

Futures Methods from Around the World



AGENCY



HUMANITY
UNITED



مؤسسة دبي للمستقبل
DUBAI FUTURE FOUNDATION

The Indian Forest Rights Act has allowed many tribal/ forest dwelling communities to regain stewardship and access to their ancestral forests. In Odissa, the women of the Kodalpalli village have *thengapalli*, a women-led form of forest stewardship creating women's patrols of the forest to curb illegal logging.

Under the *thengapalli* system any illegal loggers the women come across are brought to the village and punished per communal law. For example, they may be asked for an apology or pay a fine. If the watchwomen encounter armed loggers, they return to the village for backup. This women led system leads to fewer conflicts and corruption since women are less likely to get into a physical skirmish or accept bribes to turn a blind eye.



Collective work that each person owes to their indigenous community is known as *Tequio*.

It involves the contribution of goods and labor by members of the community to build, create, repair, and preserve their surroundings to live better. Since it is done for the benefit of the community itself, it is not paid work; its collective work involving around 50 people. The strength of "*Tequio*" lies in the many hands coming together to work toward a common goal. *Tequio* is a concept that the Xochimilcas (Indigenous community) take very seriously, as it allows them to get things done that the government never will support them with. This can look like cleaning the canals of the water lilies that have become a plague.



20 years from now How might women's rights and social justice intertwine through environmental justice?

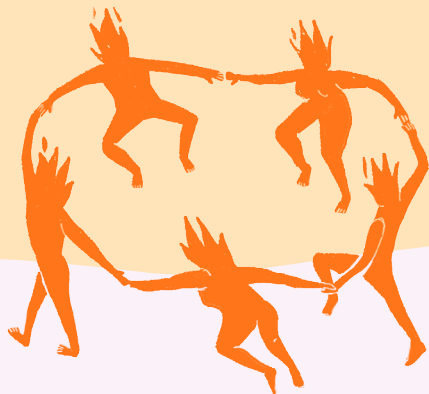
20 years from now how would our societies look if we become self-sustaining, self-managing and self-organizing communities? What values and shifts are needed if more people followed tequio?

African kinship systems, clan, lineage, and community, structure personhood as relational identity.

In Luganda, one might say, “*Omuntu si kyuma*” (*A person is not a thing*) which means a person’s existence is defined by their relationships, not their possessions. Agency here is not about “self-assertion,” but the ability to act meaningfully within the weave of family, ancestors, and descendants. A decision is rarely “*mine alone*”; it echoes through the lineage. A child’s achievement uplifts the clan; an elder’s error shames the lineage.

This interdependence transforms agency into a moral continuum, where choice carries collective consequence, a principle sorely missing in many modern systems.

“The self is a spark from a communal fire, it shines brightest when it remembers where it came from.”



Across many African societies, social life has long revolved around relational authority rather than absolute power.

In Akan philosophy (Ghana), the proverb “The chief is a servant of the people” captures a moral contract: leadership is not an elevation above others, but a responsibility within them.

Among the Igbo, the concept of “*igwebuikwe*”, “There is strength in making. A person acts, but always as a thread in the moral fabric of the community.”

Among the Baganda, the Kabaka (king) is revered, but his legitimacy rests on the consent of the clans and the counsel of elders (Lukiiko). Leadership is participatory where to rule is to listen.

This relational model of agency contrasts deeply with Western notions of power as control or independence. In a number of African systems, freedom exists only through interdependence. To act freely is to maintain the rhythm that binds one to others — a harmony of responsibility and expression.

20 years from now, as humanity redefines power and progress, will some of Africa’s understandings of agency, as the courage to ‘act with’ rather than ‘act over’, become the world’s moral compass?



The Gameya is the Egyptian formation of a rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA) scheme. The Gameya is a money circle formed by a group of trusted people deciding to save money together on a monthly basis. As an example, a ten month gameya is formed by 10 members each paying the same amount every month.

Every month of the ten months, one of the members receives this money. The Gameya now exists in a digital format as fintech apps to create such money circles online. Apps such as Money Fellows or El Gameya, are allowing people financial independence and agency by giving them a financial product dependent on the savings and borrowing methods they are accustomed to but enhancing it through a digitized experience.



20 years from now what if local practices could help people exercise financial agency? And, if digitized, would they benefit from the availability of a wider network and a more secure infrastructure and streamlined experience?

Does anything in this zine remind you of a practice, source of knowledge or wisdom from your community that you would like to share with us?

We shared some of the provocations and questions the entries sparked for us when thinking about potential ideas and implications 20 years from now. Did reading the entries surface any other questions or provocations for you?



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