Sustainability leadership, UNESCO competencies for SDGs, and diverse leadership models

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Abstract

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require leadership to fulfil their promise in 2030. While much has been written about the need for and types of leadership necessary for achieving the SDGs, limited literature exists describing the leadership styles and models appropriate for achieving the SDGs. In this essay, several leadership styles are introduced as candidates for enhancing the UNESCO competencies for achieving sustainable development. System leadership and servant leadership concepts converge well with the UNESCO competencies for sustainability leadership, with the latter adding the extra dimensions of listening, healing, awareness, persuasion, stewardship, and personal growth. These extra dimensions of servant leadership are similar to those in Buddhist Boddhisatva leadership (shepherding), which can be associated to Gross National Happiness (originating from Bhutan), aiming at balancing material and spiritual wealth and the cultural, economic, social, and good governance dimensions of sustainable development. Other knowledge and leadership systems of the Global South have a somewhat different perspective than Western ones, advocating collective agency (encompassing and going beyond individual agency). This is demonstrated in people empowering Ubuntu leadership (South Africa) leading the community; whereby the community consists of the ancestors and unborn; and a person exists only through respect for the other as well as Earth. Indigenous leadership councils aim at balancing seven generations of ancestors and future generations, which can be associated with *Buen Vivir* (originating from the Quechua, and embraced in Bolivia and Ecuador), for achieving biocentric harmony with nature within the community of life.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; Sustainable Leadership; System Leadership; Servant Leadership; Buen Vivir; Sumak Kawsay; Buddhist Gross National Happiness; South African Ubuntu

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1. Introduction

Contemporary global society has become more complex and more complicated, with globally affected 'global citizens' required to reconcile individualism with diversity, economic growth with environmental sustainability, and the multiple crises and vulnerabilities experienced by humankind and the global environment. Described as "sustainability citizens" (Wals, 2015; Wals and Lenglet, 2016), individuals must be capable of collaboration, assertion, and action for positive change (UNESCO, 2015). There is broad agreement that to become sustainability citizens, one must possess key competencies for sustainability, defined by UNESCO (2017) as: (a) systems thinking, (b) anticipatory, (c) normative, (d) strategic, (e) collaboration, (f) critical thinking, (g) self-awareness, and (h) integrated problem-solving competencies. (UNESCO, 2017, see Table 1 below)

While much has been written about the need for and types of leadership necessary for achieving the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), and one of the competencies describes empathetic leadership as an important trait, limited literature exists describing the leadership styles and models appropriate for achieving the SDGs. Several potential leadership styles and models for achieving the SDGs are examined in this article, within the context of their applicability to the UNESCO key competencies for sustainability. UNESCO equally has a mandate for indigenous people and set up the LINKS (Local Indigenous Knowledge Systems) programme, an interdisciplinary initiative for 'meaningful inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge in biodiversity conservation and management, and climate change assessment and adaptation'.[1] (See also Nakashima, 2010). Therefore, these leadership styles will be included in the analysis.

This article addresses the question of the underlying values of competencies for sustainability leadership as defined by UNESCO, to contribute to a comprehensive definition. It examines leadership literature, both conventional and indigenous, and is complemented by interviews for the three indigenous worldviews, the methodology of which is described in Van Norren (2017; numbered A1 [Africa], B1 [Bhutan], E1 [Ecuador]). Fist we discuss the UNESCO sustainability leadership definition, after which we examine the different leadership styles from the West (system and servant leadership) and Global South (Boddhisatva, Ubuntu and indigenous American leadership). The latter are introduced with a short description of their particular sustainability concept.

2. Sustainability leadership

The term leadership is often used to describe the actions of an individual or group who oversees something. However, leadership is not necessarily a position or title bestowed upon or acquired by an individual, and can be demonstrated absent any formal position or title. One does not need to hold a formal position to be a leader, and holding a formal position does not guarantee the individual can or will lead. Every individual possesses some degree of leadership competency (Ferdig, 2007). While leadership is often considered a characteristic or trait, scholars have further described leadership as a process of influencing others to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2018), and as a personal characteristic (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Leadership definitions may

also vary culturally, as we will demonstrate below. Certain cultures require collective leadership or man-woman complementarity in leadership or inversed leadership (where the leader shepherds the people).

Beliefs and one's way of looking at life, including at sustainability influence leadership. Sustainability (largely a Western concept) was defined by the Brundtland commission as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (WCED, 1987) and generally divided in economic (growth), social and ecological dimensions. Cultures of the Global South refer to guardianship of nature, recognition of Rights of Nature and Mother Earth (mirrored in deep ecology and environmental justice movements in the West). The idea of sustainability is often coupled with economic growth, which is opposed by these cultures (as everything happens in balance) as well as by the degrowth movement (D'Alisa et al., 2015[2]). Even the term sustainability is contentious in certain cultures such as in *Buen Vivir* (Ecuador, Bolivia), as it suggests stability rather than the circular process of growth and decay of natural cycles (Van Norren, 2020).

Sustainability leadership implies a process in which individual or collective beliefs and ideals about sustainability influence the leader (and his/her awareness of leadership styles), resulting in an inclusive, balanced, and deliberate leadership process (Burns et al., 2015). Unlike conventional leadership styles, based on the Western epistemological paradigm, which are more transactional or mechanistic in nature, sustainability leadership embraces a holistic approach, which is similar in structure to the living systems which sustainability leaders seek to enhance. Rather than simply administering new leadership styles to existing situations and circumstances, sustainability leaders diagnose the sources of unsustainability, determine the social, cultural, economic, and environmental effects of their organizations, and appreciate the ecological and cultural diversity of ecosystems (Foundation for Deep Ecology, 2012). It has been suggested that sustainability leaders should lead *with* and not *over* others (Ferdig 2007), concurring with certain traditional leadership styles from the Global South such as Ubuntu leadership.

Sustainability leadership core competencies include: systems thinking, external collaboration, social innovation, sustainability literacy, active values, forward-thinking, normative, strategic thinking, and interpersonal skills (Haney et al., 2018; Hesselbarth and Schaltegger, 2014; Lans et al., 2014; Osagie et al., 2016; Ploum et al., 2018; Strandberg, 2015; Wesselink et al., 2015; Wiek et al., 2011), nearly all of which mirror the UNESCO key sustainability competencies. Taken from a cross cultural perspective one could add other dimensions such as equality/equity, collective/consensus decision-making (in modern times: deep democracy; Mindell, 1992; Mindell, 2002), gender complementarity, awareness of ancestors and future generations (van Norren, 2017). Table 1 gives the UNESCO definition of leadership competencies.

3. System leadership

Academic references to system leadership first appeared in the early 21st century within the field of education. System leadership was defined as a developing practice comprised of a broad assortment of responsibilities developed within individual networks or programs that, when combined, contribute to systemic transformation (Hopkins and Higham, 2007). System leaders are unique individuals capable of recognizing and understanding the larger system, and catalysing collective leadership for proactive co-creation of the

future (Senge et al., 2015). System leaders exhibit boundaryless leadership, influencing individuals and groups which frequently exist outside of their organizations, industries, regions, and traditional spheres of influences (Beehner, 2020a). These leaders are capable of "working across" organizations and sectors, especially under complicated conditions (Timmins, 2015). They frequently possess no formal leadership role and are unable to exercise direct control over the individuals and groups they seek to influence. System leaders are successful because they are "comfortable with chaos" (Timmins, 2015, p. 4) (the feminine principle according to indigenous cultures, see below on Ubuntu).

Table 1. UNESCO competencies for sustainability leadership

Competencies	Description
(a) systems thinking	The abilities to recognize and understand relationships; to analyse complex systems; to think of how systems are embedded within different domains and different scales; and to deal with uncertainty
(b) anticipatory	The abilities to understand an evaluate multiple futures – possible, probable, and desirable; to create one's own visions for the future; to apply the precautionary principle; to assess the consequences of actions; and to deal with risks and changes
(c) normative	The abilities to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions; and to negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets, in a context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions
d) strategic action	The abilities to collectively develop and implement innovative actions to further sustainability at the local level and further afield
(e) (emphatic)collaboration	The abilities to learn from others to understand and respect the needs, perspectives, and actions of others (empathic leadership); to deal with conflicts in a group; and to facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving
(f) critical thinking	The abilities to question norms practices and opinions; to reflect on one's own values perceptions and actions; and to take a position in the sustainability discourse
(g) self-awareness	The abilities to reflect on one's own role in the local community and global society; to continually evaluate and further motivate one's actions; and to deal with one's feelings and desires.
(h) integrated problem-solving	The overarching ability to apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainability problems; and develop viable inclusive and equitable solution options that promote sustainable development, integrating the above-mentioned competencies

Source: derived from UNESCO 2017

While system leaders exhibit a variety of personalities and leadership styles, they have two notably similar impacts: a broad commitment to overall system well-being motivates similar attitudes in other individuals;

and, the ability to empathize with diverse perspectives resulting in transparent and open engagement (Senge et al., 2015). This is important for managing sustainable systems, because achieving sustainability on a broad scale will require the participation of numerous individuals with diverse perspectives.

4. Servant leadership

Inspired by the behaviour of the character Leo in Hesse's novel *Journey to the East* (1957), Greenleaf (1970) developed the contemporary model of servant leadership, describing the servant leader as one who initially feels compelled to serve others, an act that eventually results in a conscious decision to lead. Many servant leaders accept leadership roles reluctantly, as an afterthought. Servant leaders place the needs of followers ahead of their own, hopeful that those served achieve personal growth, independence, self-improvement, and become more likely to serve others (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders share authority by empowering followers to become autonomous, and make independent decisions (Northouse, 2018). This concurs with ideas of Boddhisatva leadership (following others to serve them) in Buddhism or Ubuntu leadership in Africa (empowering others) (see below).

Servant leadership has been described as a method by which meaning and purpose can be developed in followers through self-connection, unification, contribution, and individuation (van Dierendonck and Sousa, 2016). Servant leadership begins with a profound, revolutionary vision (McCann and Holt, 2010), resulting in servant leaders transforming organizations, visualizing new paradigms, encouraging new ideas and innovations, accomplished through *being* instead of *doing* (Zohar, 1997). In other words, servant leadership is more a state of being or condition, than an action. These values may be treasured differently across cultures, whereby the West may emphasize 'doing', Africa 'feeling engagement with the other[3]', Asia 'contemplating', and indigenous Latin America 'being' in harmony with Nature, Earth, and the cosmos (Van Norren, 2017 and 2020).

While Greenleaf did not envision servant leadership as a means for societal impact, this is an identified outcome, because servant leaders develop healthier organizations which then benefit society through positive social change, thereby enabling society to flourish (Northouse, 2018*). While servant leadership is described as a leadership style, it is also recognized as a philosophy, with adherents committed to the growth and improvement of others* (McCann and Holt, 2010). According to Senge (2002, p. 345), "In an era of massive institutional failure, the ideas in servant leadership point toward a possible path forward and will continue to do so". This is important for sustainability transitions, because successful sustainability must not be confined to the boundaries of organizations and institutions which may be temporary but must exist at the global societal level.

5. Gross National Happiness and Boddhisatva leadership

Buddhist Gross National Happiness (GNH) is an alternative sustainability concept, based on four pillars: culture as a basis for all development, socio-economic development, care for the environment and good governance. It aims at balancing material and spiritual development, 'outer circumstances' and inner development leading to moderation and living a simple life. GNH treasures respect for nature, compassion, and

interdependence of all things (co-dependent origination of all life). (Ura et al., 2012; Phuntsho, 2013; Tideman, 2004; B3, B4, B8, B9, B19, B40, B41). The Bhutanese policies of GNH and broader wellbeing are an alternative for conventional economic thinking rooted in GNP (Gross National Product) (B2; Ura et al., 2012; Ura and Galay, 2004). It is embodied in a GNH index including nine dimensions: psychological well-being, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, community vitality, education, health, good governance, ecological diversity, and resilience, and living standards (Ura et al., 2012)

Buddhism contains the concept of Bodhisattva leadership of wisdom and compassion of which the six attributes are generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom (Tideman, 2016, p. 20). It is based on 'a path of personal transformation and mind training' (Tideman, 2016, p. 31; see eightfold path). 'The Buddhist leader knows that his own happiness is best served by serving the happiness of others' (the principle of interconnectedness makes that your inner peace depends on that of others). The aim is societal well-being where subjective well-being is the primary goal of leadership (Tideman, 2016, p. 20). Sustainable leadership entails looking at benefits for present and future stakeholders including ecosystems (Tideman, 2016, p. 30). It replaces selfishness, competition and shareholder value with social behaviour, the possibility of effectuating transformation and stakeholder value. This requires introspection to unravel belief systems that have caused outer circumstances. This way one can reach sustainability leadership (Tideman, 2016, p. 33). A balanced person requires the equilibrium between yin and yang, the feminine and masculine aspects of life, matter and maternal versus patterns and paternal.[4]

'There are three types of Bodhisattva leaders (Tshering, 2008): (a) The one who goes in front and takes the others with, like the pilot or boatman; (b) the one who goes behind and takes the people in front, like the shepherd; (c) the one who achieves individual power first and then thinks of the people, like the King' (B43). 'According to Kunzang Lama'i Shelung; the King's way is called 'arousing *bodhichitta* with great wish', the boatman's way 'arousing bodhichitta with sacred wisdom' and the shepherd's way 'arousing of bodhichitta beyond compare.' All three have competence, vision and love for their followers translated into service. The shepherd's style is considered the best, according to Tshering (2008), as the interest of the followers comes first. Leadership principles can be derived from helping others through the six realms of existence to escape the wheel of life (Tshering, 2008): complacency, superiority, craving, anger, ignorance, and search for the self.

6. Ubuntu leadership

The traditional African philosophy of Ubuntu (or Botho) contains both prescriptions on how humans are to relate to one another as to their relation to the planet and the universe. Ubuntu can be defined as the continuous motion of the *unfoldment* of the universe (abstract Ubu, brought to life by the life force Ntu, see Ramose, 2005). More popularly it is described as 'I am because we are' (a person is a person through other persons; Eze, 2010; Gade, 2012; Metz and Gaie, 2010; all interviews A, except A4; Ramose, 2005). It is an ontology with a collectivist outlook (of communal being), which stresses the value of compassion and relatedness, and 'life as mutual aid', as well as restorative (reconciliatory) justice and the interdependence of all things (linked by the life force 'ntu'; A13; Mbiti, 1990 see also ad 1 Table 2). The 'bantu' community includes the ancestors and the future generations. Ubuntu does not know the word development but stresses

humaneness (a verbal noun expressing motion) in relations (including with nature) (A8, A9; Ntibagirirwa, 2012; Ramose, 2005)*. It is embodied in national Batho Pele (People First) policies related to government conduct (GoSA, 2007).

Table 2. Themes in 'African management' discourse in South Africa

(1) Humanistic aspects	* *Ubuntu*, 'humane-ness', communalism, egalitarianism, social obligations (unconditional mutual solidarity); extended family as organising principle
	* Emancipation, liberation; rid of 'victimisation' and 'alienation' ('feel at home'); optimism, visionary management, prospect of prosperity
	* Notion of 'decolonising the mind' (both employees and managers)
	* Self-confidence, self-assertiveness (masculine aspects)
(2) Participatory decision-making	* Dialogue, mass rally meetings, (time-consuming) consultations, questions and answers, consensus building, emotionality, 'understanding each other', reflection (feminine aspects)
	* Boldness ('not soft'), firmness, competitiveness, urgent action and quick decision-making (masculine aspects)
(3) 'Eccentric' organisational principles	* 'De-bureaucratisation': anti-rational, anti-intellectual, anti-modernist, egalitarian; questioning organisational conventions and 'taken-for-granted' management practices
	* Dramatisation, emotionality, spirituality
	* Imaginative (non-corporate) romanticist views (e.g. Mbigi, Davey)
(4) Afrocentric management, 'Africanness' and Africa	Elements of purification:
	* Search for authenticity; 'excavating' an essence of 'Africanness' (e.g. 'Japanese model')
	* Fear for 'foreign' concepts (fear for cultural 'contamination')
	Elements of hybridisation:
	* Contextualisation (of global management) and indigenisation
	* Anthroposophical influences (participatory 'people-oriented' management)
	* Search for 'strong organisational culture' (e.g. *Eskom* with assistance from IBM)
	* Integration: embracing cultural diversity, notion of 'unity in diversity' (e.g. focus on commonalities Africans and Afrikaners)
	* Incorporation of 'Christian' interpretations of *ubuntu* (in relation to management)
	Elements of homogenisation:
	* Narrative of the 'uniqueness' and 'unity' of Africa; the theme of 'Cradle of Humankind'
(5) Personal life stories & political engagement	* Inspiration from Black Consciousness, anti-apartheid, liberation struggle (e.g. Khoza, Mafuna, Hlahla, Boon, Binedell, Mbigi, Davey)
	* Moral obligations: 'Do something in return' (e.g. Blecher, Takoulas)
	* Corporate social responsibility: the notion of 'enlightened self-interest' (e.g. corporate sponsors of CIDA City Campus)

African management (Van den Heuvel 2007, chapter 3)

Ubuntu leadership is a collective leadership style where leader and people empower each other (Ntibagirirwa, 2012, p. 324, citing Mulwa). 'Ubuntu centred leadership is transformative, visionary, people-centred, strategic and action orientated' (Tshishonga, 2011). Ubuntu management in South Africa is attributed with helping create a common sense of purpose and belonging in a company, combatting self-enrichment ('greed') and corruption, participatory decision-making or at least consultation of staff, managing intercultural diversity and in some cases post-apartheid trauma healing within companies; a great proponent is Lovemore Mbigi (Van den Heuvel, 2007). Although associated with African Renaissance, brotherhood, and black consciousness (ad 4 and 5 Table 2), Ubuntu is an example of *glocalisation* where global management and local knowledge are mixed (Van den Heuvel, 2007). It emphasizes communal participatory decision-making with time for reflexion and consensus, together with boldness of action (ad 2 Table 2). Ubuntu requires balancing of the feminine (chaos and creative life force) and the masculine principle (analytical structure - which currently dominates the Western (management) world); in Ubuntu thought this is called balancing the feeling Mother Mind with the analytical Warrior Mind.[5] (similar to *yin* and *yang* in Buddhist cultures) Therefore in modern Ubuntu management theory, the counter, anti-rational thinking is also stressed (ad 3 Table 2).

The concept is sometimes misused: 'Zuma believes in the African concept of leadership and being a strong man..., but that is not the Ubuntu concept of leadership; it is opposite of that, that is patriarchal leadership... it is the same why Mugabe (Zimbabwe) wins the elections and Kabila (Congo) and Kagame (Rwanda), they are using Ubuntu power, when dressing in African dress and dancing with their people..., but Ubuntu leadership is humility, trust, togetherness and reconciliation' (Van Norren, 2017, Interview A9).

7. Buen Vivir indigenous leadership

Ecuadorian and Bolivian Buen Vivir is derived from the Quechua Sumak Kawsay, the right way of living or 'Good Living'. This is based on living in (subjective) harmony with the universe, sacred Mother Earth (Pachamama), Nature, others, and the community of life (including the inanimate) balancing spiritual and material wealth (Acosta, 2015; Akchurin, 2015; Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara, 2014; Gudynas, 2011; Government of Ecuador, 2013; all interviews E except E41). Its wisdom is contained in the four principles (IRCR) of the Andean cross Chakana (Van Norren, 2020, Figure 1):

- Integrality: Balancing the inner, current, and upper world (uku, kai, huawa pacha), (upper left,) corresponding with emphatic care (heart, muray), work (hands; ruray) and wisdom (head, yachai) (lower right). (see figure 1). Sometimes also corresponding with snake (underworld), puma (land, here and now), condor (sky, oversight) (see figure 1, upper right).
- Relationality: Departing from families within communities and regions (lower left), which pray to (and respect) nature, sun and moon, and Great Spirit (upper right).
- Complementarity: while balancing the masculine and feminine in all life forms (horizontal)
- Reciprocity: And living in reciprocity (vertical).

It is also contained in the three life rules (contained in the constitution of Ecuador and Bolivia): do not lie (ama llulla), do not steal (ama suwa) and do not be lazy (ama quella). Sometimes complemented by the fourth:

loyalty (ama japa).6 The terms mita, minka and ayni, (not mentioned in figure 1) refer to different forms of collective labour and are described in Table 2. The Incan cross has many variations, a few of which are depicted in Figure 2.
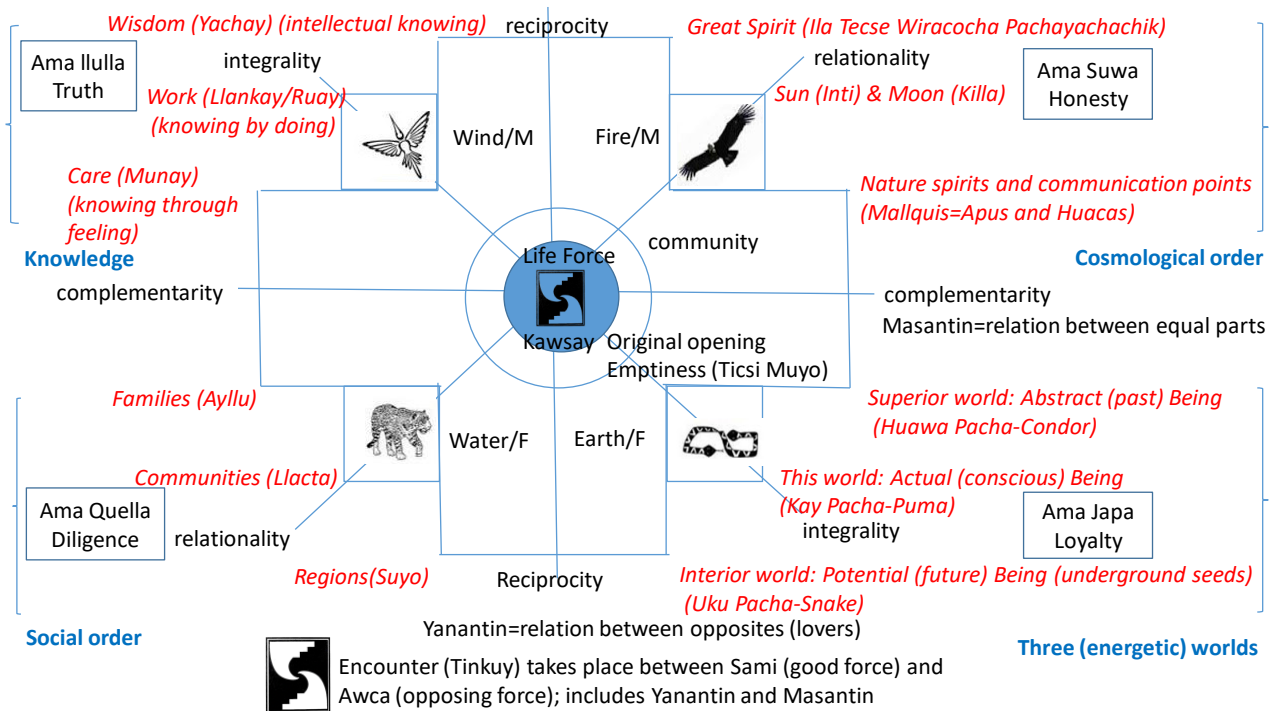
Figure 1. Chakana, 4 principles (diagonals) and 4 life rules (corners) (Van Norren, 2020) [For a summary of explanations of the Chakana see Table 3]

Table 3. Chakana significances (position of quadrants are variable) [Adapted from Liliana Usvat, June 2016; and from Van Norren 2017]

Explanation to Figure 1	
3 knowledges	*3 levels of spirit*
Munay: caring/feeling (inner)-past	Wiracocha- Great Spirit
Ruray: doing (here)- now	Sun (M) and Moon (F)
Yachai: knowing (upper) –future	Nature spirits
3 communities	*3 worlds*
Ayllu: families	Huawa pacha -upper
Yacta: communities	Kay pacha – present
Suyo; regions	Uku pacha – under

Table 3. *Cont.*

Explanation to Figure 1	
3 worlds	*3 The holy animals:*
	Condor/eagle: represents the upper world in the sky
Huawa Pacha – Heaven; The upper world, light sophisticated energy. The stars, divine creatures, and gods.	Puma/Cougar: represents powerful land animals
Kay Pacha –The earth; This world, light, and heavy energy, here and now, Mother Earth. People's lives.	Snake: represents the lower world
Uka Pacha –The Underworld; Heavier energy, subconscious, Death.	
	(fourth animal is Kolibri, happiness, see figure 1)
3 knowledges	*3 ways of cooperation*
Munay: caring/feeling (inner)-past	Ayni: exchange of agriculture produce/labour days
Ruray: doing (here)- now	Minka: community labour (e.g. building roads)
Yachai: knowing (upper) –future	Mita: contribution to community (formerly taxes/forced labour to Spanish)

Centre/Hole

Life force (Kawsay); meeting of light and dark forces (sami and awca); and meeting of opposites F-M (yanantin) and relation between equal forces (masantin); Original opening or emptiness (ticsi muyo).

Represents the Incan capital Cusco, the centre for the Inka Empire; or the people who lived in the middle of the 3 lives, in the 4 elements and the middle of the universe.

Top: Wiracocha / God

Bottom: Pachamama / Mother Earth

Diagonals: ICRC principles

Left top to right bottom: integrality

Right top to left bottom: relationality

Horizontal: complementarity

Vertical: reciprocity

Table 3. *Cont.*

Explanation to Figure 1

4 sides

The four most important corners are supposed to symbolize

North, South, East and West

the 4 elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air

the 4 big stars in the Southern Cross

Sometimes also corresponding with 4 holy animals: Kolibri (N), Snake (S), Condor (E), Puma (W)

12 corners

The 12 festivals / The Inka calendar.

The Inka's had a calendar, composed by twelve months, each of 30 days. Each month in the Inka calendar had its own festival (meaning month). The twelve outer corners mark the twelve corners of the year and an achievement of awareness.
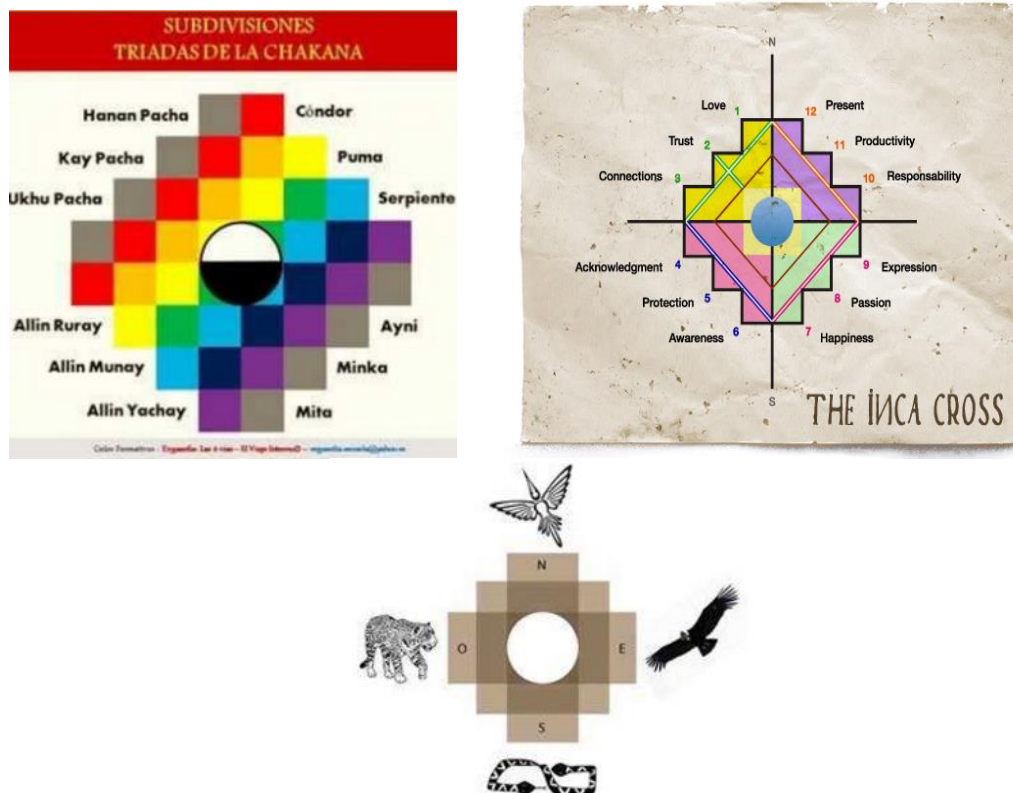
Figure 2. Variations of Inca Cross [Source: Left pictures: Sila Svetl[a7]; Right picture Liliana Usvat blogspot, June 2016[8]]

Achievement of awareness or maturity is reached by walking the 12 corners of the Inca cross anti-clockwise (which also represented 12 Inca festivals of the year; now 8 festivals): 1. Love 2. Trust 3. Connections 4. Acknowledgement 5. Protection 6. Awareness 7. Happiness 8. Passion 9. Expression 10. Responsibility 11. Productivity and 12. Present (Figure 2, right picture). The 12th point may refer to reaching the cardinal value of 'being', in harmony with the cosmos and Nature and in full awareness of the present. When one has mastered all, one is a leader. Leadership is thereby an intrinsic quality of a person. It also means mastering the four principles: see life as an integral whole (integrality), in which all is related (relationality), and in balance with masculine and feminine (complementarity) and exercising equal exchange (reciprocity).

This roughly corresponds with other medicine wheels such as that of the Native American Hopi and Seneca (figure 3; for explanation, see Van Norren, 2017).
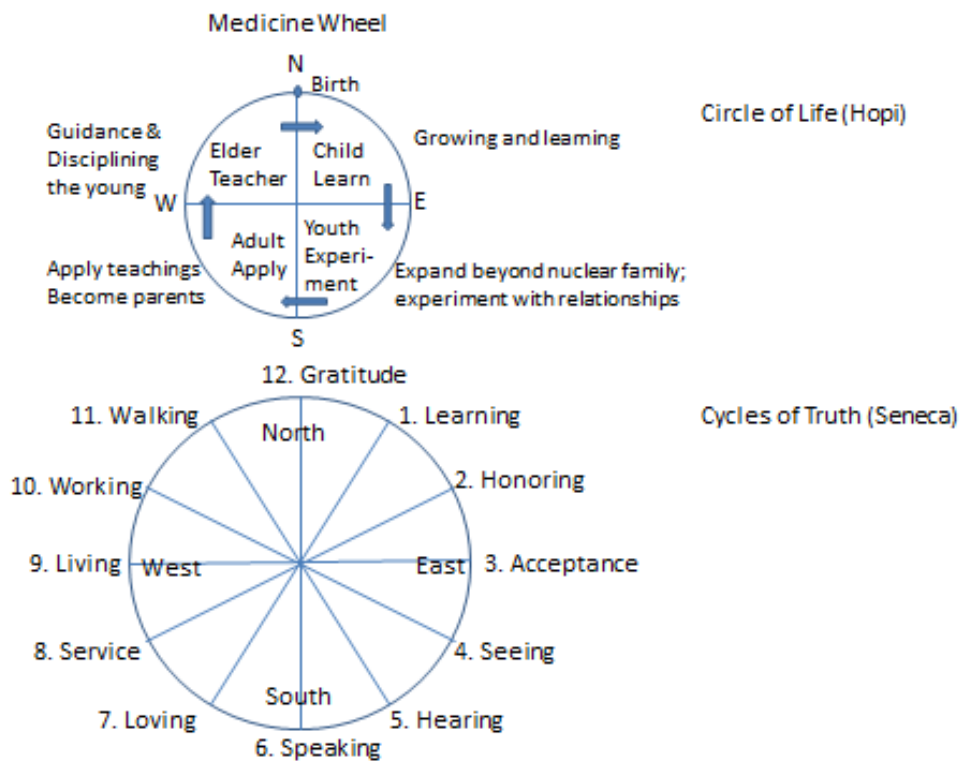
Figure 3. Indigenous competencies in Medicine (Van Norren, 2017), Source: Cohen 2003 (Seneca)

Sumak Kawsay requires balancing masculine and feminine values, which are 'qualities beyond human gender' (Waldmüller, 2014, p. 5; Oviedo, 2008, p. 168) (similar to the Buddhist yin-yang). However, the feminine (heart) is deemed to be more powerful; 'it's the cosmic Grandmother that sustains life' (Oviedo, 2008, p. 167). Every leadership position needs to be fulfilled by man-woman complementarity: Qhari Warmi (i.e. collective and not individual, with a minimum of two).

Leaders need to respect relationality and integrality (interdependence) of, and reciprocity with all living things (including the living dead or ancestors and inanimate subjects – nothing is an object). In order to achieve this, the indigenous believe in the seven-generation leadership principle. Sustainable (business) planning must consider the seven generations to come: 'Our spirits will be carried forward in the next generations and our teachings toward the earth will be carried along' (Clarkson et al., 1992, p. 24).

This means adhering to 'the precautionary principle', which means until proven to be safe, do not act. One needs to consider whether the benefits outweigh the risks (Hopi, E5). Leadership was not static but appointed at the time of need 'by experience and representation' (Clarkson et al., 1992, p. 17). Decisions were made collectively and by consensus and who was representing the clan was dependent on the decision to be taken (Clarkson et al., 1992, p. 17). Goodman refers to indigenous 'choosing our responsibility to the seventh generation over quarterly earnings, regeneration over economic growth, and the pursuit of well-being and harmony over wealth and financial success' (Goodman, 2015, p. 29).

Often in Quechua communities, having the leadership position is not an honour but a duty (bestowed on someone with a very good reputation), or even a punishment (if someone has offended the community). It is generally extended for a short period (1 year) on behalf of the community council (*asamblea*). The council can also take away the leadership. In principle, the decisions of the asamblea must been taken unanimously. The village leaders are not allowed to take important decisions without the approval of the village council. Honourable leadership is also extended to the *padrino*, bestowed on the one who has earned the most that year, who must then give a party for the community, by which he shares his wealth which creates equality in the community and status to the padrino and his family. Even so, leadership involves consulting the (Nature) spirits and ancestors. In Bolivia, Aymara communities, and Guarani communities have similar leadership mechanisms. (Laats, in conversation)[9].

8. Discussion

This section will compare leadership styles and the UNESCO competencies to see in how far UNESCO has been inclusive of both literature and indigenous knowledge systems.

Achieving the SDGs by 2030 will require leaders who can transcend physical boundaries, and social, cultural, and political barriers to influence large-scale collaboration and cooperation. System leadership has been advocated as a model and framework suitable for achieving sustainability (Beehner, 2020a). The *System Leadership for Sustainability* framework is based upon the propositions that system leadership is appropriate for accomplishing sustainability because system leadership is: established in natural systems thinking, requiring leadership methods reflective of natural environment systems; a boundary-less concept, necessitating leaders capable of transcending boundaries and limitations, and engaging a diversity of stakeholders; and, a complex, comprehensive concept, requiring holistic leaders capable of seeing the big picture, and influencing entire systems. The three core competencies developed by system leaders are the ability to: view the overall system; encourage reflection and more creative communication; and, shift collective attention from reactive problem-solving to proactive future-focused co-creation (Senge et al., 2015). These competencies neatly overlap with the (a) systems thinking(e) collaboration, (g) self-awareness, and (h)

integral problem-solving sustainability competencies of UNESCO. Systems thinking describes the ability to understand entire systems. Collaboration describes the ability to learn from others, understand and respect their needs, perspectives, and actions, collectively resolve conflict, and facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving. Integrated problem solving describes the ability to solve complex problems which may or may not be systemic in nature by integrating multiple competencies. The UNESCO competencies clearly incorporate leadership attributes described in academic literature. However, neither the UNESCO competencies nor the system leadership model consider an indigenous worldview, with both perspectives demonstrating a western perspective.

Because servant leadership requires leaders consider the common good before of their own, this leadership style offers a viable method to influence humankind to evolve beyond the short-term thinking that established the current unsustainable planetary state (Beehner, 2020b).That means that servant leadership ties in with indigenous notions of thinking beyond the boundaries of one's own generation, looking at where one has come from (forefathers and mothers) and where one is heading (future generations) in one's decision-making. This would ideally span a period of twice 400 years (seven generations of an average life span of 60 years; a 'Baktun'), corresponding with the Maya calendar of changing cycles (Burland and Nicholson, 1970; 2012 being the 13th baktun and reset of the calendar to zero, a new time and consciousness).[10]

As stated above, servant leadership rises above the current short term unsustainable thinking. Moreover, servant leadership is appropriate for integrating sustainability in organizations (Taylor and Pearse, 2009), because contemporary organizations will need successful, servant, and sustainable leadership to flourish in a global economy (McCann and Holt, 2010). Spears (1998) identified the following servant leadership characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, sense of community, and growth of employees. The conceptualization, foresight, awareness, and sense of community characteristics of servant leadership neatly overlay with the (b) anticipatory, (d) strategic action, (e) collaboration, and (g) self-awareness sustainability competencies of UNESCO. In as far as servant leadership is frequently coupled with Christianity (Shirin, 2014), or another prominent religion, it also becomes (c) normative.

The dimensions of listening, healing, awareness, and persuasion are less visible in the UNESCO competencies list, as well as the concept of nature stewardship and personal growth. These can all be characterized as more 'feminine' (inner, reflective) leadership qualities, which are also present in the described philosophies of the Global South. Notably collectivist ontologies (community collective agency) differ from Western concepts of collaboration; collaboration may suggest individuals in collaboration having a 'Kantian' social contract, instead of collective agency putting the community first. Extra competencies that philosophies of the global south further add are: collective agency, participatory decision making. Actively involving ancestors and future generations (through spirit wisdom), biocentric awareness, the ability to be in harmony with Nature, making us of (non- gendered) feminine-masculine complementarity, living in reciprocity and service, sharing, intuitive informal thinking (deregulating over-bureaucracy), reconciliatory skills and mediating diversity; as well as a long-term vision of 400-year (7 generations to come) and historic perspective (7 generations before) *Baktun* perspective.

While the leadership styles of the Global North are appropriate for sustainability leadership, none of these leadership styles were developed with a sustainability focus. The applicability to sustainability was identified and promoted after the initial identification and development of the particular leadership styles. However, the leadership styles of the Global South all incorporate sustainability as fundamental elements and attributes. Ubuntu leadership recognizes the interconnectedness of humanity and nature as a community of life through future generations and the living-dead. The Bodhisattva leadership style, as incorporated within the concept of happiness (GNH) requires nature guardianship as a competence. Buen Vivir leadership is inherently biocentric, emphasizes the rights of Mother Earth and Nature, recognizing that culture is Nature. All three Global South leadership styles acknowledge a responsibility to Nature as a condition of leadership.

Without diminishing Ubuntu, Happiness or Buen Vivir to the idea of service (reciprocity) only, this competency does constitute a prominent feature in all three. The ultimate aim, or concept of progress, is mutual 'service' or 'development as service' (Van Norren, 2017). Building relationships with others and Nature constitutes 'sustainability', whilst recognizing interdependence of all things. And thus, a different type of leader emanates. The concept of service is also found in the three distinct leadership concepts: The Ubuntu leader and followers who empower each other (Ntibagirirwa, 2012; Van den Heuvel, 2007); the Boddhisatva leader that shepherds his people with wisdom and compassion (Tideman, 2016; Tshering, 2008); and the Native American indigenous leader, who's vision reaches seven generations beyond (Clarkson et al., 1992). This ties in with notions of servant-leadership enabling others to perform better, out of a deep desire to help others (Greenleaf, 1977). True wealth is in interrelationships.

Table 4 explains the competencies of various leadership styles. Table 5 explores what extra leadership competencies are added by indigenous leadership models.

Table 4. UNESCO Competencies (C) and Leadership styles (L)

C/L	Systems thinking*	Anticipatory	Normative	strategic	Collaboration	Critical thinking	Self-awareness	Integrated problem-solving
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)
System	X						x	X
Servant		X	X		X		x	
GNH	X	X	X				x	X
Ubuntu	X	X	X		X			X
Buen Vivir	X	X (400 years)	X		X			X

Table 5. UNESCO Competencies (C), extra competencies (C plus) and Leadership styles (L)

Leader-style *Competence*		Systems	Servant	GNH	Ubuntu	Buen Vivir/Native American
Systems	*a*	X	X	X	X	X
		I-WE	Transactional: I-WE	Transactional	Relational: ancestors-future gen- us WE ALL –I	Relational: Universe –Earth-Nature- us
		Interdependence	Practised	Balancing yin-yang	(we incl all)	ALL-WE-I
		Recognised		I-WE-I duality recognized, and altruism practiced		(all incl we)
Anticipatory	*b*		X	?	X future generations	X 400 years; precautionary principle
Normative	*c*		X Christian?	X Buddhist	X African philosophy	X Indigenous philosophy
Strategic	*d*	X			X process-oriented	X Cyclical season thinking
Collaborative	*e*		X	X Start from compassion	X Mother Mind (feeling)	X Feminine Earth (grounding-snake)
Critical	*f*			?	X Warrior Mind (analytical)	X Masculine Sky (oversight-eagle)
Self-awareness	*g*	X	X	X self-reflection	Rainbow diversity	X Plurinationality and interculturality
Integrated	*h*	X		X	X	X
Listening	i		X	X listening to self/monkey mind awareness	X empathic listening	X being/listening to mother earth
Healing	j		X self	X self/compassion	X empathic feeling	X spiritual cleaning

Table 5. *Cont.*

Leader-style	Systems	Servant	GNH	Ubuntu	Buen Vivir/Native American
Competence					
Awareness	k	X self	X self & others	X others/life	X Universe/Earth
Persuasion	l	X others	X Through compassion	X mutual empowerment	X Within Collective council
Stewardship	m	X others and environment	X nature guardianship	X community of life	X rights of nature, culture is nature
Personal growth	n	X psychology	X meditation and prayer	X rituals and	X rituals such as sundance; chakana 12 points/ medicine wheel; 1. Love 2. Trust 3. Connections 4. Acknowledgement 5. Protection 6. Awareness 7. Happiness 8. Passion 9. Expression 10. Responsibility 11. Productivity and 12. Present
				education of moral personhood through community	
Collective agency and participatory decision making	o			X community	X assembleia
Ancestors/ Spirit Wisdom	p		X	X	X
Biocentric awareness	q			(in between antro and biocentric)	X
'Being' in Harmony with nature and cosmos	r		X (sacred nature/ ancestors/ nature spirits)	X (ancestors and future generations, spirits)	X (3 levels of spirit: God, Sun/Moon, nature spirits)

Table 5. *Cont.*

Leader-style *Competence*	Systems	Servant	GNH	Ubuntu	Buen Vivir/Native American
Complementarity	s				X Qhari Warmi (M-F)
Reciprocity (service) (incl future generations and ancestors)	t		X	X	X (IRCR principle)
Sharing	u		X voluntary compassion	X essential	X serving community
Debureaucratisation/informality, 'chaotic' counter thinking	v			X	
Humanistic reconciliatory skills			X	X	X
Mediating diversity				X holoculturality rainbow nation	X plurinationality and interculturality
Twice 400 years (Baktun): 7 generation (past and ahead) perspective					X

9. Conclusion

Though UNESCO has formulated leadership competencies, the global system that the SDGs operate within, still represents a patriarchal system lead by the G7/G8, mainly representing Western views, and the G20, inclusive of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This can be said to represent the 'King' style, though international aid and cooperation also contain notions of servant leadership, enabling others to perform better. It is questionable if this patriarchal system aligns well with the UNESCO promoted 'systems' leadership of holistic viewing of integrated and interrelated problems (and value systems). Global leadership systems definitely do not represent a (more matriarchal) 'servant' leadership model, whereby the leader makes him/herself subservient to the attainment of achievement of others. This also counts for Asian leadership styles of Boddhisatva leadership, representing the shepherd, who follows behind his people, guiding others from a position of ultimate modesty, wisdom, and compassion. Ubuntu leadership is equally embracing equity in its 'boatman'

leadership style (going in front taking the others with), whereby the community consensus takes precedence, and leader and people empower each other. Lastly, indigenous leadership knows only a leadership council appointing temporary leaders on their behalf, representing man/woman complementarity, and embracing a visionary seven generations collective leadership.

UNESCO competencies reflect academic leadership styles: They refer to system leadership and in part to servant leadership. However, they do not necessarily refer to indigenous leadership styles, especially not collectivist leadership styles (Ubuntu and Buen Vivir) and rely less on the inner qualities of servant leadership and GNH or Boddhisatva leadership. They embody more 'masculine' (active –'doing') qualities than 'feminine' (reflective – 'being' or 'feeling') competencies, mediating (reconciliatory) competencies (whereby we recognize feminine-masculine men and masculine-feminine women). On the positive side they do refer to:

- Systems thinking and integration, which may be linked to the idea of interdependence, although it is doubtful whether this covers the full breadth of indigenous notions such as 'integrality' (Sumak kawsay) and 'co-dependent origination' (Buddhism) and 'Ubuntu.
- Collaboration, collective decision making in the strategic notion (important in Ubuntu/Buen Vivir)
- Anticipation, also reflected in the American indigenous precautionary principle
- Self-awareness (GNH values)
- Normative leadership (reflected in all three philosophies of Global South).
- Complementary balance of critical thinking ('warrior mind' in ubuntu) versus self-awareness ('mother mind' in ubuntu)

They do not refer to:

- The ancestors and future generations nor to the long-term 400+400 years (7+7 generations) buen vivir perspective.
- Listening, healing, awareness and persuasion, nature stewardship and personal growth (servant and various indigenous leadership styles)
- Collective agency, participatory decision making. Actively involving ancestors and future generations (through spirit wisdom), biocentric awareness, the ability to be in harmony with Nature, making us of (non- gendered) feminine-masculine complementarity, living in reciprocity and service, sharing, intuitive informal thinking (deregulating over-bureaucracy), reconciliatory skills and mediating diversity

For other findings see Table 5. These competences still reflect some preference for the current patriarchal leadership model; moving away from this towards a more collaborative society may turn out to be crucial in achieving 'sustainability' or harmony with Nature or any of the goals articulated in the SDGs.

Several leadership styles have been introduced as appropriate, or even beneficial for achievement of sustainable development. The styles examined included both western and indigenous perspectives because the present unsustainable global conditions impact the inhabitants of both people. While each leadership style enhances one or more of the UNESCO competencies, it is unlikely that one leadership style may fully satisfy the achievement of sustainable development. Moreover, individuals exhibit various behaviours and personalities and are influenced by diverse cultures, negating the ability to select one universal leadership style most

suitable for achievement of the UN SDGs. Because leadership is a process of influencing others to achieve a common goal, it would seem appropriate for sustainability leaders to adopt ingredients from various leadership styles as deemed appropriate to influence their followers. Therefore, a hybrid combination of leadership styles is recommended for the attainment of sustainable development. It is also recommended that UNESCO can explicitly include more indigenous perspectives in defining sustainability leadership. Table 6 provides an oversight of values and leadership styles behind the SDGs (see also Van Norren, 2020) and how different leadership styles are tied to philosophies and definitions of agency, sustainability/Nature, and anthropocentrism/biocentrism.

Table 6. SDGs, leadership styles and values

Perspective on	SDGs	Sustain-ability leader	System leader	Servant leader	Happiness Leader	Ubuntu Leader	*Buen Vivir Leader*
Philosophy	Leave no-one behind	Idem	System Transformation/ holistic view of integrated complex systems	Life is Serving Others (Christian?)	Respect all sentient being	Life is mutual aid	Harmony with Nature Let Mother Earth lead, serve the community
Agency	Individual	Idem	Idem	Idem	In between	Collective	Collective
Sustainability	Balance socio economic and environmental	Idem	Idem	Stewardship of Nature	Guardianship of (sacred) Nature	Respect Earth for ancestors and future generations	Recognize Mother Earth
	Anthropocentric (subject-object relation)	Idem	Idem	Idem	Between antro and biocentric	Between antro and biocentric, leaning towards biocentric	Biocentric (subjective relations)

Table 6. *Cont.*

Perspective on	SDGs	Sustain-ability leader	System leader	Servant leader	Happiness Leader	Ubuntu Leader	*Buen Vivir Leader*
Leadership style	King: the one who achieves individual power first and then helps the people *(Global Governance systems based on patriarchal power system lead by G7/G8)* combined with notions of Servant-leadership enabling others to perform better	Sustainable thinker (a)systems thinking (b)anticipatory (c)normative (d)strategic (e)collaboration (f) critical thinking (g)self-awareness (h) integrated problem solving	Systems thinker informal influence across sectors	Servant Empathetic Serving of others	Boddhisatva leader shepherding (following behind) his people with wisdom/compassion	Boatman: Leader and followers empower each other (going in front taking the others with)	Seven-generation leadership council (collective leadership) Qhari Warmi Man-woman Complementarity

The limitations and challenges of adopting hybrid combinations of leadership styles are primarily cultural in nature. Sustainability leaders within the Global South might be apprehensive about adopting Western leadership styles which are primarily academic (and paternalistic) in nature. While the adoption of Western styles and approaches by the Global South is more common, there is little or no mutual adoption of Global South styles and approaches among the West. However, mutual learning would be beneficial to the adoption of hybrid leadership styles, with parties in both cultural groups benefiting by the "cross pollination" and resulting synergy of the cross-cultural exchange.

Future areas of research include a more in-depth analysis of the leadership competences as understood in indigenous cultures or philosophies of the Global South. Literature comparing the leadership styles and philosophies of the Global South mentioned in this article is virtually non-existent, including within the realm of leadership literature. Future researchers may also examine how the UNESCO sustainability leadership competences have been applied in practice in various cultures and nations. Qualitative interview-based

research could provide a better understanding of how UNESCO competences have been successfully applied to achieve sustainability actions, and what lessons can be learned from their application in different cultures and nations. Researchers can also explore whether these Global South leadership styles have been applied and with what results.

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Footnotes

1 http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/links/related-information/about-us/

2 For source material see also Research & Degrowth, an academic association: http://degrowth.viper.ecobytes.net/

3 The 'sympathetic reason' (thinking from the heart) instead of the Western 'reasoning eye' (thinking from the mind) (Ntibagirirwa 2012, 100); not to be understood as emotion versus reason.

4 See for example: http://www.penninetaichi.co.uk/index_files/Page1058.htm.,

5 Zulu Sangoma (healer) Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, A Message to the World, Global Oneness Project, http://www.globalonenessproject.org/search/node/ubuntu

6 Oviedo (2010, 32) argues that Ama killa (Diligence), Ama llulla (Truth), Ama suwa (Honesty), Ama Yapa (Loyalty) have been changed by Catholic priests and need to be interpreted as 'being' in the now; it was supposedly derived from:

- Ama Ruray (Not Doing, anything in particular: 'Go with the flow');
- Ama Kay (Not Being, anyone in particular: Letting go of ego);
- Ama Riy (Not Going, anywhere in particular: Letting great spirit decide your direction).

7 Retrieved 23 August 2020 from https://sila-svetla.eu/en/andean-cross-onyx-3-cm/46/133/0/#prettyPhoto

8 Retrieved 23 August 2020 from http://lilianausvatnotes.blogspot.com/2016/06/andean-cross.html

9 Conversation with Buen Vivir expert Dr. Henk Jan Laats, director cross cultural bridges, Amsterdam, June 2020.

10 https://www.thoughtco.com/the-maya-calendar-2136178