sociable, moral and munificent unfolding of leadership such as:

- Encouraging the adoption of more humanistic leadership practices,
- Building common shared organisational social and cultural value systems in ways that encourage coherence and people-oriented thinking,
- Utilising such collective synergy to convey organisational mission statements, construct a sense of organisation as community and in focalising the notion of common interest and ethical and moral conduct in work spaces.
- Drawing on the dramaturgical, undulating and flexible leadership structures inherent in an indigenous African context to encourage more rotational and multi-leader leadership practice beyond the proposed concepts of co-leadership (Sally, 2002) and other multi-leader approaches. The manner in which this implication could work in practice is illustrated in Fig. 8.1 below.

8.1 Simulation of multi-leader model (Eyong)



The above simulation demonstrates the potential changes that could emerge should the notion and practices of indigenous African leadership were to be implemented in a contemporary organisation. As illustrated above, the responsibility for leadership could intermittently interchange between various individuals in an organisation rather than remain the prerogative of one individual CEO. Hence in this simulation, there

are several CEOs to reflect the indigenous practice of multiple interchanging leaders. How this could work is that CEOs A, B, C or D take up leadership for different projects of the organisation at different times and functions rather than fixed in a permanent linear structural architecture as is the current practice. This way, there is not just one CEO but multiple CEOs who take turns to address specific issues in the organisation in the areas that they have the best expertise. For example in a meeting to discuss issues about marketing the CEO becomes the person with the Best knowledge in Marketing. However, there is a coordinating CEO at all times but who fluctuates between being the facilitating CEO and a normal staff at various times.

### **8.3.4 Implications for development in Africa**

A key learning that comes across particularly from the organisational analysis of this thesis is the difficulty of transferring the humane, sociable, inter-dependent and communal spirit within the cultural and traditional councils to leadership in formal LGCs. Adopting these values and practice code in public leadership could mitigate the prevailing ethnicity, self-seeking and unethical practices that characterise leadership in public organisations in the wider African context (Rotberg, 2004). To this extent, the findings of this thesis may serve as material for teaching and learning for future leadership development in the African context in the areas of moral and ethical leadership practice. One way this can be done is to remove or discourage tribalistic, ethnocentric and self-serving thinking in leadership in formal public organisation such as LGCs. Thus, future leadership development efforts can draw on the findings of this research to create awareness in the necessity for collective interest in leadership thinking which ironically underpins the local cultural perception and practice of leadership. This could reduce loyalty to tribal affiliation and ensure a practice of meritocracy and collective advancement rather than tribal galvanisation and antagonism that characterises contemporary leadership practice in many African states. This way the effects of tribalism, favouritism and corruption deplored by African researchers (Ochola, 2007; Rotberg, 2004; Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe, 2011), may be partly addressed. At the same time leadership development needs to address the prevailing Afro-centric notion of leadership as a personal fiefdom intended for a life-long period (which seemingly derives from indigenous African

thinking) to dynamics of change of leaders and leadership based on effectiveness and fitness.

### **8.3.5 Limitation of the thesis**

This thesis has presented an exploratory perspective of leadership in twelve communities in two regions in Cameroon and Nigeria within rural indigenous location, people and environment. However, despite contributing new insights into leadership in this context, certain research processes may not have materialised as planned. The numerous adaptations to context (some of which are reflected upon in section 4.2.5, chapter four) might have led to some unintended decisions and consequences. Further, the difficult nature of the terrain, multiple changes and limited time for fieldwork might have affected the research outcomes. Nevertheless, the essential aspects and elements of the research were always covered and clarifications were quite often requested to clarify any areas of doubt.

The more important limitation of the study may have resulted from the multiple languages used during fieldwork in the communities. In all seven to eight languages were used including: English language, Pidgin English, Bayang language, Weh, Essu, Aghem and the Jukunoid languages at Takum and Ussa council areas. In certain communities, the local languages were used alongside English language and or Pidgin English. This meant that some participants could not express themselves in their preferred local languages. Had they been able to do so, it can be speculated that their explanations would perhaps have been more fluent and clearer for some questions and issues of discussion. However, this was not so much of a problem given that all the participants could reasonably communicate in Pidgin English. Also, there were always other participants to clarify the views of those who could not express themselves very fluently in any of the languages employed across the field.

Added to the above limitations is the problem of variation and multiplicity which is pertinent to much qualitative research as participants articulate their individual perceptions and experiences mostly which is at times different between participants. However, these individual experiences put together provided a multiplicity of thoughts, some common and others conflicting, incoherent and dispersed. In line with constructionist research practice (Gergen, 1999), rather than discard the

confusing and contrasting views, these were acknowledged and accounted for in the general theory building and sense making. To this extent, this thesis recognises the problematic of 'ambiguity of empirical material' and 'complexity of interpretation' in qualitative research but relies more on collective and co-created interpretation which is also subjective (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009:2).

A further limitation is the obvious issue of sample size. The research covered twelve communities in two regions only. This represents only a small sample of the overall communities and tribes that make up the two countries Cameroon and Nigeria and more so across the SSA sub-continent. Thus, it is possible that other tribes may not conceptualise leadership in the same way as those studied within this thesis. It is also possible that the cultures, rituals and symbols of leadership may be different. However, given that the objective of the study was to explore deeper rather than gain knowledge of the wider geographical and demographic scope, it was important to stay within the selected communities of focus. It follows that the findings of this thesis are specific to the regions and communities explored and are therefore not generalisable or entirely transferable. Therefore, the findings do not claim to be a representation of leadership in the entire African continent although it is possible that other communities and regions could conceptualise and practice leadership in similar ways in both countries and within the wider SSA sub-continent. Nevertheless, it should be clear that the findings and the resultant theory proposed by this thesis reflects the selected communities studied only.

Finally, although the transdisciplinary research design adopted for the study enriched the research by providing multiple views, it may arguably be limited in terms of the degree of focus in employing just one approach. For instance had only the social anthropological analytical approach been utilised, more time would have been spent in the field. Also, perhaps the research would have focused more in the local institutions and laws rather than factor in formal organisations. However, such a mono-approach would have also missed the opportunity to compare and contrast leadership discourses and practices within the formal LGCs and the traditional ICCs which greatly enriches this study. By adopting two approaches the inherent tensions, contradictions and nature of cultural and ideological co-habitation was better appreciated.

#### **8.4 Looking back: Personal reflection on fieldwork**

Fieldwork for the thesis progressed in three stages. The first stage was a pilot study that lasted for two weeks starting from July 15<sup>th</sup> to 2011 to August 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. This pilot project was limited to the village of Besongabang – an indigenous village in the Cross River region. During this visit early interviewing and group discussion sessions were held with a focus in the Ekpe institution - an active indigenous community governing body. The objective of the pilot study was to acquaint myself with the research field and to gauge expected issues, difficulties and to get in touch with personalities and potential facilitators. The pilot study subsequently helped to frame initial research questions although these were not eventually utilised as the research progressed into adopting social anthropological approaches in addition to the initial idea of employing organisation approaches only. As a consequence, semi-structured interviewing was changed to unstructured interviewing. Also, additional sources of data such as observation and interpretation of artifacts were included in the final methodological design.

This first stage was followed by two months of uninterrupted active fieldwork starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> June to the 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013. Apart from the research data relating to leadership which was the main focus of the study, the most striking discovery the field was to learn that the practice of witchcraft and superstition remained established practices within the communities explored. I have always considered superstition and godly beliefs as myths rather than matters of fact. Therefore, engaging with participants who claimed to have witnessed superstitious events was really shocking to me. It was a little bit frightening in interactions with the locals to find that belief in gods and ancestral spirits ran through most discourse about indigenous community life. What was even more uncomfortable was learning that some of community leaders with whom I had interacted so closely could be at the very forefront of enacting acts and practices of superstition. For instance, I was particularly surprised when in three communities the leaders actually consulted with their gods, spirits and ancestral forefathers to find out if my mission in their community was without danger to them. In these communities the leaders went into a small hut build on the courtyard and re-emerged to report on the response of their gods. In all the cases throughout the field, it was a great relief to me when the report

was positive and thus clearing me from trouble and affording me with the right to proceed with my research. Looking back, I can only imagine what my predicament would have been had those consultations with the gods returned a negative verdict.

The above issues around belief and superstition apart, I was really marvelled by the exotic beauty and cultural flamboyance of the local cultural and traditional folklore, dances and the accompanying regalia and paraphernalia. In every community, the social aspect of life and the various rituals, emotions and gyration in dances created a feeling that spiritual forces were being mobilised. The singing and dancing also invoked a sense of happiness, pride and exhilaration amongst the local people with such genuine beaming smiles, laughter and enchantment as I have hardly witnessed in the West. Critically rethinking these episodes, it is nevertheless see that whereas many of the local people believed the in the invocation of external forces through particular rituals, my sense of the various acts was they had become reproductions of historical practices passed down from generations rather than actual spiritual conjuring. My sense of the sacrifices, rituals and multiple cultural repertoires conducted is that these were mostly hegemonic cultural refrains rather than spiritual manifestations. This perception was reinforced when some individuals expressed doubt about the active participation or any involvement of ancestors and gods even as they still took active part in the dances. It seemed that the various acts have become part the cultural identity of the local people rather than the embellished notion of spiritual transcendental notion they associate with the repertoires.

Another striking observation that I witnessed in the most interior communities was that most of the women had little clothing in most parts of their bodies. Women of certain ages typically only covered between their knees and their upper groin. The rest of their bodies remained bare. This was quite an uncomfortable sight, initially making me reluctant to come into eye contact or get closer to the local women. I found women walking under scorching sun with very little clothing to protect their bodies. This sight made me contemplate for a while about the relationship between poverty, culture, tradition and way of life. Could it be that environment and culture where just impositions of location and environment? Accordingly, I reminded myself about the multiple traditions, cultures and peoples in different parts of the SSA sub-continent which are foreign even to other Africans to make sense of the diversity of the African continent. The experience drew my attention to the different and ever

changing subject positions embodied in the field. At certain times I was an African studying other African traditions. At another I became the African who has changed to become a European. Yet at other times, I felt as though I was an African exploring my own roots far from the University of Leeds. In spite of this initial difficulty, I eventually became accustomed to life in the communities. Upon better understanding and acquaintance with the local way of life, I became fascinated that most of the interior communities still retained a great deal of their indigenous cultures and traditions in ways mirroring descriptions of some of the earliest African explorers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and earlier colonial administrators in SSA (John and Lander, 1830; Mansfield, 1905; Park, 1795; Partridge, 1903).

The third and last phase of fieldwork was a ten day trip from April 6<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> 2014. This time, I was already acquainted with the key participants and some local personalities. It was a fantastic opportunity to re-visit some of the people I had spent time with in the earlier visits. This time it felt like home-coming. I received and greeted in the communities with such as though I had become a part of each of the communities. During this last visit further clarification on a number of issues were obtained to validate, confirm and verify some aspects of the data as it had been written in the first complete draft.

## **8.5 Future research**

This thesis has attempted to make sense of leadership with a focus in indigenous traditional and cultural council organisation (ICCs) and in more formal local government council organisation (LGCs) in two indigenous regions in Cameroon and Nigeria. As an exploratory study this study has presented some background knowledge about leadership in context. However, moving forward, a more focused research approach is recommended for future studies. Such research efforts could potentially enrich our understanding of leadership in context and extend knowledge beyond the boundaries of this study. Through such future studies, we may be able to uncover other rituals, symbols, belief systems and practices in other communities across the SSA sub-continent.

Research is also recommended in cross-continental indigenous conceptualisation and practices of leadership. Such studies could map out peculiarities, similarities and

differences between indigenous clusters and inform alternative discourses and practices from the rich exotic cultures and traditions of indigenous communities and peoples across the world. Furthermore, future studies should employ translation and socio-linguistic approaches to focus on the significations, denotata and lexicon of the word leadership to explore its existence and use in other indigenous languages compared to the manner in which it is employed in English language. For instance, it will be interesting to explore if the word leadership exists in the various indigenous African languages and whether it encodes the same meanings as in Western languages such as English, French, Spanish or German. Such a focus in language could potentially surface new terminologies, words, phrases and expressions that could disentangle the already heavily layered 'catch all' meaning ascribed to the word 'leadership' in Anglo-centric thinking and Anglo-Saxon writings (Collinson, 2005).

Finally, research is recommended to put together leadership development programmes in schools, colleges and universities emphasising the humane, social and inter-dependent ethos of leadership that is central to leadership thinking in the historical cultures and tradition of the communities explored. This introduction could engender more humane and ethical leadership ideals, practices and ethos beyond the semi-autonomous tribal communities to increasingly converging multi-cultural and multi-tribal national institutions in Cameroon and Nigeria.

I have now come to the end of my PhD journey having done the much I could within the time and means at my disposal. I have to confess that this has been the most challenging and humbling experience than any project I have ever undertaken. Through, the process I have really learnt so much about leadership in an indigenous African context such as I would never have imagined at the start of the journey. However, I would like to re-echo the words of early African explorers Richard and John Lander (1830) as stated in the quote at the beginning of this chapter by equally noting that ultimately it will require a proper understanding of the local languages and longer stay within these communities to gain further improved understanding. Such a prolonged stay should enable a much better Judgement about the local indigenous laws, manners, customs, institutions, religion and their influences in the local conceptualisations, discourses and practices of leadership.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethical approval

Performance, Governance and Operations  
Research & Innovation Service  
Charles Thackrah Building  
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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

Joseph Ebot Eyong

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**AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee**

**University of Leeds**

25 November 2015

Dear Joseph

**Title of study:** **Constructing and Deconstructing Leadership in Africa: An Indigenous Perspective from Cameroon and Nigeria**

**Ethics reference:** **AREA 12-39 Response 5**

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and following receipt of your responses to the Committee's comments, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 12-039 Today, response to ethics.docx	4	24/01/13
AREA 12-039 latest Response, ethics panel.docx	2	09/01/13
AREA 12-039 latest Ethical Review to panel.doc	3	09/01/13

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at

[http://researchsupport.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/academic\\_staff/good\\_practice/managing\\_approved\\_projects-1/applying\\_for\\_an\\_amendment-1](http://researchsupport.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/academic_staff/good_practice/managing_approved_projects-1/applying_for_an_amendment-1).

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at

[http://researchsupport.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/academic\\_staff/good\\_practice/managing\\_approved\\_projects-1/ethics\\_audits-1](http://researchsupport.leeds.ac.uk/index.php/academic_staff/good_practice/managing_approved_projects-1/ethics_audits-1).

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie

Senior Research Ethics Administrator, Research & Innovation Service

On behalf of Dr Emma Cave, Chair, AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee

CC: Student's supervisor(s)

## Appendix B

Exemplar of transcribed group discussion

**Joseph:** if I may start with you here, how can you translate the word leadership the Aghem language?

**Participant 1:** leadership in the Aghem dialect is called, "Wutisekoh"

**Joseph:** "Wutisekoh"

**All Participants:** yes

**Joseph;** so it is two things, 'Wuti' and 'sekoh'?

**Participant 1:** translation like this, one word in translation might make a whole sentence. You understand

**Joseph:** yes

**Participant 1:** "Wutisekoh" means the person ahead of everything.

**Joseph:** What is the meaning of "Wutisekoh" in the Aghem dialect?

**Participant 1:** in Aghem dialect it means the person who commands those who put him there.

**Joseph:** ok; what are the things that are taken into consideration before one is appointed or elected as a leader.

**Participant 1:** your qualities first, in particular aspects. We look at your moral situation, in fact, your character in all aspects, socially and financially. If you are financially upright, financially upright does not mean that you have a lot of money. That you can be transparent, that you can be objective, that you can be accountable. Then you fit other qualities that a leader should be you are now named "Wutisekoh".

**Joseph:** has somebody else has anything to add about what you think a leader is? In your family if you want to put a leader what will you be thinking in your head?

**Participant 2:** A leader is the person we have to respect, is the person who no matter what time he calls us, we have to go because we are the people who elected him. It is he who summons meetings. It is he who gives orders of what to do and what not to do. We can only listen to him and before he says do this or that, he will call his closest notables or executives.

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 2:** He will discuss with them and ask if I say so to the population will it be good or not? If the executive say his idea is good, then can he go and talk to the people. At that time he will be speaking alone and ask the people and asking for

understanding by respond from the people. As it is coming from his mouth, all respect will go to him.

**Joseph:** that means that leader does not take decision on his own?

**Participant 1:** if you are a leader and take a decision without consulting the people, it means you are a dictator. He will only do what he likes but at times he can do what we like and do not like and this can bring problems. This is because what comes out of his mouth must be true, it must be respected, and you should not wrongly give orders that will burn the whole place.

**Joseph:** what is the leader starts saying things that are not from his people take the case of what is happening in Cameroon. What do you do with that kind of a leader?

**Participant 3:** in normal circumstances, that kind of a leader, we snob all your ideas

**Joseph:** Ok

**Participant 4:** we play down on what he puts across to the people, because if it is not what we give him, if it is not the work he goes out to do for us, if he comes back and tell us anything that does not benefit us in any way.

**Participant 1:** The Aghem man has one statement which is; “wah”

**Joseph:** what is the meaning of ‘Wah’:

**Participant 1:** ‘Wah’ means that we have condemn all what you are saying, just that statement alone ‘Wah’ it means all what you are saying have been condemn. So is that leader is that kind of a character, we listen, we respect since we elected you, to an extent, you find people sometime just disappearing one after the other. If they don’t say it out “Wah”, they say it by their actions

**Joseph:** ok inside

**All Participants:** yes. In general situations, they say it.

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant:** yes. When they say it out, just turn you back that nothing will work

**Joseph:** ok. That is very interesting. So how does a leader get his power? What do you consider to give him power in the Aghem culture? When you want to put a leader in the family or Aghem, what do you do to give the power?

**Participant 1:** when we gather to appoint a leader, we take white “mimbo” (palm wine) in a traditional cup, we give the cup to an elder who has once been a leader to pour the white “mimbo” in the cup and give to the person we want to be leader telling him he is our leader. When we are outside like now, that place that is outside, as we have made a new place, a leader is there, you have been a leader yourself and you are an elder so you are the one to give him a drink from this traditional cup that he should be a leader for those people sitting out here. That is what we call be a leader, is the drink that we put in this traditional cup. To elect a chief, when we are gathered like this, the family will elect a chief and then they will take and give to the people and if they do not like the chief, they will say “Wah”. Whether you are rich or not, when they say “Wah” it means they have rejected you but if they do not say it, on the day of the coronation, they will give this cup to another chief, to pour a drink in and pour it on the ground and give you to drink. That is the kingmakers.

**Joseph:** OK the kingmakers,,

**Participant chorus:** yes the kingmakers. If they pour a drink on the ground and give you to drink, it means you have become the chief.

**Joseph:** so what is the meaning or significance of pouring the drink on the floor?

**Participants in chorus:** they are pouring the drink to the other chiefs who are now dead so that the newly elected chief can have powers

**Joseph:** ok. That means in the Aghem culture you people believe that those powers are coming from the ancestor?

**All participants:** yes

**Participant:** the Aghem **Participant** is just like a Christian who believes that when you died, there is another world. The Aghem **man** believe that there are saints, they believe that all the people who died are saints, all of them especially those who were leaders.

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 5:** The Aghem **people** believe that there are saints already in heaven. Normally whenever they assemble, in every aspect in anything they want to carry out, they will draw powers from the ancestors because we ask God to be with us and then you also pray to your patron saint to guide you. That is how the Aghem **Person** We believe in those rulers who ruled who were leaders before who have gone, we still believe in them up to date and we think that we have to continue to emulate their example and reason why in every aspect we have to give their own share to ask them to turn back and give us power to go ahead with what we have to do.

**Joseph:** pa said that you give the drink to an elder to pour and give to the leader to be why is that?

**Participant 5:** If there is a compound that a **man** has once died there, they will ask a small child and ask them to go and stay in that compound, and they will give him drinks and say you will look after this place. Even for us women we have a person in the family who is a leader, we go and gather there and he or she will be the one to say we have to do this or that

**Joseph:** that leader?

**All participants in chorus:** yes we take oil and keep in her house and we will go and share it.

**Joseph:** why do you people give the drink to an elder?

**Participant 5:** the reason why we use an elder is because he knows everything, is him that we say you are the leader, in case of danger, you will be the person to first face it. So you have to be care full when talking to that kind of person for when you challenged him, he can point his hand to the ancestor in the ground and you can die at the minute. That is why we respect him as when he speaks, the ancestors are hearing and listening to him as he can say your life will end tomorrow and it will come to pass.

**Joseph:** so do you believe that when a person gets older he gains power?

**Participant 3:** the man that is ahead, the leader who can say is our father, he knows many things as they say experience is the best teacher. If we want to appoint a young man as a leader, we say to the elder that you are the person to give this leader the advice he needs because he know what kind of advice to give to that leader saying do not take decisions just because you are a leader, you have to consult the elders, the old, even a woman, tell them what you what to do and hear from them and know which one is correct, if three people say the same thing, just go out and announce what you want the people to do. At that time, people will be glad because this is what is in their minds. So that is why we trust just the elders or the old to pour that drink to the leader.

**Joseph:** don't you think that as that man is old he does not know things of the present? Because this young man knows thing of now and the old man knows things of the past. Don't you think?

**Participant 7:** Exactly what you are saying is true; I am the assistant quarter head in my quarter in 'Nzonghokwo' yeah. The **man** who is the leader of the quarter, people know his knowledge is no reduced and he will say if you want to know anything, go and ask Matthias which is me. He says they should ask me because he knows I will do what is correct.

**Joseph:** that means although you respect age, you do go to the young generation for help?

**Participant 7:** yes. Even in the meeting house if the president is saying what we don't like, we tell him to sit aside let someone else say something. If there is a leader who is a hundred and fifty years, his senses are the people, those who are closer to you because normally, there are people who are close to you, they are people who are your advisers and in every aspect, you are the one who precise but you are using the intelligence and the contribution of these other collaborators to precise. The ancestors are seeing you; they can be seeing you through the young or seeing the young people through you. They must only see the community or see these young people through you because you are still there.

**Joseph:** so do mean to say age connects a person to the ancestry?

**Participant 7:** we have already said that, as pa was explaining it must be an elderly who has to empower any leader who is elected by the community. They must go to the older

**Joseph:** who has the connection to the ancestry?

**Participant:** yes. He is the one to empower that leader elected by us her now

**Joseph:** so have you noticed any change with culture in those days and the culture now in selecting a leader or appointing somebody as a leader?

**Participant 1:** there are quite many changes. Previously, once a leader has died and someone is appointed to take over, everyone must respect him but now if a person is selected as a leader and not everyone agrees, that person will now use their money to influence the people which will destroy leadership and the selection process.

**Joseph:** why is it that money is now influencing the selecting process now our day and not in the past as there was also money in those days?

**Participant 4:** The people in the past were scared of God, they knew God. I have the believe that they knew God, whether it is the almighty that we now honour or god of the tree or god of the sun but they respected that one to be the almighty so with that fear, they could do everything and anything runner up or any June over coming up, they will be bound to respect. Now, you can find out the multiplicity of churches is one of the things which has damaged the tradition. Apart from that, when we talk of money is not like the kind of money we have today, we are seating here today you see young people driving their cars and parking there, that was so seldom in those days is it a lie am telling? If you see a man driving a car and coming here, it must be a **man** who has reach a certain level, if you see a man driving here, everyone will want to stand and see but now people have develop a lot of skills now to sustain life and so there is a saying that when you have money, you have power so that money become now like something you can use to dominate those who don't have.

**Joseph:** that means money is now stronger than the culture?

**Participant 4:** money is not stronger than culture it only comes in to damage the culture

**Joseph:** so as money has come to damage the culture, what do you do to prevent money from damaging the culture and the process of selecting a leader?

**Participant 4:** as money has come to destroy the culture, there are certain families that when you use money to buy your position and you spend a night in the house of the person you succeeded, you will never have peace. There are some cases where some people have appointed as leaders when it is not their right and they could not even sleep in the places.

**Joseph:** why are they not sleeping in the places?

**Participant 3:** Because the people do not accept him as a leader, as they say you have use your money it was not your right. So I think that people will respect the culture if people down (in the ground – stamping leg on the ground) they manifest the way they are manifesting in certain places

**Joseph:** so your hope now is depending on those people in the ground?

**Participant 1:** What we are trying to do now is to try and defeat that devil which is coming now to damage the tradition. In most youth associations now, students associations, these are some of the sensitive topics about the tradition. How can we percentage to maintain our tradition? In most student association, this topic must come up. How can we maintain our tradition? And then they must cater put, those who know the tradition will share and those who do not know will learn and when they sit with elders like us, those inquisitive ones they will want to know a lot of things. By being inquisitive to know a lot of things, they are finding a way to eradicate it.

**Joseph:** let's explore this thing here today as students are exploring it, how do we save the tradition? What is the general thinking of an Aghem man now that money has come to destroy the tradition what do you do? What are you thinking?

**Participant 2:** I think the main people to kill this thing is us; some of us that are enlighten and visit other culture too and there are some people who visit other places and see how there is culture there and how they respect their tradition because it is natural that you can go and learn something outside and you come and fortify what

you have at home and it will stand better than what it was. So the way I think that we can struggle to maintain our tradition is by educating our children.

**Participant 1:** to maintain our tradition, we have to educate our people, we are not here to debate, and we don't have to go and borrow other people's culture although we can borrow what is good and deny what is not good. It will be good if those of us who want to maintain our tradition start educating our children, tell them, if you take money and buy a position, you will not stay in that position. If they can understand this, they will see and they will pick up then that our tradition will come back. Secondly, don't send your children out for holidays instead those Aghem people that are out of the village should send their children here for holidays to those of us who live permanently in the village. My junior brothers are outside with their families during the holidays, I will request that they send their children to come and spend it here so that they can begin to know a lot of traditional and cultural things than adapting themselves to foreign culture. You find many of our children who grew outside; they do not know the dialect. The third point to eradicate this is introducing the vernacular education in primary schools and even secondary schools. In primary and secondary schools here, Aghem is taught as a subject.

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 4:** yes and our animators all are always encouraging that in the house, always speak the dialect with your children, English is what they can learn outside with their friends. These kinds of children we are bringing them up in the way that they should be adapted to the modern way by which we want to have the society survive. So those are the aspects we are looking.

**Participant 8:** Not respecting a leader do not mean that the children do not understand the dialect, since we have just revamped our association, I will propose that we redefine laws of this succession and if the time comes and the law is against you, you cannot stand so that we should be following the laws.

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 8:** Even the leader, we should only bring the leader to come and give the powers when we have followed the laws.

**Joseph:** do you think that it will be ok if laws are made?

**Participant:** no

**Joseph:** why do you think so?

**Participant 9:** It will be ok, why will it not be ok? If you put something on paper, you can go and read it. As you have been here and heard all what we said, when you go back and say these things to your people, we say you are a leader

**Joseph:** so it is ok if it is written?

**All participants:** yes.

**Participant 2:** If it is written and some of its clause says to be a leader you must be literate so therefore if you are illiterate, you cannot stand, if you are a thief and the law says a thief is not allowed, even a thief who is rich cannot contest to become a leader.

**Joseph:** what do we do with this leadership problem?

**Participant 4:** now that money has come to damage the selection process of a leader, when we have selected somebody to be a leader and someone else come along who is rich, we forget of the recently selected person and appoint the rich **man**. As you are asking now, we do not know we have to do. In my own opinion, I think that there are many deaths now than before so this money that has come came with many things. These many deaths are caused by money. When you come and say I have money, I am a leader; you are looking for your death that is why there are so many deaths. People were not dying too many before as now and we do not know what to do with this problem that money is causing. As we have not sat down and discussed what solution we are going to take.

**Participant 10:** All I can say is that as money has come to spoil everything, all we can do is pray to God for change so that a leader can be a caution somebody, so that we that are alive can be caution people. Those of us that are alive have tried to bring an end to this matter to no avail so is only God who can bring an end to this matter.

**Joseph:** what of the white man? Did he change anything?

**Participants:** in the Aghem tradition?

**Joseph:** in the community or in the tradition. What kind of things do you think the White man changed?

**Participants:** in appointing a leader?

**Joseph:** no, not that in the Aghem culture.

**Participant 4:** there are many things that we are now following but the white man's ways, for example, because of the Whiteman, a leader now have more powers.

**Joseph:** so are there any other ways that the Whiteman's culture has change the Aghem culture?

**Participant 1:** is the same as when somebody has never been to school his or her way of behaviour is different, but when you have children and send them to school where they have learnt a lot, which is not concentrated as their father's knowledge, when they come back, the way of life in the compound must say. For example a child might say to his father to stop sleeping in the kitchen where food is prepared, instead of using a grass mattress, let's try and gather money to buy a nice one, so you see the lifestyle start changing because when you send children to school, they bring back things that can fortify the family.

**Participant 2:** all of us here have families and in these families, we have a person who is the leader, have you heard?

**Joseph:** yes

**Participant 2:** this one has it, I myself have it, a leader is he who tells us what to do, and anybody in their family is just like that – so it is the family that holds the village?

**Participant chorus:** yes, family. Every family have a place where they gather with a leader.

**Joseph:** So what has the Whiteman changed in the Aghem tradition?

**Participant:** What change?

**Joseph:** because the Whiteman came here so what did he change in the tradition?

**Participant 1:** we cannot change.

**Joseph:** so have they been no change due to the coming of the Whiteman?

**Participant:** no.

**Joseph:** so from the time you were born to now nothing has changed?

**Participant:** it has changed

**Joseph:** how has it changed?

**Participant 10:** it has changed that you go to school I did not go to school. My mother had me I did not go to school so things have changed

**Joseph:** in the Aghem tradition that comes from other traditions? What do you people like that has come from other tradition?

**Participant:** how do we leave our tradition and take another?

**Joseph:** no not to take but like

**Participant:** at first I use to hoe my farm by myself but now that there is money, I give it for people to hoe so I can plant my corn.

**Joseph:** anything in the Aghem that you don't like or which makes the people not to be together.

**Participant 3:** as children have gone to school, they have leant things that have spoiled the tradition.

**Joseph:** so school is spoiling Aghem tradition?

Group: yes

**Participant 1:** let's go back to the question where you asked what do we like in the Aghem tradition that keeps us together...s we are here, everyone will have their own opinion...but for me what I like is the annual general cleansing that all the chiefs gather and go into this small house where they communicate with the ancestors and bring good things is what I admire.

**Joseph:** so what good things did you see out of the last cleansing?

**Participant 1:** from the last cleansing, harvest was very good because of that unity. So we are still expecting the outcome of the last one

**Joseph:** how long does it take to have an outcome?

**Participant 9:** we are going towards to the harvesting season

**Joseph:** so what did they say when they came out of the house?

**Participant 3:** They said all bad things should go away, and bring good things

**Joseph:** so as they have said so, they are waiting?

**Participant 3:** yes, as they have said so, after they do the cleansing, there is one particular chief that they give him the dirt to throw in the river that carry all the bad and embrace the good

**Joseph:** OK, papa can you think of anything in the Aghem culture that makes people stay together?

**Participant 5:** what I like is the fact that when you go into an Aghem man's house when he is eating, he will take you like a brother. He does not have a bad heart. He cannot deny you food like other people that is why we say Aghem culture is good. When he is angry with you, he will say my brother, my brother, forgive me cut 'mimbo' give me, all they hatred he had will go that is why we say an Aghem man is a God but in other places, when somebody point a finger at you and say I give you seven days, even if you talk to him, he will never forgive you which is not good but the Aghem man is not like that. Many people say when you go to the Aghem people, you become an Aghem man. An Aghem man has a very good heart.

**Joseph:** very interesting. Papa, can you think of anything in the Aghem culture which is very strong that keeps the Aghem people together?

**Participant 1:** I was born here in Aghem and I grew up here what I have noticed is that an Aghem **man** does not get angry for a long period of time. When an Aghem **man** is angry, as we are sitting here is finish. When you go to an Aghem **man**'s house, whatever he has, he will bring and give to you, or if you are hungry and ask someone for food, he will help you. All these things make us to be in unity because when you go to somewhere else and see how they are living like animals is not

good. While we are here, we are kind with everyone, which is why I say Aghem is good.

**Joseph:** so Participant please give us a summary, what is that thing in the Aghem culture that makes Aghem strong, that thing which can make you die for Aghem, that thing which makes Aghem strong and will be strong in the future that comes from the tradition?

**Participant 8:** what catches my attention is that an Aghem man is in solidarity, an Aghem Participant has a lot of love for each other. Principally because of that love, an Aghem man can never have a problem with you and extend it, once you identify the problem and you apologise, it ends there and there. And in the twinkle of an eye, you find being like people who never had any problem. This is one of the things that makes me to say Aghem is a community worth living.

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 6:** secondly, an Aghem man is very welcoming. This is one of the aspects I have learned in Aghem here. As I have visited, worked and stayed in other places before returning to Wum, there are certain places, that is my son, if he comes with a Mankon boy or a Makonkon girl, and introduces him to me as his friend, the love I will have for Bertrand will be transferred to his friend, the Mankon boy. And the Aghem **man** will say I don't know when I shall happen to find myself in Mankon or somewhere where they will treat me the same. The Aghem man has the human feeling for everybody. He feels that everybody has blood that flow through the stream so it is the same. An Aghem man has more affection to a stranger than a native. I think that that is what I can conclude about an Aghem man. An Aghem man is very special, an Aghem man is closer to God, minus God, many people will say minus God the Aghem man is God.

**Joseph:** so if an Aghem man is made a leader in Cameroon everything will be OK emmm hahaha

**Participants laughter:** Yes. yes, yes

**Participant 2:** My son, you are a leader, you are a leader, and people have to respect you.

**Joseph:** and now that am leader what do I have to do and what not to do?

**Participant 10:** If I have a child and send that child to school, if he understands what his being taught in school then I say he is a leader. If you are appointed as a leader, you must hear from the people and respect them too.

**Joseph:** any idea of what a leader should do? Papa has said a leader should hear and respect, any other idea?

**Participant 10:** This thing (leadership or respect) does not even belong to Aghem. In the bible it says you should respect your father and your mother, when you do that, you will be a good leader. Is not only in Aghem, when you do this as your father says, you will be a good leader. When you go where people are talking, we listen there, capture and leave it.

**Joseph:** but papa there is situations which are difficult where if you hear from people it becomes bad. If leaders just keep listening to people it means he does not have power.

Women: if you have knowledge, you will have power. If you say you will do something then later you can change your mind and say, this is not correct

**Joseph:** ok. That means if you are leader, you have to use your knowledge?

**Participant 4:** yes. If I say to you come let go this way, you have to use your knowledge and check if it is correct. It does not mean that a leader must only listen to what people say, if they say go and carry water, he will go. If you are a leader and are doing a bad things in the family, we will sit as we are sitting now and say, this leader is doing a bad thing what do we do? Let us join and pray to God to remove him, when we sit we will call on our mothers, our fathers, our sisters, this leader that you people gave to us, God remove him. This is a bad leader for us, if god hears, no matter what, he will leave. One day, we will just hear that you are dead which is due to the prayers we made saying that he is a bad leader in the family, you want to destroy the family and they will hear our voices.

**Joseph:** ok. Thank you all for your contributions. I have learnt a lot from it. Papa you want to say something?

**Participant 10:** yes. We join leaders with chiefs, they are not the same, and there is a different, a chief is a leader but if we appoint somebody as a leader, we still call him a leader. There is a different, the different being that we can say the man is a leader, headman and if his movement is not correct, we change it

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 1:** if you be a leader, if we do not like what you are doing, we can change it but we cannot change a chief until he dies

**Joseph:** so if you have a paramount Fon (Chief) who you do not like you cannot change it?

**Participant 1:** No

**Joseph:** very interesting. Why is it like that? Why is it that you cannot remove a chief who is not good?

**Participant 1:** we did not elect him

**Participant 1:** the reason is that it is a natural law, the Fon is never elected, only an elected official can be removed from office. If you heard me talking to someone on phone it was a similar question.

**Joseph:** that is from culture?

**Participant 1:** yes. It remain natural

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 1:** the Fon or the chief if first of all given by the family and once the family has given now, selected and given to the villagers, the villagers thumb print and they say ok. Then the villagers now give to the king makers who now empower him to rule and he shall die on the throne.

**Joseph:** ok

**Participant 1:** whether he does what, he shall die on the throne. Let him be wicked, let him be bad, let him be what he shall die on the throne. Until the day he dies that

they can look for another person to take over. We will keep managing him, bring things to keep the village going.

**Joseph:** so the only thing is to pray?

**Participant 4:** yes, pray to the ancestors and obviously each time we gather like this, the prayer is that oh ancestors this is Fidelis Wung who took over from say you Joseph and so we are asking you people now to turn back to us here and guide fidelis so that he can continue to rule us well. We continue always to pray like that

**Joseph:** to pray like that

**Participant 1:** the compound here like when the Fon wants to make any libation in his prayer, he calls his great-great grandfather who have ruled this throne. He is the twelfth from the paternal succession. If he has the opportunity, he names the other eleven asking them to support him in what he is doing here and guide him or direct him to give the wisdom to be able to rule us. That is how it is.

**Joseph:** very interesting, very interesting

**Joseph:** so this tradition how do you pass it to your children so that it can continue in the future?

**Participant 1:** it is just like Bertrand was trying to put across as pa was saying that people are talking too much, they have their own way they are looking at it. They have said that they don't know which way we can change it and we are saying that the young people now who are coming up my children, through our children in the university and each time they are talking about it when they go to their meetings that it is good that the laws of this Aghem land be written, documented and put in the acais so that our great grandchildren will grow up and see different things being done they will say this is how our parents were doing, this is what we read here. When you go to other villages, which is how it is. The white man has documented everything from the day that country came into existence. And they only come back and refer and say this person ruled this is how the law was and the law today we have to go so. So Aghem man does not have a written history/law. The written history is there like that young man we have sent there he was insisting that are we advocating that they revamp Aghem cultural and development association? Which

took place two weeks ago? Should sit down and put their heads together and come out with laws that should govern this clan. So that some of those ills will be eradicated automatically. We will no longer listen to some of these people when they come here and sit down with their archaic ideas and we are seeing that what is happening today is not what use to, or what use to obtain last time, last year is not what can prevail now and we survive.

**Joseph:** ok

**Unidentified Participant:** we must match with changing time

**Joseph:** so what will happen if you cut your relationship with those people?

**Participant 1:** No it is a lie. *Till the end of time we cannot cut relationship with the ancestors. If you do that wouldn't you die? Pa is just contradicting what I was saying and I am even supporting him that we can never change to say we snob these people down here. He is just mentioning that he learnt a lot of sense from his elder brother the tenth Fon of this compound in succession that he learnt his sense from it and we are just saying the same thing here that you can never*

**Joseph:** so what he is saying is that you can keep the knowledge without writing?

**Participant:** yes

**Participant 1:** Like that house, there is never a day that we can put it in zinc. Like that house is great from my fathers. There is never a day we will put in zinc. Is the law I still maintain and I say to my children if I go or die, you people should know that these two houses do not need zinc it only needs traditional glass and traditional bamboo. So that is the thing, we do not write it on a book. As I am here, twelve chiefs have died; this is the twelfth chief eleven have died we maintain the law not in the book.

**Joseph:** so you do not want to see book? Book will not help anything

**Participant 4:** book helps but it does not help the tradition

**Joseph:** but they say the book is use to write the tradition

**Participant 1:** that house is not in the book, it is in the law

**Participant 5:** I want to know from him, he said things have begun to change for at first there were no houses like these, we were using bamboo but now, we have started to put zinc up and build with block is what I want to ask him you as an elder here fortunately your son will grow tomorrow and say you did not have money to zinc that house, he has money that you if he put zinc on that house what will happen? .....that question you are asking you do not know.....because we do not know things can change. If my son come and say that house I did not have money; he wants to zinc it and if he put zinc there and do not do it in order, it is these people in the ground that will answer him.

**Participant 3 (younger)** That is what we are saying that it is good for it to be written that, there should be no zinc in these two houses because if you put zinc there is the person on the ground you will be answerable to.

All: yes

**Participant 3:** so you people have agreed with me...is what I said that it should be written so that as they are growing, so that they will be reading it err mm ...yeah; because somebody who might be new or stranger e'mm if there is nobody to tell them and they decide to put zinc on the houses something can happen.

**Participant 1:** This one (hut) has once been zincked and nobody could sleep there so the zinc had to be removed. They said the zinc was making too much noise at night...the belief is that, they believe that all the Fons are buried in front of the house so by implication, they are staying inside that house and they (gods and ancestor) have not grown up with zinc in the house so if you go and put corrugated iron, it disturbs them so who ever put it - if you don't remove it, you will be in more trouble than them. So one thing pa forgets to understand is that we go and change with time. Pa Tanyi was his grandfather was he wearing this type of shoe? (clarification in brackets.

**Joseph:** So times have changed?

**Participant 3:** Ye ...now pa is wearing very expensive shoes but he does not see that things are changing and we have to live with the changing time. Pa do forget, as we sit here like this, very soon you will open your laptop and rewind all what we have said here and he will hear his voice himself but did he know if these things were

existing before? Pa has a phone and he can talk to his son in Yaoundé now in less than no time but he does not want to know that as the day breaks, things are changing. He just wants us to be as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end amen.

**Joseph:** Maybe pa is afraid that if they write it, they might change it

**Participant 10:** This idea of change, we should never change the tradition - as we are here now, this is something that has come now (computer laptop) but about the tradition, we can never change the tradition. That is what this man is asking; in your tradition, how do you people do things? He did not ask how you use to dress. Did you ask about dress?

**Participant 10:** you ask about the tradition if you asked about the dress I would have said how I grew up and saw my parents how they were dressing. If I can talk about the dress

**Participant 3:** does pa know that people have to die?

All: yes

**Participant 3:** ask pa that if you do good deeds you will not die?

All: yes

**Participant:** if you do bad things wouldn't you also die?

All: yes

**Participant:** so let us just say death is something that even if you do good things you will die and if you do bad things, you will still die that is the thing. So let pa not say even if you follow the law like what when your day has come, you will still die.

**Joseph:** I saw at the Fon's palace that there are some things that when you see, you will know that this is a leader. So tell me some of those things and their meaning. Like in the house where the Fon is tell me what is there.

**Participant:** Like the house where Fon is?

**Joseph:** yes. Something that will tell me this is the house of a leader.

**Participant 1:** As the chief is there, have you seen the Leopard skin?

**Joseph:** yes

**Participant:** That is very important

**Joseph:** can you tell us the meaning of that Leopard skin?

**Participant1:** *I will tell you the meaning, the meaning is that if they do not say that you are a **man** who is a leader, like this chief who is here, you cannot have that Leopard skin. He is the only one who has that Leopard skin in the whole Aghem clan because he is the one knows/looks all the other chiefs in Aghem. He is a leader, he is the only one who can have that Leopard skin because he is leader and he controls all the Aghem chiefs*

**Joseph:** why do they not use goat skin?

**Participant 1:** no; it is cheaper. As I am here, since I grew up I do not know Leopard if he dies they must get it and it is not easy to get it but if it is goat, I can kill my goat in the compound and give them. You can die without seeing a Leopard with your eyes that is why it is difficult

**Joseph:** what is the meaning of Leopard? Why Leopard and not lion?

**Participant 4:** because Leopard is strong and if a Leopard is in the forest, other animals cannot pass inside.

**Participant:** That is the meaning. The word which we said that is "Wutisekoh" in our language is like Leopard. The man who is at the head of affairs is equivalent to a Leopard because he dominates every aspect of the society. That is the thing... and so we must give him that due respect as we are afraid of Leopard we do not respect Leopard but we do respect the leader as we are the people who put him there.

**Joseph:** Why is the Leopard strong? Let us try to see the behaviour of the Leopard.

**Participant 4:** Is God that gives him that behaviour not man-made and is not Leopard who made its self to be strong. Is the same as we are here if we say you are a leader it is not you who made yourself a leader, it is people so that is how god made Leopard to be strong so is not Leopard who decided to be a strong animal.

**Joseph:** We have talked about Leopard skin is there any other thing?

**Participant:** in the palace here?

**Joseph:** yes. What about these two carvings?

**Participant 8:** these carvings are not very important because I can carve them myself and put them in my house. The important thing is that Leopard skin because I cannot sit on it.

**Participant 2:** these carvings have a meaning

**Joseph:** it is that meaning that we are trying to learn.

**Participant 8:** These carvings show how our parents were before, when they are tapping in the bush and they come across a carving, as it has carried "mimbo" and coming, it shows this young generation that this is how the old when they take their clothes and patch it children will say this man is walking naked. That maintains that this is how our father were walking when they are coming from the bush one is in front, one is behind coming with a walking stick

**Joseph:** It means that that thing is book:

All: yes

**Participant 4:** if a man is going to the farm, his wife is following behind with a baby on her back it shows that that is how our fathers were doing. Sometimes he will be too scare that stick means he is guarding the enemy that is why he puts his wife behind that if he sees the enemy like the Leopard, when it wants to come and face him, he will take that spear and shoot it and guide his wife behind or even his child will be following him behind so he will say even if we die when you see that carving you will say that this is how our fathers were doing. Even at first you will see one is carrying fire with bamboo that time they were no light when his mother is cooking fufu on the fire that is one of the book. They were drawing everything our fathers were doing. He can get up now and go to Esimbi to fight and come back and the carving were showing how he will go to Esimbi catch people, bring them and put his feet on them and say I am a Leopard man, I have gone to Esimbi and caught people. He will tell his children you people should come I am a powerful man when he has

caught people or he beheaded them he will say this is it, nobody can be more than me. Have you seen? If they show an example of that carving, they will say my father is a powerful

**Participant 1.** Before, like this pa who is here, this compound will be full of his children and nobody else will be near him and if somebody wants to enter he will say you people should come somebody has entered my compound. Only his children when they come out every one has a stick and before he come out, they have scattered everywhere, they will tackle them and he will say well done my children you have done it, I can do anything anywhere as I have children. That time he is beat his chest and say he is a **man**.

**Joseph:** so what about the chair? Does anyone have an explanation of the meaning of the chair the Fon sit on?

**Participant 1:** the meaning of that chair is that if you have not enthroned, you cannot sit on it. That is how the law is because that chair that the chief sits if you have not been enthroned, that chair that the chief sits is a lawful chair, and law that has been given that is only one person that can sit on that chair when enthroned and unless the other chief comes that the chief will say to him sit there but he cannot say that to a different person because he has not been enthroned as chief.

**Joseph:** so would =you say that the chair shows position of power?

**Participants in chorus** then participant 1: yes position of power...when he is not around, people will honour that chair even if he is a bad man they will honour the chair... The chief has no power of his own but the people give him power for example if something wants to go wrong, this one will go and say to the chief his is what we should do; this will also go not one person. The chief cannot have knowledge on his own...that is why we say when you have been elected as a leader; you have to hear from everybody

**Joseph:** but what if this man brings different ideas and that man bring different ideas?

**Participant 6:** He will pick his own. He will know that this man is a politician who can spoil things for him.

**Participant 1:** A living example of the occasion of today is the sub divisional officer, all what was done here, was not organised by the chief but everything was done in the name of the chief. He merely conveyed his own quarter of what could be done everything, the organisation, but he is the one that is carrying now the name that the DO has been well received in the palace of Nzonghokwo. So we are him, we contribute our own ideas and make him to be what he is. The address presented, he did not give a sentence, he did not make a sentence but we build it up for him and presented to him. So that is how a chief is that is what makes a chief; that is what makes "Wutisekoh". He commands the respect because he is at the head and we have to give him the respect and the supports not only respect but the support as well.

**Joseph:** interesting. This has been a very interesting discussion. Is there any other thing that somebody wants to add?

**Participant 1:** if there is something you wish to ask you can ask

**Joseph:** you know I cannot ask anything but if there is anything that somebody wants to add to help me learn the tradition.

**Participant 2:** before, these clothes, these shoes, this cap were not, they are formed by us. Before, our ancestors were using back of feathers and make two sides.

**Joseph:** what were they making?

Participant 3: bag, weavers' fibre of weaver

**Joseph:** the white part

Participant 2 and 3: yes. They used it to make caps and some to make clothes. As that finished, the started using sticks peelings and soak in water, women will have their own to put in front and behind to hide their skin that is the clothes. You will see somebody will cut a stick, clean it, and put a robe there like shoes. There was a time when they were using cow skin to make shoes. First place in Wum here it was bags feathers, this **Participant** is still doing the cap

**Joseph:** with this material?

**Participant 3:** yes is that material; If this type of people die, you will not see this bag again. See this is not a traditional bag; this is a traditional bag that we grew up seeing.

**Joseph:** so this is what they were using to make clothes?

**Participant 3:** that is why we say we should write down the laws and the history of this place but pa is refusing.

**Participant:** in those days there were bamboo chairs do you know them?

**Joseph:** yes I have seen some here

**Joseph:** so does anybody has anything about the culture that they would like to add? Nothing OK fathers and mothers, thank you all very much, I have learnt so much about your culture. I am still around with you and please if I remember something can I come and ask any of you again?

Chorus: Yes, yes anytime.

OK thank you.

## **Appendix C**

### Aide memoire questions for Group discussions and interviews

1. What can you tell me about leadership in your culture/this LGCs.
2. Have you been in a position of leadership or worked under someone? Could you share your experience with me?
3. Does your local culture influence the way you think of or practice leadership?
4. Could you explain the difference between what you would see as good leadership and what you think is bad leadership in your culture/LGC
5. Can you think of any leader in the LGC/ICC which many people admired and share with me why he was admired?
6. Can you think of anything that symbolises leadership in your local culture.
7. How would you describe leadership in the local council and leadership in the LGCs (participants working in both kinds of councils)
8. Can you tell me about some of the secret things in your traditional community about leadership?
9. There is so much talk about ancestors can you share your experience in traditional and cultural way of life how you relate to them.

10. Do you think there are any changes in the way you think about or practice leadership this days and how it was in the past?
11. What do you think are some of the factors influencing change in the perception of and practice of leadership?
12. Is there any other comment you would like to make concerning what leadership means to you and your culture/LGCs?