TOWARDS AN AFRO-CENTRIC, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM IN AFRICA

MINDS
MANDELA INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

nhc
National Heritage Council
SOUTH AFRICA

an agency of the
Department of Arts and Culture

ABOUT MINDS

The Mandela Institute for Development Studies (MINDS) is a continental think tank that seeks to address the development challenges in Africa in a holistic and comprehensive manner. MINDS emerged out of the observation that development efforts in Africa have failed to meet expectations with respect to social, institutional and economic outcomes in comparison to other regions of the world such as Asia.

The central hypothesis in setting up MINDS is that effective and sustainable development can only be achieved if development policies and practices are founded on the cultural heritage, value and knowledge systems and institutions of the people who are the subjects or beneficiaries of the development interventions.

As a leading Africa-wide think tank MINDS seeks to address this challenge by providing a platform for dialogue, information dissemination and networking underpinned by rigorous research on the different elements of 'Africanness', in order to shape policy and practice on governance, economic development and the evolution of African institutions for quality service delivery.

MINDS CURRENTLY RUNS FOUR PROGRAMS:
☐ African Heritage Program
☐ Regional and Economic Integration
☐ Youth Participation in Elections and Governance
☐ Scholarship Program for Leadership Development

ABOUT THE NHC

The National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC), an agency of the Department of Arts and Culture, is a statutory body of the South African Government responsible for the preservation of the country's heritage. Since its existence on 26 February 2004, it has managed to place heritage as a priority for nation building and national identity.

The NHC's vision is to build a nation proud of its African heritage, and its mission is to transform, protect and promote South African heritage for sustainable development. The areas that the NHC focuses on are:

- ☐ Policy development for the sector to meet its transformation goals
- ☐ Public awareness and education
- ☐ Knowledge production in heritage subjects that were previously neglected
- ☐ Making funding available to projects that place heritage as a socio-economic resource.

BACKGROUND

The Mandela Institute for Development Studies (MINDS), in partnership with the National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC), an agency of the Department of Arts and Culture, hosted a two-day workshop themed 'Towards an Afro-centric, sustainable development paradigm in Africa' on the 8th and 9th of June 2018 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The workshop brought together Africa's leading heritage practitioners, academics and engaged stakeholders to discuss and recommend how to take forward the research and practice of African Heritage, in a manner that is grounded in 'Africanness' for the sustainable and transformative development of Africa.

The two-day workshop explored the viability and modalities of conducting research on the 'Africanness' of African Heritage with a number robust discussion and deliberation on the meaning and value of articulating 'Africanness' within the study, research and development practices of African Heritage.

The workshop brought together Africa's leading heritage practitioners, academics and engaged stakeholders

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

☐ Articulate the vision and goals of the MINDS African Heritage Program

☐ Commission the 'Africanness' research project and process

☐ Establish how 'Africanness' research will contribute towards sustainable development in Africa

☐ Identify key themes of the 'Africanness' of African Heritage research project

☐ Develop an operational structure of the research project

☐ Consolidate a network of individual and institutional researchers for the project

☐ Establish funding options.

" A key achievement of the workshop was the formulation of thematic focus areas of the study and the operational structure of how the research will be organized and conducted to attain the expected development results, out of the articulation and practice of 'Africanness' on the African continent.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ABOUT AFRICA

Participants were spurred to offer critical reflections on the justifiable 'anger' that drives our redemptive urge as afro-centric activists or social advocates for commitment to Africa's sustainable development.

✓ ASPECTS LIKED THE MOST	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO MENTIONED THIS ASPECT
Abundance of natural resources	9
Socio-cultural diversity	7
Resilience of the African people	6
Spirituality of the African people	3

✗ ASPECTS NOT LIKED OR THAT 'ANGRY' ABOUT AFRICA	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS WHO MENTIONED THIS ASPECT
Despising our African culture and identity	10
Slow pace of development/lack of political will for sustainable development	6
Donor dependency	3
Conflicts including wars	3
Marginalization of the youths	2

Outcome:
The reflections indicate that the participants observed that the competitive advantage of Africa in terms of its abundant natural resources, rich culture and diversity is chiefly 'suffocated' by an identity crisis and lack of leadership/ political will for sustained and transformative development.

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DAY ONE
SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

WHY AFRICA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE INFORMS THE DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY OF AFRICA

OPENING ADDRESS
Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa

Advocate (Adv.) Mancotywa, CEO of the NHC, acknowledged the collaboration between MINDS and the NHC in convening the workshop. He gave high praise to the MINDS Chairperson, Mrs. Graça Machel, for pioneering the 'Africanness' research initiative, describing her as an organic revolutionary intellectual "who is not only interested in analyzing the world but changing it".

He set the tone for critical reflection by challenging participants to confront the problem of how to change the hegemonic structure of the current knowledge architecture so that Africa can stop being a source of raw material of knowledge but a knowledge producer for its own sustainability. This can be achieved through channeling and projecting its own heritage as a foundation for its sustainable transformative development. According to Advocate Mancotywa, the 'Africanness' research initiative in African heritage studies and practices is congruent to the NHC's philosophy that understanding our Africanness is impossible without an appreciation of Africa's diverse heritage as an enduring resource for its sustainability.

The workshop was one of the practical responses to the challenges of restructuring the knowledge architecture by articulating the philosophy of 'Africanness' of our heritage.

The CEO reiterated that the NHC, which was established as the major institution for transforming the heritage landscape

> "The workshop was one of the practical responses to the challenges of restructuring the knowledge architecture by articulating the philosophy of 'Africanness' of our heritage.

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WHY AFRICA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE INFORMS THE DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY OF AFRICA

Opening Address - Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa

in democratic South Africa, welcomes this research initiative as it responds to the critical need of changing the historical imbalance of the global knowledge architecture. He lamented that although Africans have comprehensive diagnoses of the continent's problems, there is still no structured or systematic approach to deal with the diagnosed problems. He warned that if Africans keep on labelling these problems without responding in a pragmatic systemic way, this would perpetuate the betrayal of our 'Africanness'. The central issue, he maintained, is the extent to which our cultural heritage informs the development trajectory of Africa. He proposed that the participants reflect on the philosophy that informs our own development trajectory as Africans. Furthermore, he challenged participants to make recommendations on how policy makers

can embrace and incorporate the role of heritage, including the African indigenous knowledge systems, in Africa's sustainable development.

Adv. Mancotywa argued that given the advantages of our cultural heritage as an indispensable resource and foundation for development in Africa, its inclusion in education curricula at all levels is imperative and should form part of the questions of the workshop deliberations. Exploration of these questions, he asserted, will make MINDS research on articulating and positioning Africanness in African heritage studies a worthwhile initiative. He further challenged participants to commit to the research undertaking and concluded by affirming NHC's commitment to the partnership with MINDS.

> **He warned that if Africans keep on labelling these problems without responding in a pragmatic systemic way, this would perpetuate the betrayal of our 'Africanness'.**

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AFRICAN PEOPLE SHOULD BE PROUD OF THEIR HERITAGE WHICH IS FIRMLY GROUNDED AND ROOTED IN THE AFRICAN IDENTITY

OPENING ADDRESS
Mrs. Graça Machel

Mrs. Graça Machel, the Chairperson of the MINDS Board of Trustees, acknowledged the workshop participants as representatives of the continent's stellar intellectuals and thanked the NHC for their continued support towards MINDS on the African Heritage research initiative.

Mrs. Machel gave a background to the strategic objectives of the workshop, stating that the workshop was intended to bring experts together to find pragmatic solutions and practical approaches to Africa's development challenges. She encouraged participants to frame the issues that relate to the definition, understanding, description, articulation and positioning Africanness for sustainable development in Africa. Mrs. Machel explained that this exercise was important because 'we have lost the description of what it means to be African'. She explained that the loss of who we are as Africans is generally seen in how Africans respond when are asked to define 'Africanness'. Mrs. Machel observed that what normally emerges from such engagements are multiple and contradictory definitions according to one's own subjective experiences and beliefs, with no unifying cogency. She lamented that this is despite the fact that as Africans we have been talking about reclaiming our identity and how this can contribute to our affirmation and assertion of 'Africanness' within the context of a world which has been on a sustained onslaught to guide the future of Africa even though that future may not be in the best interest of the continent.

> We need to develop a body of knowledge on Africanness that can inspire us as Africans, because we should not underestimate the psychological damage of colonialism, which is still much alive in our social and cultural institutions, and in our governance systems.

The workshop is the start of a process to get to collaborate on the exploration and articulation of the core values of Africanness that unite and distinguish Africans

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Opening Address - Mrs. Graça Machel

Mrs. Machel further argued that the prevalent state of knowledge of African heritage among young people, which betrays the level of how much of our history we tell our young people, is an indictment to the African elders. She challenged the participants to work towards a future where young people can use electronic search engines such as Google to find inspiring information of what 'Africanness' means.

Ubuntu is an indispensable social resource and key feature of 'Africanness'

Mrs. Machel explained that Africans generally do not define themselves in singular terms because we conceive of our being in terms of social interconnectedness. This conception of being as being-with-other, she explained, is reflected in our customs of greeting, marrying, and naming of children for example. These are collective responsibilities of the whole community. In addition, Mrs. Machel pointed out that Africans view success as climbing with others and acknowledging the contributions of the many people involved in one's growth, which ensures equity and inclusivity as ways of being for Africans. She therefore challenged participants to explore how to inculcate

'Africanness' in the conceptualization of legal and policy frameworks for development in the continent.

She pointed that our 'Africanness' is built on our heritage of Ubuntu and it is an indispensable social resource in the quest to achieve sustainable transformative socio-economic development. This, as Mrs. Machel explained, is because "Africa borrowed a way of planning that benefits the few and leaves millions behind." She argued that the models of economic development, justice, governance etc. that Africa adopted are leaving many people outside the mainstream of socio-economic development. Using the example of the judicial system in Africa, she asked participants to reflect on how many rural people have access to courts, and if such a situation reflects the ideal world for all.

Mrs. Machel suggested that given the importance and envisaged scope of the project, there is a need to identify and involve more people and institutions to be part of the project in order to create a body of knowledge on 'Africanness'. She concluded by affirming that African people should be proud of their heritage, and the pride needs to be grounded and rooted in the African identity.

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PLENARY DISCUSSION TAKEOUTS:

☐ Focus on reversing the distortion of 'Africanness' in African history and culture;

☐ Steer the worldview of Africans back from Eurocentrism to Afrocentricity

☐ Develop a philosophy of 'Africanness' to ensure that African heritage can be a catalyst for development

☐ Investigate how African indigenous systems can contribute to sustainable development in Africa and the global pool of knowledge

☐ Focus on decolonization as a process that is needed to reverse the deep impact of colonialism

☐ Revisit and celebrate African culture including our dressing and music etc.;

☐ Utilize Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a vehicle for advancing 'Africanness'

☐ Emphasize plurality and inclusivity as two key elements of African identity.

FACILITATED SESSION ON CLARIFYING 'AFRICANNESS'
Dr. Olusegun Morakinyo

Dr. Morakinyo challenged the sentiment reflected in all facets of our socio-cultural, political and economic existence that 'Africanness' is an obstacle but noted that there is a need to explore how 'Africanness' is or can be a useful tool in African development. He also noted that there is need for conceptual clarification of the following interlocking terms that are used in the 'Africanness' discourse: 'Africanness', African, Africanity and Afrocentricity. Dr. Morakinyo posited that "the central argument is that while we cannot escape our Africanity, since it is what makes us African, we need Afrocentricity

as a theoretical praxis to project 'Africanness'. This is conscious, non-hegemonic affirmation of what binds us together as African and what makes us unique from others." He went on to say that this should be followed by the articulation and promotion of 'Africanness' in African development, through an Afrocentric philosophy and an Afrocentric turn in African heritage studies and research. He argued that beyond ensuring material sustainability, foregrounding Africanness in African development unlocks the promethean consciousness of Africans through self-rediscovery.

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SUMMARIZED COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION POINTS FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE:

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT	CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION
Mr. Mpumlwana	Noted that we need to explore the authorization and validation frameworks as we change the epistemological foundation of knowledge.
Dr. Nawa	Emphasized the interconnectedness between what we do and our spirituality. Recommended that religion and spirituality must be one of the themes we explore.
Dr. Jopela	Noted that some of the conceptual clarifications presented in English are not easily not translatable to Portuguese. Raised the need to explore organic African concepts of heritage, Africanness, Africanity and Afrocentricity for describing our own phenomenon, given the difficulty of divorcing our analysis from a Eurocentric orientation.
Prof. Kaya	Raised concerns on the designation of African knowledge as indigenous knowledge compared to universal knowledge. The distinction is limiting and presumes that our knowledge is only applicable locally. Argued that we need to validate our own knowledge and acknowledge that it is universal while acknowledging its diversity.
Mrs. Machel	Emphasized that recovery and articulation of African spirituality is important because it has an implication on how we are integrated into the global system. "It might be one of the issues through which we can make a major contribution to the world today". Spirituality is an important theme because it is about wellness and how generational continuity is maintained.
Dr. Sithole	Highlighted the need for clarification of the conceptual confusion which assumes that to modernize is to Westernize, as modernization and Westernization are sometimes used interchangeably yet they mean different things.
Mr. Mpumlwana	Pointed out the need to explore how we can accept and affirm the sectors of the economy that are considered informal. Ethiopia is an example of a largely 'informal' yet thriving economy that should be studied as a model.
Prof. Lenkabula	Questioned whether all knowledge systems are universal and argued that 'in a world where competition and suppression is normative, the responsibility lies with us as Africans to project our 'Africanness', claim and expand it".

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DAY ONE
Summary of Proceedings

DISCUSSION

The respondents agreed with the arguments of the presentation, and the discussion which ensued focused on some of the important issues surrounding the concept of Africanness''. The discussion highlighted the difficulties in bringing about an Afrocentric based curriculum in the education system, especially at university level. She argued that, given the hegemony of the Eurocentric authorized heritage discourse, museums and heritage studies/ centres generally reinforce the assertion that African heritage is static and contained. She asked the following questions to encourage further reflections on the subject matter:

☐ How can these legacies be engaged?
☐ What should be the fate for African museum collections overseas, because as long as they remain, they will continue to define us?
☐ To what extent is African scholarship involved in the repatriation of museumized items from Europe?

Respondents suggested the need to move with urgency in exploring 'Africanness', because the idea of Africanizing African heritage studies is long overdue.   From these contributions, it is evident that a shift in African heritage studies towards Afrocentricity is crucial for the articulation of 'Africanness'. It is also apparent that, given how our indigenous knowledge systems have been appropriated and museumized, bringing these knowledge systems to the fore through critical study of 'Africanness' is an issue of epistemic justice. In concluding the session, Dr. Morakinyo questioned the designation of African intellectual heritage as endogenous or indigenous knowledge and left this open to further interrogation to establish which one is more appropriate. In response to the question on challenging the interpretation of African heritage in museums, he recommended a study of African artefacts in-situ, in colonial museums and archives as one scientific approach.

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DAY ONE
SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

1. PLENARY DISCUSSION

Specific questions which guided the plenary discussions are presented below.

Question 1:

What is the rationale for understanding and articulating 'Africanness' for sustainable African transformation?

Issues raised and discussed included the need to:

☐ Foreground the understanding, articulation and positioning 'Africanness' in credible African history.

☐ Identify what is missing in the developmental path that Africa has undertaken post-independence.

☐ Recognize that our societies were dislocated by colonialism in understanding 'Africanness'.

☐ Find a path that enables constructive development.

☐ Anchor our politics and economics in principles that allow Africa to flourish.

☐ Create counter-narratives to the distortion and dislocation and enable us to redefine ourselves in a way that is relevant to how we need to transcend neo-colonialism.

☐ Understand that endogenous knowledge on Africa creates an opportunity for Africans to solve their challenges.

☐ Have an Afrocentric understanding of the diversity of cultures, and the ways of doing things, which may provide insights to why Africans are still marginalized.

☐ Consider how 'Africanness' research can help find solutions to the African problems and establish constructive paths for Africa's development.

☐ Create a trans-disciplinary approach to resolving Africa's challenges by exploring 'Africanness' through diverse disciplines like history, archeology, geography, linguistics, mathematics, anthropology etc.

☐ Create an archive of a body of knowledge for researching and investigating Africanness.

☐ Ground collective self-knowledge because when one is aware of his/her past, it becomes relatively easy to prepare for the future.

☐ Use 'Africanness' research to challenge the misconception that anything associated with the African continent is negative and contribute to positive image building of the continent.

☐ Bring integrity to African heritage so that the outside world will understand the African continent on its own terms.

☐ Prevent/ minimize misappropriation of African cultures/ identity.

☐ Bring African pride which will make Africans assert themselves proudly, and not be apologetic about being African.

> A major challenge that was raised in the plenary discussion, apart from its resources and structural imperatives, was how to provide a philosophical grounding for understanding and articulating 'Africanness'.

REFLECTIONS FROM DAY ONE

☐ The MINDS African Heritage Program is a continental initiative, and not confined to a specific country. Thus, while it can be contextualized, the partnership should cut across African states and not to be limited to organizations and participants in South Africa;

☐ 'Africanness' discourse should not remain theoretical, but should translate into improving the quality of lives for current and future generations of the African people;

☐ The outcomes of the MINDS 'Africanness' research should directly influence legal and policy frameworks for economic, social and political development on the African continent;

☐ The 'Africanness' focus should not just be about conference presentations and recommendations without result-based actions to transform people's lives. The project should evolve into a movement that impacts pragmatically on the sustainable development of the continent;

☐ It is imperative to include other sectors, beyond the heritage and art sectors, in the programme;

☐ While heritage is not just one aspect, as it consists of everything about the about a given people, there is need to streamline the research focus as all aspects cannot be realistically explored in a single research;

☐ Since a communication strategy for articulating the idea of 'Africanness' is key in order to get the desired outcomes of the MINDS African Heritage studies, the audience must be clearly defined;

☐ 'Africanness' research should influence education system across all levels;

☐ The programme should speak to and influence different institutions in Africa, including at religious and family levels; and

☐ The different social and formal institutions on the continent should be mobilized as resources in tackling specific problems facing society.

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DAY TWO

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTATION

THINKING 'AFROCENTRIC' IN A MULTI-CULTURAL WORLD

by Prof. Muxe Nkondo

Prof. Nkondo emphasized that in an attempt to explore Afro-centricism on a whole range of issues, it must be acknowledged that Africa is 'poly-epistemic'. This means that Africa cannot be understood from a linear or narrow lens but requires a broad-based approach. He remarked that:

☐ MINDS' agenda on 'Africanness' and sustainable development paradigm in Africa is "an exercise or a movement whose time has come to occupy spaces towards consciousness and affirming our 'Africanness'";

☐ Given that a common time-frame of 6 months is agreed in almost all the working groups, another meeting of this group should be convened in 6 months' time;

☐ To ensure success of this research initiative, it is important to develop monitoring indicators as the basis for the project evaluation;

☐ Strategic exploration of all funding options must be explored to ensure the success of the research project through regional blocks, country-based sources of funding including government, civil society, private sector partnership as well as highly networked individuals.

1. IDENTIFIED THEMATIC AREAS FOR THE 'AFRICANNESS' RESEARCH PROJECT

Following discussions, the following research themes were identified, as well as the nominated members of task teams that will drive the process going forward.

RESEARCH THEME 1	MAPPING OF 'AFRICANNESS' OF AFRICAN HERITAGE	
Overall objective	To establish what has been researched and documented, where and of what success or challenges. Most importantly, to identify gaps and priority areas to locate 'Africanness' in the broad African Heritage Studies (AHS) discourse.	
Group members	Prof. Hassan Kaya (Convener)	
	Dr. Victoria Okojie	Prof. M. Nkondo
	Prof. Gor	Dr. Pindai Sithole
	Dr. Pindai Sithole	

RESEARCH THEME 2	AFROCENTRIC PHILOSOPHY OF 'AFRICANNESS'	
Overall objective	To explore and document the philosophy of 'Africanness' as an entry point into different disciplines such as economics and how they are understood, from an African perspective. In other words, to explore the articulation of heritage in different African cultures and languages.	
Group members	Prof. Balintulo (Convener)	
	Dr. Morakinyo	Mr. Khwezi Mpumlwana
	Dr. Frayemi	Dr. Maaba
	Dr. Jairoce	Dr. Osha

WORKSHOP ROADMAP

RESEARCH THEME 3	LANGUAGE AS A CULTURAL TOOL FOR CONCEPTUALIZATION, IDENTITY, COMMUNICATION, SPIRITUALITY AND BEING	
Overall objective	To study the languages of Africa, with the understanding that language and culture are central to knowledge production, conceptualization, and they are tools for social, economic and political power in society. That is, the research will focus on how Africa can advance knowledge generation anchored on 'Africanness'' in epistemic appropriation and in pedagogy.	
Group members	Prof. Lenka Bula (Convener)	
	Prof. Nkondo	Dr. Albino
	Dr. Virginie Nantchop	Prof. Claude Mararike
	Dr. Helena Hassan	

RESEARCH THEME 4	USE OF ICT TO PROMOTE AFRICAN CULTURE AND HERITAGE	
Overall objective	To revisit how ICT can be designed and applied in advancing African culture and heritage for the sustainable development of the continent.	
Group members	Dr. Sarah Kaddu (Convener)	
	Mr. Ganyani Khosa	Prof. Chakanetsa Mavhunga (at MIT USA)
	Agnes Rwashana	Constant Okello-Obura

RESEARCH THEME 5	INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN HERITAGE STUDIES IN ALL LEVELS OF THE EDUCATION CURRICULA
Overall objective	To explore prospects and challenges of mainstreaming 'Africanness' in education curricula across all disciplines.
Group members	Prof. Nkondo (Convener)
	Prof. Fikeni
	Prof. Lenka-Bula

KEY ACTION

A resource mobilization and communication strategy needs to be developed to enable a systematic way of marketing and sourcing funding for this 'Africanness' research initiative. The strategy will include profiling of prospective funding and technical partners.

2. ACTION POINTS

THEMATIC GROUPS:

☐ Nominate more experts for recommendation to MINDS for co-option in the thematic groups

☐ Develop a full research proposal for the thematic area with proposed timelines and budget

☐ Create online/social media groups (e.g. emailing list, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, etc.) for ongoing meetings and discussions within each thematic area

TECHNICAL COORDINATING TEAM:

☐ Create online/social media groups for ongoing meetings and discussions within each thematic area and combined thematic groups on agreed scheduled times

☐ Use the meetings to provide assistance and feedback on work-in progress

3. FUNDING PROSPECTS

☐ African Union

☐ International: European Union Fund, North America, and BRICS

☐ Regional blocks: ECOWAS, CEMAC, SADC, etc.

☐ UN agencies including UNESCO

☐ Country based funds

☐ Public funds: National, provincial, and local

☐ African Development Bank/Country development banks

☐ African high net-worth individuals

☐ The private sector

☐ Financial sub-sector

☐ Insurance companies

☐ Digital multinationals

☐ Civil society organizations.

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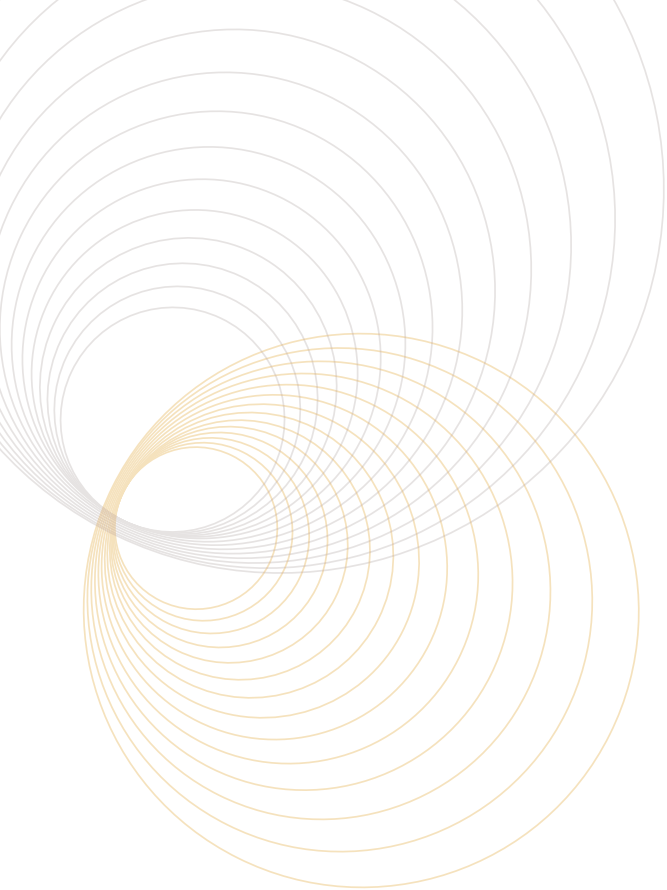Dr. Danny Goulkan

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Thank you to all our participants of the MINDS African Heritage Workshop