

Richard Seel has written about organisational culture with reference to business and corporations but I believe his ideas can be applied to any form of organisation, social and political as well.

Seel describes culture as an emergent paradigm. It is emergent because it grows organically from communication and interaction of the people involved in its development.

It is a paradigm which, according to Fritjof Capra whom he quotes,

*is a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way a community organises itself. (Capra 1997:6)*

Since a paradigm is internally generated as it evolves from the communication and interaction of participants in a unit: 1. It cannot be externally imposed. 2. It becomes problematic when it remains fixed though the conditions that gave rise to it have changed.

Culture is a complex process continuously developing and changing. Attempts to reduce culture to a set of fixed precepts lead to conflicts.

And in today's world where societies are made up of people with different cultural paradigms, there is a tendency to fix paradigms and impose them on others. Take the imposition of Western democracy in the East, Middle East and in Africa.

Western democracy arises out of a constantly evolving paradigm that encompasses an ever widening spiral of liberties; liberties such as rights for women, gays and children and liberal concepts such as freedom of expression.

Such a paradigm developed in the West and imposed on non-Western countries has created various forms of syncretism.

Western paradigms imposed on the Middle East, East and Africa have led to problems in so-called democracies in these non-Western countries.

In Cote d'Ivoire, despite 'democratic' elections, we have a President who will not give up his power to a newly elected President, in Zimbabwe, we have an opposition group that cannot function, in other countries we have 'democratically' elected dictatorships that stay in power for decades and in some countries the notion of irresponsible freedom has taken hold and there is no government at all.

The Western paradigm has led to confusion and conflict, exacerbated by the perception that the paradigm, though it promises democracy, is undemocratically imposed, and treats other paradigms as oppressive.

But these other paradigms are what people in the Middle East, East and Africa have developed, understand and accept.

Non-Western paradigms do not pursue individual freedom to the extent that it is pursued in the West and as the desire for such freedom did not develop organically in Eastern, Middle Eastern and African societies, there is great confusion about what constitutes freedom and the majorities of populations in non-Western countries find it difficult to repudiate authoritarian rule.