


# Leadership development for missions in poor urban communities

**Author:**Kasebwe T.L. Kabongo<sup>1</sup> **Affiliation:**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

**Research Project Registration:**

**Project Leader:** A. van Niekerk  
**Project Number:** 02461412

**Description:**

This research is part of the research project, 'Ecodomy: The church and sustainable communities', directed by Dr Attie van Niekerk, Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria.

**Corresponding author:**

Kasebwe Kabongo,  
kablut@yahoo.fr

**Dates:**

Received: 23 Oct. 2018

Accepted: 07 June 2019

Published: 29 Nov. 2019

**How to cite this article:**

Kabongo, K.T.L., 2019, 'Leadership development for missions in poor urban communities', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(1), a5293. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5293>

**Copyright:**

© 2019. The Authors.  
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

**Read online:**

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Leadership development is an ongoing need in Africa. Good leadership is key to the building of any society. This article is written from the perspective of someone who lives in an African community of poverty. As he or she observes the many problems the African continent faces, he or she wonders about the role of the church to participate in seeking solutions to these problems. The article stresses that effective leadership development should equip people to be participants of the flourishing of their communities. It discusses the theological and missiological foundations of leadership as avenues to align leadership formation with the improvement of the quality of life of Africans living in communities of poverty. The researcher belongs to a missional community which focuses on discipling local residents, with the hope of nurturing agency from inside out. He uses the autoethnographic methodology to describe this case study of his missional community efforts.

**Keywords:** leadership; missional leader; transformation agent; good news; innovation; imagination.

## Introduction

Meaningful leadership development is key for the building of a community and the sustainability of an organisation. African communities of poverty need exemplary individuals and institutions to help build them and improve the quality of life of ordinary people. Christian leadership, in particular, is based on the concept of servant leadership found in the Bible (Mt 18:4). Tshilenga (2016:ix) points out that 'the greatest need of the contemporary world and for Africa particularly, is an excellent servant leadership'. Currently, there is a lack of such 'leadership in various domains', hence Africa seems 'to wander through obscurantism' (Tshilenga 2016:ix). Russell (2003:4) stresses that 'Jesus saw Himself as a servant leader, one whose very incarnation had the purpose of serving humankind'. Shaw (2006:119) states that 'a salvation history approach to the theology of leadership suggests an ideal of theocratic leadership, the heart of which is the servant leader model of Jesus'. He adds that 'such an idea' becomes a reality when someone learns 'to find significance in their relationship to God rather than through their status and position as leaders' (Shaw 2006:119). Such a posture 'empowers a leader to move towards the eschatological imperative of vulnerable authority' (Shaw 2006:119).

This article reflects on the case study of InnerCHANGE, a missional team, which efforts to disciple ordinary people as agents of their own hope and active participants in seeking solution to communal issues. It is guided by the following question: how can discipleship nurture local agency in a way that helps life flourish? It uses the autoethnology method to describe how grassroots leadership is being nurtured and developed in a context of poverty.

## Research methodology

This article reflects on a case study happening in the township of Soshanguve<sup>1</sup> using the autoethnographic approach. Case study research is situated within the broader domain of qualitative social science research. According to Polit and Beck (2008), case studies are:

[...]n-depth investigations of a single entity or a small number of entities. The entity may be individual, a family group, an institution, a community or other social units. In a case study, researchers obtain a wealth of descriptive information and may examine relationships among different phenomena or may examine trends over time. Case study researchers attempt to analyse and understand issues that are important to the history, development, or circumstances of the entity under study. (p. 235)

1. In South Africa, a township (also called location) refers to the often underdeveloped racially segregated urban areas that, from the late 19th century until 1994, were reserved for non-white people. They were usually built on the periphery of towns and cities. The township of Soshanguve was a location for black people only. It is located 40 km north of the city of Pretoria.

I reflect on InnerCHANGE efforts alongside my personal journey of leadership formation, hence the ethnographic nature of this article. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010:1) state that 'autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience'. According to them, this methodology allows someone to use 'tenets of autobiography and ethnography to' share a story or findings (Ellis et al. 2010). In an autobiography, a writer usually reflects 'retroactively and selectively about past experiences' (Ellis et al. 2010). Oftentimes, autobiography authors 'write about epiphany, which are remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted' their life timeline (Couser 1997:1). These authors may also be reflecting on their seasons of 'existential crisis' and lessons learnt from them (Zaner 2004). In an ethnography, a reflection of 'a culture's relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences for the purpose of helping *insiders* and *outsiders* better understand [sic] culture' (Maso 2001:1). The current article will retrospectively and selectively capture the 'epiphanies that stem from or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity' of both the researcher and the missional team he belongs to (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2010:1). It will also reflect on 'these experiences' and appreciate them objectively (Ellis et al. 2010). These experiences will be reflected upon as they pertain to InnerCHANGE efforts of leadership development. An understanding of the theological and missiological foundations of leadership will be helpful in this process.

## Theological and missiological foundations of leadership

Both the theological and missiological foundations of leadership are found in the Bible (Lk 9:48; Mt 12:33 & Mt 28:16–20). The theological foundation rests upon what the Bible describes about a true leader, that is, the least or the servant of all (Lk 9:48). This description is in contrast to how the world defines a leader. Alluding to Jesus' leadership posture, Russell (2003) points out:

The Jews desired a new and powerful king, while the Romans feared just such a person. Jesus was the antithesis of what both groups anticipated. When Jesus did not appear as a powerful conqueror, even John the Baptist began to question whether Jesus was the true Messiah. He sent his disciples to Jesus and told them to ask: 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' (Matthew 11:3). Jesus told them to return to John and tell him of the evidence of His ministry: 'The blind receive sight, the lame walk ... the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor (Matthew 11:4–5)'. (p. 5)

Reflecting on Jesus' answer, Frost (2016:127) points out that a leader blesses people everywhere they are and everywhere life takes them. Hirsch and Ford (2011:22) define a leader as a person who lives like 'salt and light in the name of Jesus Christ, regardless of situation, vocation, or location'. Such leaders build churches that are 'incarnationally present in people's lives right where they already are, in the rhythms of the life they are already living' (McNeal 2011:146).

This understanding of who a leader is has inspired some scholars in their definition of leadership. Niemandt (2016), for instance, sees leadership as:

Where one or a few individuals steer the behaviour of many ... It is a set of practices surrounding the legitimate use of gifts, resources, and position, which therefore influences relational power ... [it is] the transformation of people and institutions to participate, through meaningful relations and in the power of the Spirit, in God's mission. (pp. 86–87)

According to Walker (2007:ix), 'leadership involves power and influence over others, and it is incumbent upon a [person] to use that power and influence benignly'. Ford (2006:30) believes that 'leaders in the body of Christ' should enable, equip and release other in areas of service they are called in. For Clinton (1988:4), 'leadership is a dynamic process in which a person with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God's people toward his purposes for the group'.

In the context of InnerCHANGE efforts, the purposes of the group are based on the missiological foundation of leadership. The foundation connects the great commission (Mt 28:16–20) with what Jesus describes metaphorically as a tree is seen by its fruits (Mt 12:33). I believe that sent out should be assessed by the kind of impact they are making in the world. Some of that impact could be tangible, such as someone actively seeking the peace and prosperity of the community he or she lives in, like Jeremiah 29:7 says. Such an impact could help life flourish. Volf and Croasmun (2019) understand flourishing life as:

[T]he good toward which humans are meant to strive. It names not so much any number of things we desire, but the ultimate goal of our striving along with the values that determine what is truly worth desiring. (p. 13)

They interchangeably use terms such as 'true life', 'good life', 'life worth living', 'human fullness' and 'life that truly is life' to describe what flourishing life means.

Volf (2015:2) goes further to say that the 'vision of flourishing life is found in Christianity as well as other world religions. It is essential to individual thriving and the global common good'. This vision supports initiatives of ecumenism and interfaith. Niemandt (2016:1) believes that 'discipleship must be an invitation to joyful and flourishing life'. It should prepare individuals to become 'a redemptive presence in the world' (Niemandt 2016:89). It should also prepare them to be affirming of life. In its document, *Together towards life*, released in 2013, the World Council of Churches stresses that 'affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission'.

In the African context, affirming life should be engaged holistically and creatively. Mwambazambi (2011:6) stresses that good leadership should interact with 'political and economic centralisation, techno-bureaucratic influence, massive acculturation and illiteracy' that are 'still serious obstacles to freedom and the creative richness of the African people' so that life can flourish everywhere. Priest and Barine (2017:1) concur with this thought when they state that Christian

leaders' involvement in issues of 'literacy, education, healthcare, economic development, globalisation, peace and security, and the development of healthy governments' contributes to the flourishing of life in Africa. The sustainability of such involvement depends on the ability of the church to continuously nurture the following qualities in people: 'commitment, lifelong learning, mentoring and empowering young leaders, as well as caring and compassion' (Ngaruiya 2017:44). These qualities could be 'used as criteria in discerning or appointing leaders to serve others' (Ngaruiya 2017:44). Clinton (1988:39) stresses that 'the church worldwide is in need of a committed group of disciples ... who can lead the way by demonstrating through their lives a faith worth imitating'.

These theological and missiological foundations have led me to view my role in society as a servant with the mission to help lives flourish. This view is both an ideal and a lifetime goal in my development as a person. Clinton (1988:25) points out that 'leadership development is a lifetime process. It should take into consideration a people's past in order to point to critical milestones in their lives and lessons drawn from them'. This is the journey on which this article embarks.

## My leadership background

Four milestones have shaped my leadership philosophy: my upbringing in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), my experience as a Roman Catholic seminarian, and my experiences with NieuCommunities and InnerCHANGE.

## My upbringing in the Democratic Republic of Congo

I grew up in the DRC where the leadership style of people around me was autocratic. An autocratic leadership style is centred on parents, elderly people or the boss who are considered as the best custodians of wisdom and knowledge. A wise young person is someone who is good at following to the letter, instructions from custodians of wisdom and knowledge (wisetoast.com 2018). Such was also my experience in school. As a university student, very few of my lecturers 'encouraged independent and creative thinking. Most of them encouraged students to exactly repeat or reproduce what they were taught' (Kabongo 2018:3). At church, the same autocratic leadership style was applied. The pastors' or priests' opinions or interpretation of the Bible were seen as the gospel truth. This was the only and best leadership style I was familiar with when I joined a Roman Catholic order as a teenager.

## My experience as a Roman Catholic seminarian

In seminary, I encountered the autocratic leadership style again. I had signed up to be developed as a priest who would be 'prepared for ministry in the world' around him, which was Africa (osv.com 2018). I also signed up to be developed as a follower of Jesus who will:

[B]e prayerful, humble and wise; a man of integrity fidelity and compassion. A person who will be courageous, pure and detached from worldly acclaim. A person who will be selfless and free of all self-gratifying ambitions. (osv.com 2018)

The seminary touched through all the above-mentioned expectations in theoretical and practical ways. The theory meant sitting in classes studying philosophy, theology and other social sciences. The practical side – my favourite one – was to expose me to different contexts of life and ministry in Africa. I was raised to believe that my culture was the best in the world. I can certainly identify with this story shared by Donavan (2005):

'One time after I had finished a year of instructions in one of my villages, a lady resident of the village said to me: 'I think I understand what your message (the gospel) is saying to us. You are telling us that we must love the people of Kisangiro. Why must we do that? Kisangiro happened to be the next village, three miles away. The people of that village were of the same tribe as the people of the other village, but of a different clan. Being people who existed beyond the boundaries of the clan, they qualified for her as being 'those dark, evil people out there'. (p. 37)

Thinking highly of my ethnic group was the norm for me and people around me. Mongo Beti (1977:47) thinks that this ethnocentric arrogance is an African problem. He says that African communities have always been 'divided into countless small family, clan and tribe, because of internal feuds and vendettas'.

Hirsch and Hirsch (2010:14) rightly point out that 'following Jesus has a very clear cost. And the cost includes living a life that sometimes runs contrary to the culture around us'. Travelling and interacting with people from different cultures and nationalities as a seminarian taught me to learn to be counter-cultural. This is still a learning curve for me because I am still learning to 'critique both personal and cultural assumptions for the sake of becoming more like Jesus' (Hirsch & Hirsch 2010:14).

The seminary broadened my mind and worldview in exposing me to ecumenism and interfaith conversations. Oduyoye (1986:11) decries denominationalism as a reality that impedes the flourishing of lives in Africa. According to her (Oduyoye 1986):

African Christian theologians must come to grips with the attitudes of the church toward African social institutions in order to face the scandal of the divisions and competition within the church, as original tribalism is being replaced by Christian tribes – Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Baptists ... Our salvation as Africans lies in achieving unity in our diversity and in being thankful for the gift the other brings. (p. 11)

Ecumenical conversations are all about prioritising unity while affirming the diversity or uniqueness of our identities in the body of Christ. Interfaith dialogues taught me the importance of tolerance in my participation on attempting to flourish lives around me. Cook (2001) states:

Differences in thought, behaviour and tastes is one of the realities of human life which is rooted in the nature of man's creation; a

fact, acceptance of which requires the development of the human society and the increase of its capacity in interaction with different views. This can be interpreted as 'tolerance'. In order to show its importance, human history can be mentioned as good evidence for the widespread atrocities due to the lack of tolerance. Despite all progress which human has had in recent centuries in overcoming diseases and managing natural disasters, he/she has been unable to manage the human anger and violation manifested by wars and conflicts. These conflicts apparently take place in the name of social, political and religious rights, as some of these conflicts have occurred in the name of religion. (p. 1)

Learning to interact with different religions taught me to understand that Christianity is not the only religion that values the flourishing of life. Many others do too.

The seminary finally altered the understanding of my identity. I felt like I was moved from being someone who felt called to serve in Africa to dual citizenship with a hierarchy. I was primarily a citizen of our order and secondarily a citizen of the world around me. Therefore, I was primarily trained for ministry according to the order priorities and secondarily for Africa. I longed for the opposite emphasis. After I left the seminary, NieuCommunities, a missional team, provided me a platform to nurture my longing to become a servant who could help lives flourish around him.

## My experience with NieuCommunities

NieuCommunities (2002–2012) was a missional community that focused on developing emergent leaders to follow God in the way of Jesus. Their core leadership formation was a 10-month mission apprenticeship. Their 'hope and calling was to shape uncommon followers of God as they followed in the footsteps of Jesus together with them' (Saner 2018:1). There were three core practices of Jesus a NieuCommunities team was animated by:

'Jesus lingered long with his Father' (Huckins & Yackley 2012:9). So they carved out time to do the same. They called this communion.

'He invited a small band of people to do life with him' (Huckins & Yackley 2012:9). So they 'chose to share their lives with each other. They called this community'. (Huckins & Yackley 2012:9)

'He sent his disciples into the world all around them to be good news' (Huckins & Yackley 2012:9). Jesus 'lived with an unwavering purpose as he created a spiritual home for others, so they opened their hearts to be taught how to live on purpose wherever they were' (Saner 2018:1). NieuCommunities 'called this mission' (Saner 2018:1). Therefore, 'communion, community, and mission were the three streams that run through everything' they did. (boereworscurtains.blogpost.com 2018:1)

Saner (2018:1) points out that each member of their teams:

Sets out every year to pursue God relentlessly, to allow people's faith and character to be transformed in the crucible of community, and to submerge into the cultures around them and make a difference in peoples' lives. (p. 3)

When Rob Yackley, the founder of NieuCommunities, invited young people like me to join his organisation, he regularly said that 'he simply wanted us to follow God in the way of Jesus and mentor others to do the same' (Huckins & Yackley 2012). He was also very humble in stressing that his approach was not new. According to him, NieuCommunities 'set out to do an old thing once again' (Huckins & Yackley 2012:7). His desire was, like Jesus, to develop good newsagents. The latter were 'people who will be a gift to a changing world', prophetic witnesses and inspirational voices in the culture around them (Huckins & Yackley 2012:11). I went through that apprenticeship in 2004.

NieuCommunities provided me a platform where I experienced ecumenism on day-to-day basis. My missional teammates came from different denominations. We were also of different genders and marital statuses.

Through NieuCommunities, I learned to be comfortable with being a minority. I was a minority as an African immigrant in South Africa, the only Congolese and black African on the team, the only person with a Roman Catholic background and the only person who was not fluent in English.

We committed to do life together and learned to be servants who will intentionally participate in flourishing life in our context, with a preferential leaning towards the poor and the marginalised. At the end of this apprenticeship, I had had exposure to different realities of poverty in South Africa. I was exposed to poverty in contexts that are predominantly black people, white people, mixed race people or immigrants. A community of poverty was also a context I felt called to live in as a servant desiring to participate in flourishing lives. The focus of NieuCommunities was on its 10-month apprenticeship, and I was ready to be engaged in a long-term process of living out God's calling in my life. This is where InnerCHANGE became a relevant organisation for me to join.

## My experience with InnerCHANGE

Leadership formation in InnerCHANGE is ingrained in its ministry philosophy of incarnation. Its founder, John Hayes, believes in developing leaders who 'live the good news incarnationally, in a way that can be seen, heard and handled' (Hayes 2006:113). These leaders are formed to go 'into every culture, living among people, affirming their dignity and loving them' (John Perkins cited in Hayes 2006:12). They are also trained to collaborate with their neighbours to see grassroots leaders developed and the love of God displayed in meaningful ways (Ray Bakke cited in Hayes 2006:296). InnerCHANGE runs an initial formation of 3 years: 1 year of apprenticeship and 2 years of novitiate. In these 3 years, a leader is trained in the principles of leadership.

Similar to NieuCommunities, InnerCHANGE serves a particular context as a team. The majority of team members

are people who grew up outside the context they serve. I am one of them. However, our goal is to see diverse teams in which the majority of members are from the context where we serve. This is the vision that helps us remain intentional about our goal (innerchange.org 2018) (Prince 2018):

InnerCHANGE is a Christian order among the poor that exists to make disciples of Jesus and develop local leaders who are marked by merciful action, transformative contemplation and prophetic justice. (p. 1) (p.17)

To develop local leaders in a context such as Soshanguve, we decided to start an apprenticeship and adopt a democratic leadership style in the development of our leaders. With a democratic style, people are drawn into 'decision-making' and solution-seeking in an interactive way. The 'headship' of the group is 'centred on subordinates' contributions' (wisetoast.com 2018). We thought that the democratic leadership style had the potential to help us shape innovative leaders who could help flourish lives around them. Innovative leaders are known for three things (Niemandt 2015):

- They disrupt existing patterns: we wanted to help people engage the status quo in a critical way.
- They encourage novelty: we wanted to stimulate and encourage creativity.
- They act as sensemakers – sensemaking 'is the process by which individuals construct meaningful explanations for situations and their experiences within those situations' (Niemandt 2015:4-7): we wanted to steward people who will be humble and faithful learners of their own experiences.

These efforts were done in a cultural context that has some similarity with the one I was brought up in. This reality allowed me to smoothly connect with the culture of my context of life as both an observer and an active community member. These efforts are therefore designed with an ethnographic approach. Spickard (2017:71) states that an ethnographic approach 'combines the direct observation of behaviour with the researcher's involvement with the people being observed'. The design of our leadership formation was influenced by my cultural background.

## My cultural background

I grew up in a culture where love was primarily expressed through actions. I do not remember hearing my parents and many respectable and caring people around me say 'I love you'. Yet, the way they cared for me demonstrated their love. In the context of Soshanguve where our missional team serves in, expression of love is primarily through action than words. In this context, action speaks louder than words. Metcalf (2015:103) would say that for the majority of our neighbours, 'more is caught than taught' by observing and doing. Consequently, InnerCHANGE endeavoured to develop people who would participate in helping their community flourish. It started an apprenticeship. The goal of the apprenticeship was to develop a group of sojourners that could help flourish communities of poverty.

## Contextual apprenticeship

To put everything in practice, we decided to start a 4-month apprenticeship programme for the emergent leaders of our context. We brought together neighbours from different denominations and some who were not believers. The end in mind was to develop servants who could help flourish a community. We used the Bible and practical ministry projects as our formation tools. Erwin McManus advises missional teams to learn to 'shift away from the polarizing lines of denominations' and faith communities into building bands of agents of love who focus on a common goal of doing life-affirming actions (Hirsch & Ford 2011:15). He stresses that (Hirsch & Ford 2011):

[T]he everyday person wants to know whether the church can help them answer critical questions such [as] why is there poverty if there is abundance in Jesus, why is there inequality in the world if we were created with equal worth? why is there war, rape, violence and looting in Africa if God is so powerful that he can stop those evils from happening? (p. 16)

InnerCHANGE invited its apprentices to reflect on the above-mentioned questions by getting involved in its existing service projects. It wanted to expose its neighbours to 'a spunky, high impact, life oriented, world-transforming, joyous, living for Jesus our King. An outward-focused, kingdom-oriented discipleship that changes the world' and transform them as individuals (Hirsch & Ford 2011:23). In terms of our formation format, experiential learning was prioritised over theoretical learning. During the course of formation of the apprentices, I was privileged to watch our neighbours 'do things and ask them to explain what they are doing' (Spickard 2017:71). The hoped for outcome was multiplication. This approach is connected to a key priority of the church: social involvement.

## Social involvement

It was a priority for Christ and should be a priority for his church. John Scott (quoted by Grenz 1994:506) remarks that 'social involvement' is a tangible and meaningful way to display the gospel as good news. He (Grenz 1994:506-507) continues by stressing that 'much Christian missionary work has reflected the idea of a concern for the needy' and 'an action plan as a response to this concern'. This is why 'missions often encompass medicine, education', sport, ecology, care for orphans, homeless care and so on, alongside the proclamation of the word of God (Grenz 1994:506-507). Corbett and Fikkert (2009:41) also point out that social action is Jesus' legacy. He (Corbett & Fikkert 2009):

[D]eclared in words and deeds to the leper, the lame, the outcast, vulnerable, burned out and the poor that his kingdom is bringing healing to every speck of the universe. (p. 41)

Boesak (1988:37) challenges the church to adopt a holistic approach in preaching to 'the whole human existence'. As a missional team, our social involvement has always been how we enter into a particular context. We also use that to apprentice our neighbours. As we were designing our

apprenticeship, three things were key to the process: visibility, relevancy and marketability (Kabongo 2018:2):

- With visibility, we wanted to be seen and known as God's and community servants.
- With relevancy, we wanted to serve meaningfully.
- With marketability, we wanted our meaningful service to inspire others to serve and/or to join our band of servants.

Through these core processes, our aim was to develop people who would be the answer to their own prayers. We have been humbled to see that some of the leaders who went through our apprenticeship expanded our model of discipling people through social involvement to other townships and South African cities. This model lays on a spirituality of agency.

## Spirituality of agency

This spirituality is inspired by both the Bible and the Black Consciousness Movement.

## Biblical inspiration

Biblical passages have been critical in the articulation of our spirituality of agency. Micah 6:8 challenges all Christians to 'act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before our God'. In learning to be agents of justice, we seek the peace and prosperity of the environments we live in as well as the whole world like Jeremiah 29:7 states. Peace and prosperity are characteristics of a flourishing life. Christians are called to be agents of such characteristics.

Tutu thinks of 'Christians as active role players in the world on behalf of Christ, its head' (Tutu 2004:60). He illustrates it in a very tangible way by using a statue found in Rome (Tutu 2004):

This statue has no arms. When one asks why, he/she is told that it shows how God relies on us, His children, to do His work for Him. Christians are God's eyes, ears and arms in the world. God waits upon them, and relies on them. (p. 60)

God relies on his children because he created each one of them with talent, gift or a genius as stated in Matthew 25:14–30. He expects everyone to make good use of their innate genius in multiplying it and punishes those who choose not to multiply a genius in them, but instead bury it. He encourages to share what we have with others, as illustrated in John 6:1–13. He also relies on his children to build our city as shown in Nehemiah 2:17–18.

Faced with the expectations of being participants in helping lives flourish around them, our apprentices were pessimistic that if they could change makers alone or as a small group. Chirikure (2019) has this to tell all of us: '[i]f you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven't spent a night with a mosquito (Chirikure 2019:5)'. He implies that a minority can have and make a tangible impact. He also challenges us to constantly ask the question of what we can do for our community, not what can *others* do for our

communities. We are all citizens of our communities. Therefore, we must participate in helping them flourish.

Tutu (2004:64) points us to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as an encouraging change agent as well as a role model to people from humble backgrounds such as our neighbours. He states that 'Mary was a poor teenage girl in Galilee and reminds us that transfiguration of our world comes from even the most unlikely places and people' (Tutu 2004:64). People from humble backgrounds of South Africa such as our neighbours started a movement that is still inspirational more than 40 years after its establishment. This movement is called the Black Consciousness Movement.

## Black Consciousness Movement

Steve Biko (2007:156), the founder of this movement, stated that people needed to 'rally together with their fellows in order to bring transformation' and to participate in flourishing life around them. He also stressed that people's 'self-examination and determination to bring a humane society in South Africa' should be prioritised.

InnerCHANGE believes that the church should be an active participant in a collective imagination of what a flourishing life situation looks like in a particular context (De Beer 2008a:6). Kritzing (2008:99) stresses that the church alongside the community should take the responsibility to shape a context in the desired way. De Beer (2008) points out that the work of:

[F]ostering black consciousness should continue, calling blacks back to solidarity with their communities of origin, as well as black people who are still living with the scars of stolen dignity to a discovery of their own humanity, giftedness and agency. (p. 174)

Katongole (2017:205) believes that it is only through an intentional solidarity of different stakeholders that 'Christianity' can be meaningfully 'grounded on the African soil'. It should be an instrument of hope for the poor in helping them to be agents of the resolution of their 'everyday problems' (Katongole 2017:205). Talking on behalf of all Africans, Ramphele (2017:22–23) stresses that we must free 'ourselves from the inferiority complex' inculcated in us 'by systems that apportioned value and human dignity according to' the colour of a skin. True freedom will be attained when black Africans will graduate from expecting answers to their own prayers to come from outside their contexts.

Their prayers will be answered through active citizenship from bottom up. In order for this active citizenship to be beneficial, it will require a motivated, 'educated and empowered citizenry' (De Beer 2008b:6). The church could train and prepare its members for that goal (De Beer 2008a:6). Hence, InnerCHANGE attempts and efforts to prepare residents of a poor community for such a task.

## Conclusion

This article used an autoethnographic approach to reflect on InnerCHANGE as a case study of grassroots leadership

development. A reflection on my personal leadership formation shows the influence my journey has on how I develop leaders around me. Rick Warren states that (Hirsch & Hirsch 2010):

[I]n the Great Commission Jesus commands us to go and make disciples of all nations, but we can't make disciples until we are disciples. We can't make a difference until we are different. (p. 8)

I was discipled in a way that I could become a servant who participates in helping life flourish. I now attempt to disciple my neighbours in the same way through our InnerCHANGE apprenticeship. The model I use is tightly connected to the Black Consciousness Movement ideology of solidarity and participation to see life flourish in communities of poverty where hopelessness seems to overwhelmingly be palpable.

## Acknowledgements

The author thanks his neighbours for joining on the journey of learning to be servants who participate in the flourishing of their community.

## Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## Author(s) contributions

K.T.L.K. is the sole author of this article.

## Ethical consideration

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

## Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and not an official position of InnerCHANGE, the organisation he belongs to, or the University of Pretoria, his alma mater. The author did not benefit from any sources of support for writing, nor did he write this article for financial gain.

## References

- Beti, M., 1977, *King Lazarus' in African writers series 77*, Heinemann, Portsmouth.
- Biko, S., 2007, 'Black consciousness and the quest for a true humanity', in D. Accone, Z. Cindi, S. Cooper, D. Innes & J. Jansen (eds.), *We write what we like: Celebrating Steve Biko*, NYU Press.
- Boesak, A., 1988, *Black and reformed. Apartheid, liberation and the Calvinist tradition*, 3rd edn., Scotaville, Braamfontein.
- Boereworscurtains, 2018, 'My journey with NieuCommunities' in Boereworscurtains, viewed 01 October 2018, from [www.boereworscurtains.blogspot.com](http://www.boereworscurtains.blogspot.com).

- Chirikure, S. 2019, *Making Africa's past 'usable' for the present*, viewed 11 May 2019, from <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2019-05-07-making-africas-past-usable-for-the-present>.
- Clinton, J.R., 1988, *The making of a leader. Recognizing the lessons and stages of leadership development*, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO.
- Cook, M., 2001, *Commanding right and forbidding wrong in Islamic thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Corbett, S. & Fikkert, B., 2009, *When helping hurts: Alleviating poverty without hurting the poor and yourself*, Moody, Chicago, IL.
- Couser, G.T., 1997, *Recovering bodies: Illness, disability, and life writing*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI.
- De Beer, S.F., 2008a, 'Taking back our streets: reading Steve Biko's Black Consciousness and the quest for true humanity on the streets of Tshwane' in C.W. Du Toit (ed.) *The legacy of Stephen Bantu Biko: Theological challenges*, pp 169–197, University of South Africa, Research institute for theology and religion, Pretoria.
- De Beer, S., 2008b, 'Contesting inner-city space: Global trends, local exclusion/s and an alternative Christian spatial praxis', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 36(2–3), 181–207.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. & Bochner, A.P., 2010, 'Autoethnography: An overview', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12(1), Art. #10, viewed 11 July 2018, from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108>.
- Ford, P.R., 2006, *Knocking over the leadership ladder*, ChurchSmart Resources, St. Charles, IL.
- Frost, M., 2016, *Surprise the world. The five habits of highly missional people*, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO.
- Grenz, S.J., 1994, *Theology for the community of God*, Paternoster Press, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Hayes, J.B., 2006, *Sub-merge. Living deep in a shallow world: Service, justice and contemplation among the world's poor*, Regal. From Gospel Light Ventura, Ventura, CA.
- Hirsch, A. & Ford, L., 2011, *Right here right now. Everyday mission for everyday people*, Bakerbooks, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Hirsch, A. & Hirsch, D., 2010, *Untamed. Reactivating a missional form of discipleship*, Bakerbooks, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Huckins, J. & Yackley, R., 2012, *Thin places. 6 postures for creating & practicing missional community*, The House Studio, Kansas City, MO.
- Innerchange, 2018, viewed 08 June 2018, from [www.innerchange.org](http://www.innerchange.org).
- Kabongo, L., 2018, 'The Africanisation of missiology: the work of InnerChange South Africa to raise up local missionaries and decolonise black African minds (part 1)', in J.N. Jennings (ed.) *Global missiology*, vol. 4, 15th edn., Seoul, viewed n.d., from <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2146>.
- Katongole, E., 2017, *Born from lament. The theology and politics of hope in Africa*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Kritzinger, J.N.J. 2008, 'Liberating whiteness: Engaging with the anti-racist dialectics of Steve Biko', in C.W. Du Toit (ed.), *The legacy of Stephen Bantu Biko: Theological challenges*, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, pp. 83–113.
- Maso, I., 2001, 'Phenomenology and ethnography', in P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. Lofland (eds.), *Handbook of ethnography*, pp. 136–144, Sage, London.
- McNeal, R., 2011, *Missional communities. The rise of the post-congregational church*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Metcalf, S., 2015, *Beyond the local church. How apostolic movements can change the world*, IVP Books, Downers Grove, IL.
- Mwambazambi, K., 2011, 'A missiological reflection on African ecclesiology', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32(1), Art. #482, 8 pages. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v32i1.482>
- Nation, P., 2006, *Missional leadership*, viewed 31 July 2018, from [www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/philip-nation/defining-missional-leadership](http://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/philip-nation/defining-missional-leadership).
- Ngaruiya, D.K., 2017, 'Characteristics of influential African Christian leaders', in R.J. Priest & K. Barine (eds.), *African Christian leadership. Realities, opportunities, and impact*, American Society of Missiology Series, No. 54, pp. 45–77, Orbis Books, New York.
- Niemandt, C.J.P., 2015, 'Complex leadership as a way forward for transformational missional leadership in a denominational structure', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71(3), Art. #2951, 9 pages. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2951>
- Niemandt, C.J.P., 2016, 'Transformative spirituality and missional leadership', *Mission Studies* 33(1), 85–103.
- Oduyoye, M.A., 1986, *Hearing and knowing. Theological reflections on Christianity in Africa*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.
- Our Sunday visitor, 2018, *What we hope for in training seminarians*, viewed 28 September 2018, from [www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com).
- Polit, D.F. & Beck, C.T., 2008, *Nursing Research: Generating and Assessing Evidence for Nursing Practice*, 8th edn., Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Hong Kong.
- Priest, R.J. & Barine, K., 2017, *African Christian leadership. Realities, opportunities, and impact*, American Society of Missiology Series, No. 54, Orbis Books, New York.
- Ramphela, M., 2017, *Dreams, betrayal and hope*, Penguin Books, Cape Town.

- Russell, R., 2003, 'A practical theology of servant leadership', in J.T. Waddell (ed.), *Proceedings of the servant leadership research roundtable*, Regent University, Virginia, pp. 1–9.
- Saner, R., 2018, 'My journey with NieuCommunities' in Boereworscurtains, viewed 01 October 2018, from [www.boereworscurtainsblogpost.com](http://www.boereworscurtainsblogpost.com).
- Shaw, P.W., 2006, 'Vulnerable authority: A theological approach to leadership and teamwork', *Christian Education Journal* 3(1), 119–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989130600300109>
- Spickard, J.V., 2017, *Research basics. Design to data analysis in 6 steps*, Sage, Los Angeles, CA.
- Tshilenga, E., 2016, *Leadership interactive bible studies. Sharing of twenty seven biblical leaders*, Libs, Pretoria.
- Tutu, D.M., 2004, *God has a dream. A vision of hope for our time*, Doubleday, New York.
- Van Niekerk, A.S., 2015, 'Mission in practice module', Unpublished paper, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Volf, M., 2015, *Flourishing: Why we need religion in a globalized world*, Kindle edn., Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Volf, M. & Croasmun, M., 2019, *For the life of the world: Theology that makes a difference*, Brazos Press, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Walker, S.P., 2007, *Leading with nothing to lose. Training in the exercise of power. Book 2 of the undefended leader trilogy*, Piquant Editions, Carlisle.
- Wisetoast., 2018, 'Leadership styles' viewed 23 September 2018, from [www.wisetoast.com](http://www.wisetoast.com).
- Zaner, R.M., 2004, *Conversations on the edge: Narratives of ethics and illness*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC.