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**Towards a notion of transformative political
leadership in Africa**

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CHAPTER OUTLINE AND ARGUMENT



This paper challenges the ways that political leadership is framed and spoken about in Africa by considering the ways that ‘good governance’ has rendered more substantive leadership practices invisible. We consider how social movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo can serve as inspiration for thinking differently about how the political terrain is constituted that can actively shift political praxis towards emancipation.

METHODOLOGY



The paper draws on two literature reviews but uses no data and is pitched at the conceptual level.

We use academic literature and media reporting on Abahlali to inform the case study from which we distil four principles that we argue should underpin transformative political leadership in Africa.

LITERATURE AND USE OF THEORY



African political leadership: how this has historically been framed in academic work. For e.g. “poor, even malevolent leadership: predatory kleptocrats, military-installed autocrats, economic illiterates, and puffed-up posturers...indifferent to the progress of their citizens...unswayed by reason...hypocrites, always shifting blame for their countries’ distress.” (Rotberg, 2004)

Good governance: “combating corruption, nepotism, bureaucracy and mismanagement – and [promoting] transparency, accountability and proper procedure” (Nanda, 2006, p. 272)

MAIN FINDINGS/DISCUSSION



1. What does transformative leadership look like in an African context, beyond indicators of governance?
2. How do we think critically about political leadership on the continent as a situated, negotiated, and historical practice?

A 'leadership crisis' in Africa to which 'good governance' is posed as a solution.

Mkandawire's (2007) alternative definition and historicization of good governance.

MAIN FINDINGS/DISCUSSION



Scholars such as Chatterjee (2004), Neocosmos (2011) and Motta (2013a) point out that a focus on governance belies a relationship between the governed and those who govern, with little space in-between for genuine democratic deliberation to unfold except within the space of representation (e.g. voting).

Civil vs Political society

Social movements that demonstrate the ‘widening gap between dynamic societies and ossified regimes that gave rise to a crisis of legitimacy and ultimately revolutionary mobilisation’ (Harders, 2015, p. 148)

MAIN FINDINGS/DISCUSSION



NGOs as power brokers and intermediaries in the democratic process; a state of 'representation' that freezes popular democracy.

Abahlali and other social movements emerging to challenge how governance and public policy exclude people from the processes that shape their lives.

MAIN FINDINGS/DISCUSSION



Democracy as a popular practice:

1. Pursuing active inclusivity
2. Solidarity and collaboration, not co-optation
3. A living politics
4. From concessions to emancipation

A fundamental link exists between representation and accountability that underpins the legitimacy of the democratic order.

IMPORTANCE

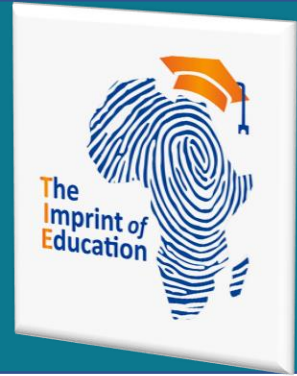


New ways of thinking about what it means to truly govern diverse, fragmented and complex African societies where people are able to articulate their needs and challenge their exclusion from the political terrain.

A challenge to *open the space of the political* and transform the normative understanding of what constitutes legitimate political participation.

Transformative leadership: leadership that facilitates its own redundancy.

REVIEW PROCESS AND HELP NEEDED



Make language more comprehensive.

Improve structure to draw out the framework being developed.