Chapter 22

Memories of Our Collective Future

Ndidi Nnoli-Edozien

Abstract This chapter explores the mindset humanity needs to develop in preparation for an emerging future, from an African perspective. The required human consciousness must be holistic and encompassing, bridging the gap between thought and action, linking the past to the present and the future, democratizing access to resources, eliminating waste and fostering regeneration. One opportunity in view is leveraging the power of emerging twenty-first-century technology, specifically blockchain-based decentralized financial (De-Fi) networks, because of their potential to build a global community where trust is once more a currency and where we can rely on humanity to do good for each other and for the planet. We need to design solutions and approaches that enable all persons, especially those marginalized in emerging economies, to find their voices and fulfil their aspirations. The author makes a strong case for combining past wisdom with contemporary know-how to create a new future that is more inclusive and equitable. Drawing on African traditional philosophy and practices, learning from Ubuntu and the Igbo people, she explores the balance between individual rights and communal values. The chapter also offers insights into the SevenPillars® framework that allows business interests, private and public, to thrive whilst safeguarding our natural ecosystem and upholding human dignity and equity.

Keywords Collective future · Emerging future · African perspective · Regeneration · Ubuntu · Blockchain · SevenPillars framework · 21st Century technology · Environment Social Governance (ESG)

22.1 Introduction

Our world is at a juncture, with some tough decisions before us and two clear directions emerging from a landscape of possibilities. On the one side, there is a broad, brightly lit, tarred road, packed with proverbial ‘fast cars’ whizzing by. This path

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offers us the road towards more 'prosperous' lifestyle ideals. A road leading to a convenient and modern highway, filled with the possibility of space travel and hovercrafts fuelled by non-fossil-fuels is enthralling, but I ask: how does the prevailing system of 'more' and 'better' impact the life and health of those living here on Earth, particularly for those who will not have access to such technologies for a long time coming, maybe never, that includes the rivers and trees that in some cultures are accorded legal personhood, with all attendant rights. That the first road will likely lead to negative fallouts might only be obvious to some; however, the sense of our being somewhat helplessly railroaded along, with limited means to change the prevailing system of fast growth, excessive consumption and waste at the expense of nature, is a perspective that is becoming more prevalent.

As an alternative, sourcing local ingredients for food and building roads from local, raw materials, and even re-purposed waste, can make such a difference when adopted by many, and when integrating human 'progress' and our planet's protection become a way of life, a culture of thinking and doing. In advocating for more balance between people, planet and profit, it is, arguably, the smaller, day-to-day choices that will make a big difference. Looking down the other path, we see the surrounding flora and fauna flourish by the wayside of a cobbled road, underscoring hope and possibility for the inevitable restructuring that humanity has to make for society's coexistence with nature. Looking down the other path, we see the surrounding flora and fauna flourish by the wayside of a cobbled road, underscoring hope and possibility for the inevitable restructuring that humanity has to make for society's coexistence with nature. That said, idealizing the cobbled stone road, which might entail promoting earth architecture and the use of available local materials, might also sound counterintuitive and therefore never achieve popular acclaim.

So, here we are helplessly grappling with how to tackle the big issues of climate change, as we rise up to the challenge of fostering a just transition to a fossil-fuel-free planet, but the real conundrum we face today is that focusing on financial prosperity alone has created a hunger among billions of humans for lifestyles that we cannot sustain.

There is the need for collective accountability in creating a new future, and this is only possible if issues of economic access, equity, social justice, connection and belonging are addressed. Humanity needs to collaborate across race, gender, age, culture, polity, geographic location and inherent belief systems to protect and cohabit this planet. Africa has an important responsibility to positively contribute towards a change in the structure of how societies work.

22.2 The Transformative Potential of African Philosophies

Clearly, human largesse has led the world down the more destructive path, and what is becoming clearer is that the world cannot continue in its current trajectory. The issue with wanting 'more' and 'bette' was first raised within my ecosystem and sphere of influence by the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth Report published in the 1970s. This

report stated that the global ecosystem cannot support human demands beyond 2100 and urged for urgent interventions in five areas, namely population trends, sustainable agricultural production, natural resource management, industrialization and pollution (Meadows et al., 1972). In the 1990s, the Frankfurt-Hohenheim Guidelines—co-founded by my two PhD professors—were published as a corporate responsibility and ethical ratings framework, and deeply influenced sustainability studies, including my research on the topic (Oekom Research AG et al. 2003). There are even more such influencers today, and yet, in spite of our increasing awareness on many fronts, we remain far short of the practical solutions and collaborative actions needed to address the challenges at hand. Even though the severe consequences industrialization has had on the preservation of our natural ecosystem are hardly debated any longer, we are still caught by this conundrum.

In Africa, my home continent, which is widely acknowledged as the cradle of human ‘civilization’, it is particularly important to reconsider racing into future ideals, as prescribed by the norms and practices of other nations, which often do not align with the cultural, historical and societal complexities of African peoples. No continent or nation can afford to be a passive recipient and implementer of solutions birthed in other countries any longer. It does not work.

For many reasons, African nations have thus far borne the brunt of the disastrous impacts of the tarred road trajectory—from exploitative systems like colonialism, apartheid and neo-imperialism, irresponsible resource exploitation, attendant environmental degradation, desertification, loss of sustainable livelihoods, social injustice, economic depravity and the increasingly devastating effects of climate change. For our own survival, but also for that of the world, it is increasingly important that the dominant voices responsible for building the prevailing economic structures, which have proved unsustainable, are joined by voices that should long have had more of a say. We must ensure that the ancient wisdom and knowledge inherent in indigenous cultures and peoples are incorporated in upcoming global solutions, if only to create a more participatory approach to problem-solving, where everyone is accountable for co-creating a shared and common future (Everling, 2021). This is especially relevant for learning from cultures that have long depended on oral traditions to pass down wisdom and knowledge. What is not yet clear is how we will create this paradigm shift.

In searching for new solutions, this present generation seems more determined than ever to break away from the past, unfortunately creating a deeper wedge in an already fragmented global community. In my view, we must write more about, and also embrace more conscientiously, our responsibility to look backwards and learn from long-neglected indigenous know-how and cultural systems for what they could offer in terms of boldly advocating for a new collective future. Inclusion and diversity go beyond making a case for women and youth and promote the inclusion of marginalized cultural worldviews within policy-making. It is increasingly clear that there are benefits to reflecting upon centuries of cultural insights to recreate the future (Ike et al., 2001). Indeed, in Germany, my motherland, many miles from my fatherland, I discovered that balancing economic, environmental and social prosperity had long been contemplated by my Igbo ancestors, arguably one of the most

entrepreneurial cultures on the African continent. This is the ‘memory of our collective future’ which my research and subsequent years of work on the Seven Pillars methodology, which will be elaborated below, draws upon.

Among other requirements, the key elements of future natural resource management strategies need to become more circular, especially by emphasizing reuse, sharing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing, relearning and recycling. This requires going beyond minimizing the use of natural capital to ensure outright elimination – not just mitigation – of waste, pollution and emissions *inter alia*. In this regard, we needed a paradigm shift that could transform hearts and minds, not just operations, processes and policies. As such, the traditional jurisprudence systems, as practised by the Igbo philosophy of ‘Omenala’¹ where human life and a healthy ecosystem existed in harmony, as well as kinship systems like ‘Umunne/a’², offer an approach that can be reapplied to modern thinking, reasoning and solution-building to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion. In traditional Igbo culture, individual and communal welfare co-existed, and such cultural beliefs and systems will serve well, alongside many others, as a launchpad for restructuring the present approach to addressing our contemporary global issues (Edozien, 2007).

Stepping back in time, we can clearly see the inroads and leaps Africa has taken in the not-too-distant past to positively and collectively transform society and uplift humanity in an ecologically, economically *and* people-centred way. The first such recent revolution came with the telecommunications sector, when African nations successfully avoided the deployment of fixed line telephone systems infrastructure and went straight into mobile & wireless (broadband). In Nigeria, according to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) this increased accessibility exponentially, from 400,000 landlines in four decades to 204million mobile lines in less than two decades, including the base of the pyramid (Udubuwa, 2021). The second revolution we could refer to was in the banking and finance sector, where Africa leapfrogged the development of branch-banking into mobile [fintech], and is moving rapidly into 100% digital banking. The third revolution, going on quietly, is in the energy sector, where we have the opportunity to chart a path to renewable sources of energy that are not fossil-fuel-based. Like with telecommunications and fintech, Africa retains

¹ ‘Omenala’ means ‘the law of the land’ and embodies the understanding of African communal values for the Igbo, which are very much aligned with the values of ‘Ubuntu.’ ‘Omenala’ offers an important principle and philosophy in understanding the interplay between community and individual; forces of nature and nurture; religion and business; the environment and humanity; and generally helps us better understand various factors and values that ensured sustainability and stakeholder participation among the traditional Igbo people. It continues to provide a valuable foundation for problem-solving today. In this context, ‘Omenala’ links the past, present and future in one continuum through the earth (Edozien, 2007).

² ‘Umunne’ and ‘Umunna’ literally means children [umu] of the same mother [nne] or the same father [nna], however in more generic terms refers to the kinship in communities and underscores the values of belonging and community, since the individual is only considered fully realized through his social relations. This involved the individual’s relationship with family, the wider community and nature (land, sky, forest, rivers, etc.). Much like with the Ubuntu philosophy, the principle of “I am because we are, and because we are therefore I am” applies (Edozien, 2007).

the option not to be powered by coal-fired power plants and has the opportunity to deploy geothermal, wind, solar and other more sustainable energy sources.

Now, Africa is at the brink of what could be termed its fourth revolution, as we improve the capacity of blockchain solutions to make smart contracts work. We have a new possibility to introduce and democratize the trust that enables financial intermediation, essentially introducing access to sustainable capital more equitably and supporting more sustainable livelihoods on the continent. This can ensure that rural communities have access to the resources they require to preserve their natural ecosystems and develop, with all the benefits that dignified living brings, self-sustaining and modern amenities. Blockchain-enabled technology could enable financial inclusion and personal fulfilment possibilities in entirely innovative ways and across every level of society, and indeed many such practical solutions are beginning to emerge.

It is not, therefore, so far-fetched to hope that Africa's role in inevitable world restructuring could be inspired by her wise, culturally rooted philosophies and best practices. The concept of 'Ubuntu' is one that has popularized the philosophy that promotes the importance of interdependence: 'I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am', which is prevalent among the Igbo and so many African cultures (Edozien, 2007). The cultural rootedness of communal thinking in tandem with the pursuit of individual interest is embedded in cultural philosophies like 'Ubuntu'. So why not encourage equity and prosperity, inclusion and human dignity on the continent, and consequently for the world, through African philosophical thought and action? Why shouldn't we leverage alternative models in achieving digital and financial inclusion, economic security, personal fulfilment and social confidence, without as much ecological disruption? Surely, we can practice a more socially and economically just capitalism that considers natural capital and captures negative externalities as part of the cost of business?

I believe that we can facilitate a just transition by mining our deep cultural systems to extrapolate inclusive socio-economic policies, with better forms of production and resource extraction, more equitable distribution of resources, and responsible leadership that is more inclusive of the perspectives and needs of those people we seek to impact. While uplifting human dignity and sustaining the natural ecosystem might be at the core of many sustainability advocates, we need to be mindful, to choose the paths that lead towards creating a world in which people, culture, natural capital and responsible capitalism are better aligned. There will certainly be a need for a multiplicity of pathways to accommodate all stakeholders. The Seven Pillars Methodology supports businesses, which are key stakeholders and potential enablers of positive change, to develop a values-based approach to work that integrates cultural and ethical values, respecting individual and communal needs and interests.

22.2.1 The SevenPillars Methodology

The SevenPillars methodology is an adaptation of the Frankfurt-Hohenheim Guidelines, which has been acknowledged as the first criteriology for sustainable corporate ratings to be developed using scientific methods (Afrikairos, 2021). As an approach, the SevenPillars evolved further based on insights acquired from businesses at the base of the pyramid, through the work of the Growing Businesses Foundation in Nigeria. The SevenPillars concept was then successfully applied to Africa’s largest listed manufacturing business, with a market cap of \$9.1bn according to Forbes, supporting it to achieve award-winning results. Originally, the SevenPillars Methodology evolved out of research covering hundreds of businesses to test the traditional values and systems of business owners and managers vis a vis the society, environment and economy in a given community. The objective was to sustain financial performance, but not at the cost of community welfare, good governance, environmental impacts and other criteria included among prevailing Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) standards. At the heart of the SevenPillars® lies the cultural pillar, which requires any implementation, first and foremost, to be aligned with the best practices and ideals of prevailing norms, values and way of life.

The SevenPillars® fashioned its methodology, in part, from the African cultural system of the Igbo, building on the values and philosophies inherent in Igbo concepts of ‘Omenala’ and ‘Umunne/a’, which emphasize alignment of individual, community, nature, business interests. Figure 22.1 shows the seven pillars of this methodology.

- **The Cultural Sustainability Pillar** is at the core of the SevenPillars® model. It seeks to embody values, ethics and align sustainability thinking with doing at the heart of the organization. Celebrating the human person and their connection with the ecosystem is critical for this pillar, and this also means recognizing employees and institutionalizing local knowledge capital as a core asset of the business. This is achieved by creating a learning environment and collaborative platforms for employees to grow and achieve their fullest potential, embody core values of the

Fig. 22.1 The SevenPillars® Methodology (Copyright by the author). The figure was designed as part of the SevenPillars® Handbook, to be published in 2022

business, adopt an inclusive approach to business including respect for cultural diversity and giving back to the society, within and beyond the workplace. This Pillar actively encourages and rewards engagement with the wider ecosystem and outside of core work responsibilities, which requires teamwork, learning and growth, volunteering, mentorship, inclusivity, respect, integrity, meritocracy and business ethics.

- **The Social Sustainability Pillar** recognizes the importance of strategic engagement with the host economy, specifically host communities, both as a corporate entity and through employee engagement, with a view to achieving social license to operate by enabling surrounding communities to grow and progress to their full potential in tandem with business profitability and growth. Businesses have an important role to play in bringing development, new business opportunities, skills, jobs, know-how, infrastructural development, resilience and prosperity through direct and indirect employment, skills transfer, local entrepreneurial development, job creation and prioritized patronage of local suppliers and contractors. Global best practices, which include appropriate technologies, educational, health and safety standards, are also extended beyond the workplace to the communities directly or indirectly through partnerships.
- **The Economic Sustainability Pillar** promotes inclusive, sustainable economic development of host countries and markets, strategically seeking - as a deliberate by-product of the business operations—to promote the economic growth, self-reliance, self-sufficiency and industrialization of the host economy. This pillar promotes an impact driven approach to business whereby long-term value is achieved by incorporating environmental and operational efficiency in the choice of production facilities, creating jobs and developing resilient local economies in strategic locations and key markets. Transparency and due diligence in the payment of taxes and fulfilling other statutory obligations also improves the economic robustness of the host country enhancing the economic prospects for business growth, mitigating country-level risk and promoting prosperity and local purchasing power. This pillar can also be developed as an important element of external reporting, especially with regard to the value and chain and supply chain of larger businesses.
- **The Environmental Sustainability Pillar** promotes the integration of sustainable environmental management practices into core business operations. This Pillar is critical to ensure a proactive approach in addressing the challenges and opportunities of environmental management, considering flora, fauna, water bodies and land as key stakeholders and ensuring business preparedness, early mitigation and mediation of risks such as climate change. Beyond taking account of and consciously minimizing negative externalities and risks, this pillar identifies and explores business opportunities and innovations that arise from consciously optimizing performance by managing energy efficiency, water usage, waste reduction, emissions, inter alia and seeks to embrace new technologies to reinvent business processes and ensure early adoption of circular and shared economy best practices for sustainable competitive advantage.

- **The Operational Sustainability Pillar** focuses on business process innovation and efficiencies by leveraging new technologies to achieve customer satisfaction and satisfy target markets through supply chain and value chain innovation. Beyond internal business process improvements to ensure customer satisfaction and operational efficiency, the pillar highlights collaboration with vendors, contractors and partners to deliver constantly improving value and service to customers and stakeholders through continuous product improvement, new business development, product innovation, with appropriate technologies and systems that constantly optimize cost efficiencies, whilst recording and actively minimizing negative externalities. This Pillar sits at the core of business operations to maintain and promote high operational standards that align with global best practices whether in occupational health and safety, to make the work environment and project sites safe for all stakeholders, or circular economy principles that incorporate new approaches to supply chain innovation whilst minimizing harm to the society, economy and environment.
- **The Financial Sustainability Pillar** seeks to achieve sustainable financial health by integrating financial and non-financial reporting, and curating a financially viable business model that delivers good and sustained returns to shareholders, whilst also creating value for stakeholders in the markets, economies and countries of operation. The integration and alignment of non-financial and financial outcomes and target-setting is central to this pillar, with the objective of creating sustained financial profitability for the business, whilst retaining social license to operate. This pillar needs to clearly articulate the balance sheet of every one of the seven pillars, and associated seven capitals, to creating linkages between them. This also results in accountability for negative externalities, ensuring mitigation against stranded assets and sustainability-related risks.
- **The Institutional Sustainability Pillar** is centred around the objective to build a world-class institution focusing on sustainability-related risk management, governance and compliance. This pillar embeds sustainability in governance best practices and underscores legal and regulatory compliance, accountability, transparency and business continuity as key business success levers. The focus on institutional sustainability also ensures that the vision, goals and objectives of the organisation are championed at the highest level of governance but also trickle down to the most subsidiary level of execution. This achieves solidarity across functions, and means that values and ethical norms of behaviour are adhered to; that best practices in sustainability, governance, risk management and compliance are truly operationalized and monitored across the business.

22.3 Closing the Sustainability Gap

In an article for the African Chapter of the Club of Rome, Preiser et al. (2020) buttress the fact that linking the past, present and future as a distinct element of sustainability is borrowed from the African value system. For instance, in the Igbo

traditional economy which revolves around family-owned businesses, it emerged that the rationale for economic decision-making often drew gravitas from 3 tiers of existence—the present living, the yet-unborn future and the past ancestors whose presence lives on through culture (Preister et al., 2020). This understanding is a cornerstone of the sustainability definition adopted by the SevenPillars approach, one that goes beyond considering the present and future generations to also incorporate the past inherent in cultural norms, values and the ethos of tradition. Additionally, there is often a disconnect between the ideals of individuals and the corporations in which they work, put more simply: a sustainability gap, which refers to the wide space that can exist between thought and action, strategy and execution.

The success in applying the SevenPillars® Methodology has mostly been attributed to its emphasis on bridging this sustainability gap, most importantly in linking thought to action, moving between ideals and their practical enactment, and also uniquely linking lessons of the past to the present and future. This thinking goes beyond just talking to lived practices, which we call culture or, in Igbo, ‘Omenala’. It shows that digging deep into past practices can promote solutions for the future. For instance, in the preparation of foods, such as moin-moin and ofada rice, some Nigerian catering businesses have returned to the practice of using organic packaging, thereby reducing plastic consumption by creatively and beautifully serving delicacies in banana leaves at important functions and events. Similarly, the use of natural earth and reuse of materials that might have become waste is now increasingly in use as building material or to create art.

There are several more practices upheld in the past which are a source of immense insight for the future. Take the notion of preserving certain parts of the forest as sacred by the Igbo, which, in the past, ensured that no human was to interfere with the space where nature was allowed to reign supreme. This allowed for balance and mutual respect between nature and the community. This regard for the earth is also seen in farming practices where farmlands were left fallow for years, the outcome of which was for the soil to recover and regain its spent fertility. The Igbo tradition built on the sanctity of flora and fauna in occurrence naturally and locally—with specific rules on the percentages of crop harvested that was to be replanted—all of which ensured a certain economic circularity embedded in the traditions, norms and culture of the people and the agronomy, sustained by the earth and the humans in the area.

In terms of social equity, traditional governance structures, like the ‘umuada’³, ‘umunne’ and ‘umunna’, ensured that all persons had representation and were guaranteed rights to a fair hearing. Traditional governing structures also maintained a balance between private interest, enterprise and the communal good, and land (a primary asset highly regarded as part of nature) was held in trust, not ever owned absolutely by any individual. This communal ownership style encouraged individual enterprise but also respected the long-term interests of the community. In communities where these traditional practices thrived, there was a strong corporate social responsibility where the most enterprising individuals collectively provided enough

³ The ‘umuada’ is another kinship classification within the traditional Igbo culture that promotes a sense of belonging (Edozien, 2007)

for all to survive. Thus, those who were in need ‘had a right to harvest leftovers from farmlands after the rightful “owner” had taken all they wanted’ (Preiser et al., 2020; Edozien, 2007). In implementing concepts like social equity within contemporary corporations, the Cultural Pillar of the SevenPillars Methodology focuses on the relevance of local cultures and existing practices and the importance of the past for navigating the present and future.

For businesses, the overall idea behind the SevenPillars® methodology, to put it another way, is that sustainability means leaning on the wisdom of all generations, to manage the present and safeguard the future. This means developing sustainability consciousness and, in more practical terms, managing Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) risk. It is our responsibility to ensure we have food, water and sustainable livelihoods for future generations. This means we must address the present conflict between people, planet and profit.

There is an urgent need for a switch from the linear to a more circular economy, similar to what used to be the norm in African traditional societies. Figure 22.2 shows the *sustainability gap* that transformative strategies need to bridge. We also need to shift from ticking boxes for reports to responsible and conscious decision-making in the realm of finance, production and consumption inter alia. For example, responsible finance for circular economy initiatives should not just tick the box stating their support of recycled waste streams but, in addition or instead, finance business strategies that eliminate and mitigate negative environmental impact and divert operations from the use of virgin materials, which could be replaced with recycled and reusable materials.

The *sustainability gap* is a problem that has arisen in the course of my work, most specifically during my tenure as an associate with the University of Edinburgh,

Fig. 22.2 The sustainability gap (copyright by the author)

working in collaboration with Professor Kenneth Amaeshi and as Chief Sustainability & Governance Officer for Africa's largest commercial enterprise. A large problem with the gap between thought and action is that, even when organizations become aware, and, in theory, acquiesce to the necessity of the SevenPillars sustainability concept, they might still be unwilling to do the work of moving the theoretical to the practical or moving from thought to action. Many organizations set social, economic and environmental targets, *inter alia*, which they are unable and unlikely to meet, because it is what is demanded from external stakeholders rather than what the employees and company leaders set out to achieve. Without the proper follow-through, this leads to integrity and credibility issues.

The SevenPillars® help to bridge the *sustainability gap*, and, in my experience, they work for large corporations, but also for small businesses. This has been evidenced in my work at Dangote and with the Growing Businesses Foundation (GBF) (Dangote Sustainability Report, 2018).⁴ While at GBF, we invented the term 'Corporate Response-ability and Sustain-ability' in 2007 to emphasize that community-centred sustainable thinking in action should be core to business strategic thinking. This was also to re-emphasize that the holistic nature of 'African Cosmology' successfully applied to capitalism can produce positive outcomes for all, including businesses, without sacrificing the society, environment or the commons.

Based on my learnings from the work of the Growing Businesses Foundation over the past 21 years and the 30-year life span of the Frankfurt-Hohenheim Guidelines, which together support the foundations of the SevenPillars®, and I believe businesses have perhaps the most important role to play in saving the planet and humanity, I believe it is possible to galvanize organizations into closing the *sustainability gap* and thus ensuring that businesses, micro, small, medium and large play their part in achieving global and local sustainability principles and outcomes. The SevenPillars® Methodology is deliberately designed for businesses, as an impactful change management framework to underpin their transformative literacy process.

22.4 Conclusion: A Contribution to Transformative Literacy

The prevailing system of 'modern civilizations', analogous to the tarred road trajectory, is not sustainable; its gains have been achieved for the few to the detriment of the many, depleting earth's resources and jeopardizing the survival of future generations. Africa needs to step into her significant role in re-fashioning the operating systems of the world, not just for her own sake but for the global community at large. The required human consciousness, and inevitable change towards it, must be holistic and encompassing, bridging the gap between thought and action, linking the

⁴ GBF is a non-profit organization combating poverty by enabling enterprises amongst the poorest people in Nigeria. For more information, see <https://gbfng.org>, accessed on 30th June 2021

past to the present and the future, democratizing access, in moderation, to resources, eliminating waste and fostering regeneration.

This kind of all-encompassing worldview, where the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the material intertwine seamlessly, is inherent across most African cultures and traditional systems. What African nations need to do, therefore, is to mine their cultural heritage and, with minor modifications, extrapolate them for both local and global transformation. The rethinking required for this holistic change has already begun, by emphasizing sustainability and circularity. The SevenPillars® framework is one tool that has been successfully deployed in Africa's leading commercial enterprise and bridges the gap between corporations and the base of the pyramid, as manifested in the work of GBF, which now spans 21 years.

Throughout these years, I have witnessed leaders and institutional actors successfully embrace ideals inherent in African cultures; and I am confident that Africa, indeed the world, will benefit from incorporating more diverse perspectives in global policy-making. We are in a new era, wherein human activity is being incentivized to be conducted with more regard for nature and equity. However, the emerging future will only be transformative for humankind and our planet when individuals, community and business leaders around the world find the courage to combine our diverse collective memories of a sustainable future. I believe we have a great opportunity to leverage technology, draw upon our extensive and diverse knowledge base across the world's rich heritage of cultures and refashion our future.

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