

# C O N C E P T P R O P O S A L

## PREAMBLE

### FROM CULPABILITY AND VULNERABILITY TO ...

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From the turn of the 21st century, and until recently, few things have attracted global sympathies, regional concern, national probing, local gossip—and caused, at the same time, a growing public apathy and upheaval—as with the seemingly intractable condition of affairs of African countries. The high “interest” the continent yields to stakeholders’ alleged multiple, diverse *interests* and *claims* on it, evidently surpasses the substantial *loss* of growth the continent has realized since the last decade of the 20th century, a scenario that depicts a renewed outright *scramble* for Africa.

This seething, scandalous state of affairs affects, practically, all areas of human life and endeavor on the continent—again, as to suggest that its anticipated solutions equally should be complete and integrated at the base. Prognosis of the outcome of this situation varies considerably than do the diagnosis of the condition itself, which may be usefully engaged in miscellaneous ways. But even currently proposed diagnoses are often locked within water-tight disciplinary and professional discourse which often ignores life’s multi-dimensionality and the contextual setting of human life and social activities which spring from it—a goal the biblical, and its allied theological, disciplines have historically adequately fostered.

The depth of insight gained from current judgments on the African condition bears close scrutiny. Generally, opinions have riveted, invariably, on the global buzzword or shibboleth *development*, as to render all other discourse subservient to it! But moot here is why *this* development has been unattainable hitherto on the continent. Often inculcated in the long search for *causes* or *solutions* to Africa’s existential predicament/development challenge are the following prime candidates:

1. colonization and modernization as linked bureaucratic systems of nation-states
2. “shattered microcosm” (e.g., tribal chieftain polities of African villages): linked to conversionist/missionary religions in the modern world
3. indigenization (= “ethnification”) of culture: local traditions set against global (post-)modernity
4. the invention of Africa/African identity: linked to the old “scramble” for and partition of Africa
5. (nondiscretionary) international foreign aid (dubbed “dead aid”): paradox: more aid, little progress
6. absence of civil society or civic culture; “culture lock” (= “fear of change”) and backwardness
7. dominating rule by foreign (-sponsored) NGOs/(imposition of) loans = “shadow government”
8. overpopulation/high population density and threat to health and food security
9. high volume foreign investments in African markets: equal access denied to African trade
10. massive institutional and societal breakdown: from families to society’s fortresses, via the forests
11. systemic and avaricious corruption fueled by both internal and external resources and bodies
12. “crisis of social reproduction”/gender parity and state policy (= issue of “state feminism”)
13. indigeneity (“subject”)/citizenship (“citizen”) divide: nation, land and (new) settlement
14. hollow (rural) “transformation” *programmes*; personal *and* social transformation disconnect
15. “politics of social cleavages”: fault lines in society—social class, geographic region, religion, rural (“village”)/urban (“city”); political inertia combined with spiritual stupor
16. absence of sound political economic structures/policies adequate to holistic development realities
17. dead governance: ruling without “social capital” or with forged or fraudulent “social capital”—“crises of nation building” remain unaffected
18. dead religion: cultural entrapment of religion and its capacity to work for positive social change and moral development
19. acquiring discursive language for critical thinking in education/global identity discourse or debates
20. fostering rational holistic approach to enduring issues of faith/culture and religion/society in Africa

While the merit or demerit of proposed causes and analyses of Africa's woes seems moot, the list itself suggests, or betrays rather, a shared culpability across the wide spectrum of actors/agents, and of the states within and beyond Africa. Life under these terms is doubtless equally vulnerable, as to make efforts at realizing Africa's weal or happiness seem redundant. But the scenario itself now signals the need for a new conversation on Africa, for a new century—a new discourse which goes beyond the old scramble for marble argument; reckons seriously with life's vulnerability in Africa but vigorously searches for new solutions; and critically weighs old hard data and current proposals against new empirical evidence and knowledge.

If the future must be seen as *radically* different from the old order of things—while retaining its sheer prolepsis or anticipated, partial realization now—then we must solidly prepare the future enlightened citizens during their educational career for this task via a shared holistic vision-driven education. We must also engage across the broad spectrum of society bona fide stakeholders who share such vision and infuse them with the courage to make it happen in a new African society—stakeholders always must be solution-driven!

Mutual benefit, criticism, shaping of ideas, accountability and enlightenment results from such a meeting. A “new social ordering” of society is gained for life to flourish, and a “new social offer” is given to sustain the new society. It is in this spirit that ANVA summit brings C&S together.

**Citizens ANVA Stakeholders SUMMIT**

When the future is critically at stake in the present, due, partly, to *mixed legacies* from the past; when people rummage through their heritage for “solutions” to contemporary problems/issues that pose a threat to their collective future; such situation ought to be of paramount concern to citizens and stakeholders alike, in their respective position and function in African society.

The state of affairs is almost always indicative of a critical but felt need to “legitimize” or *explain* social and historical *change*, with its attendant problem of *continuity*. The same condition often serves as a cauldron where identities are formed and negotiated by all and sundry. Even religion partakes of this challenge, to a very significant degree, since questions of faith must necessarily be addressed within such context. In seeking, then, to “solve” (existential) problems which are posed by the ongoing and constant interaction between “human agency” (= actors or *people*) and “social institutions” (= reified *power* or structures) or between *self* and *society* in history, there is need to engage with our world and harness all our intellectual knowledge and professional expertise to bear on giving new meaning and solutions to our sheer human existence.

An Africa Summit that is wholly solution-driven affords this challenging opportunity! It seeks to bring together bona fide citizens and stakeholders and holds them up to the integrated common task of fostering a critical analysis of Africa's state issues/regional problems and proffering profession-specific workable solutions for the long haul. Its distinctiveness is that it approaches wide-ranging “African issues” from their foundational origins in traditional African “civilization” or culture, and thus make realistically feasible, the emergence of new frameworks for formulating solutions that engage directly with the whole developmental course of human civilization. From this “trajectory” approach will emerge new formations of culture and society, which can navigate and negotiate the new order of things and affairs in the (post-) modern world and beyond.

## RATIONALE OF C.ANVA.S SUMMIT

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African countries, and its people, are clearly faced at the moment with an existential predicament. But it is good to be reminded that its defining *issues*, and the *problems* they further generate for us, are as old as human civilization itself—and blessed is the nation that has a firm grip on them!

There is need to go beyond extreme non-tolerant and non-commensurate positions often presented in analyses of African issues and a way forward for Africa in the 21st century: a liberal “western” oligarchy rooted in absolutist (Enlightenment) rationalism *versus* a traditional “African” monarchy rooted in (primitivist or essentialist) authoritarianism. Quite arbitrarily, each conceives the notion of and obstacles to “progress” erroneously—it is both personal and social, and must factor in how the tools of governance and leadership dynamics are utilized or navigated to positive ends that serve humanity and society at-large.

By positing a view of progress achievable via the path of *critical consensus*, we can give *priority* to a healthy critical or rational analysis of issues and problems, while also granting *privilege* to a holistic understanding of life, on the scale of minimum to maximum consensus for the issues or problems so defined. This view of achieving progress via “critical consensus” goes beyond mere accommodation to either group or individual involved in the process, to learning to grapple with the nature of events and affairs that is associated with living in a (transient) world—of people and things, whose action is often characterized, paradoxically, by firmness and flexibility. Under this view, each person is obligated to model an aspect of, or be committed to, the progress that is being sought at the individual and or community level.

## W.WW.W: C.ANVA.S STRATEGIC MISSION

W.WW.W encapsulates the mission of C.ANVA.S summit:

- A. **Worldview**—education, critical thinking, ethics
- B. **Work**—economy, entertainment, environment
- C. **Wealth**—law/politics, civic administration, civil society
- D. **Worship**—God, the individual/new community, the good life

## C.ANVA.S: A FAITH ENGAGEMENT OF ISSUES

Like the SEPol Forum, a defining feature of C.ANVA.S summit is *faith engagement* with African issues; and on this score one can rest assured that the days of religious ignorance or intimidation are gone! At C.ANVA.S summit, participants learn to rediscover historic faith dimensions and foundations to Africa’s socio-economic-political issues, and how these can be navigated in today’s (post-)modern world, in which the emergent African society is taking shape. Religious history is probed in the various contexts of ancient societies for the values they generated and circulated; but the world of antiquity itself is brought forward and critically examined in light of developments and changes within its socio-economic and political institutional frameworks. And knowledge gained becomes insight for navigating and (re-)forming our new world-society—that is, Africa!

## STRUCTURE OF C.ANVA.S SUMMIT

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After the first convention (date/venue TBD), ANVA summits will hold every 3-5 years—meeting in the 4th year. This plan allows for the post-summit process of “passing on” conference (re)solutions, etc by the participant-group representatives to their respective citizenry for extensive *deliberation, enlightenment, enactment* and new *proposals* (DEEP) for the next summit: the post-summit dissemination process is DEEP! Each congress will last for 7 intensive days and will normally be designed around 5-7 core areas of critical importance to enlightened citizens of Africa and stakeholders in the continent’s future. Participants at ANVA summit fall under two broad categories: the enlightened *citizens*, typically drawn from the public and postsecondary institutions as represented by the student unions/fellowships or associations; and bona fide *stakeholders*: FBOs/institutions, NGOs/companies, industries, public institutions/corporations; and government/allied institutions and agencies, with a well-defined and robust stake holding mission in Africa.

ANVA summits will combine *educational, professional* and *societal* concerns and commitments, and will regularly feature authorities in these areas, who share the ideals and foster the goals which these meetings seek to promote. The range of activities at each convention will vary greatly, being determined, *inter alia*, by (sub-) themes, convention goals and outcomes. The activities will utilize some of the conventional modes of instruction/conversation (e.g. plenary, seminar/workshop) but spiced with the creation of new instructional modes and modalities of communication.

New strategies will be employed in planning for and executing ANVA meetings. Such strategies will allow for the Logistics/Mobilization Group(s) **LMG** (= Central Working Committees **CWC**) to be set up in the African country where the summit shall hold, with due oversight of functions provided by the Programme Execution Group **PEG**, whose membership shall include persons drawn from various walks of life. Each summit is planned to be generously funded by donors/agencies and people of goodwill, who share the ideals and mission of ANVA.

~ NOTES ~

Share your comments or concerns with us on C.ANVA.S—solution driver for a new world Africa! E-mail: [hokmahouse@gmail.com](mailto:hokmahouse@gmail.com)

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
&  
POLITICAL (SEPol)  
FORUM**

**2013 - 2015**

**THEME**  
**A NEW MISSION FOR  
A SOCIETY UNDER SIEGE**

Society or culture mirrors and is defined by various forms of social relations and institutional networks. These relational networks are often guided by extant and regnant values as are in vogue and in circulation. This makes culture and society a prime arena of competitiveness, especially for those values and external goods which are almost always in short supply. We may term this phenomenon *externalization of culture*. It is a “game” widely open to interested parties and the governing values are widely shared by the contestants as by the viewing public itself, which often stands in the place of clients of these goods from its patrons, the contestants. Virtue becomes submerged and gives way to vice in the contest, with activities/practices which are defined by the same vice often being paraded as values—in a society that has lost its sense of true civility. The fierceness of the competition often means an equally fierce opposition against its “opponents”\*

\*Randeé Ijatuyi-Morphé, *Africa’s Social and Religious Quest: A Comprehensive Survey and Analysis of the African Situation* [Jos: LogosQuest Publishing, 2011] p. 529). (Note: a short sequel to this book will explore the idea of [re-]framing a new civil society for Africa).

A *society besieged* by countless raging forces competing for its survival or control, is a society in a state of disrepair. One presumably knows where to go when an automobile or the human body breaks down—even in such society; but one is at a loss on where to turn when whole societies are drifting on the path to their own ruin. How does one define the new role of the politician/prophet in stemming the tide or salvaging a precarious situation which has reached its critical phase now?

How to salvage Africa and its people from the current worldwide mess is no longer anyone’s guess; it is, to be sure, everyone’s business! Each SEPol Forum will engage with the theme critically, as a first step toward articulating a new vision for Africa. The vision entails a new mission of both working for a new social ordering of society that promotes true flourishing, and extending to citizens an authentic new social offer across boundaries and strata that divide.

## SEPol INTENSIVE FORUM: A ONE-DAY/12-12 EVENT

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The Socio-Economic-Political (SEPol) Forum of Hokma House is both a pre-Summit meeting, organized in preparation for the Summit event; and a post-Summit reflection meeting, organized to assist in the DEEP exercise (i.e. the extensive *deliberation, enlightenment, enactment* and new *proposals* post-summit dissemination process). The SEPol Forum is organized both independently, and in partnership with leading educational institutions, organizations, centres & institutes, which share the ideals and mission of C.ANVA.S summit. The SEPol Forum, while intensive in nature, like the summit itself, is arranged to be less disruptive to participants' schedules, and reduce travel time and costs for attendees resident within the area or region where the Forum is holding. SEPol Forums vary greatly and are not necessarily duplicated, nor repeated for successive meetings within the same country or even its different regions. This measure ensures a fair sampling and representation of countries/regional and cross-sectional views, and prepares in a very real way for the future summit itself.

SEPol Forums are normally arranged and geared, by the hosting/organizing committee, to feature a keynote paper presentation on the theme, a critical response(s) and a panel-led plenary session, and especially engaging conversations *by* participants, and *with* the speakers and leaders.

Like the summit, a defining feature of SEPol Forums is *faith engagement* with African issues; and on this score one can rest assured that the days of religious ignorance or intimidation are gone! At SEPol Forum participants learn to rediscover historic faith dimensions and foundations to Africa's socio-economic-political issues, and how these can be navigated in today's (post-)modern world, in which the emergent African society is taking shape. Religious history is probed in the various contexts of ancient societies for the values they generated and circulated; but the world of antiquity itself is brought forward and critically examined in light of developments and changes within its socio-economic and political institutional frameworks. And knowledge gained becomes insight for navigating and (re-)forming our new world-society—that is, Africa!

SEPol Forums are planned to be very focused and searching but also deliver heartwarming results. Before each CANVAS summit, SEPol Forums will be included in SALT conf.

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~ NOTES ~

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