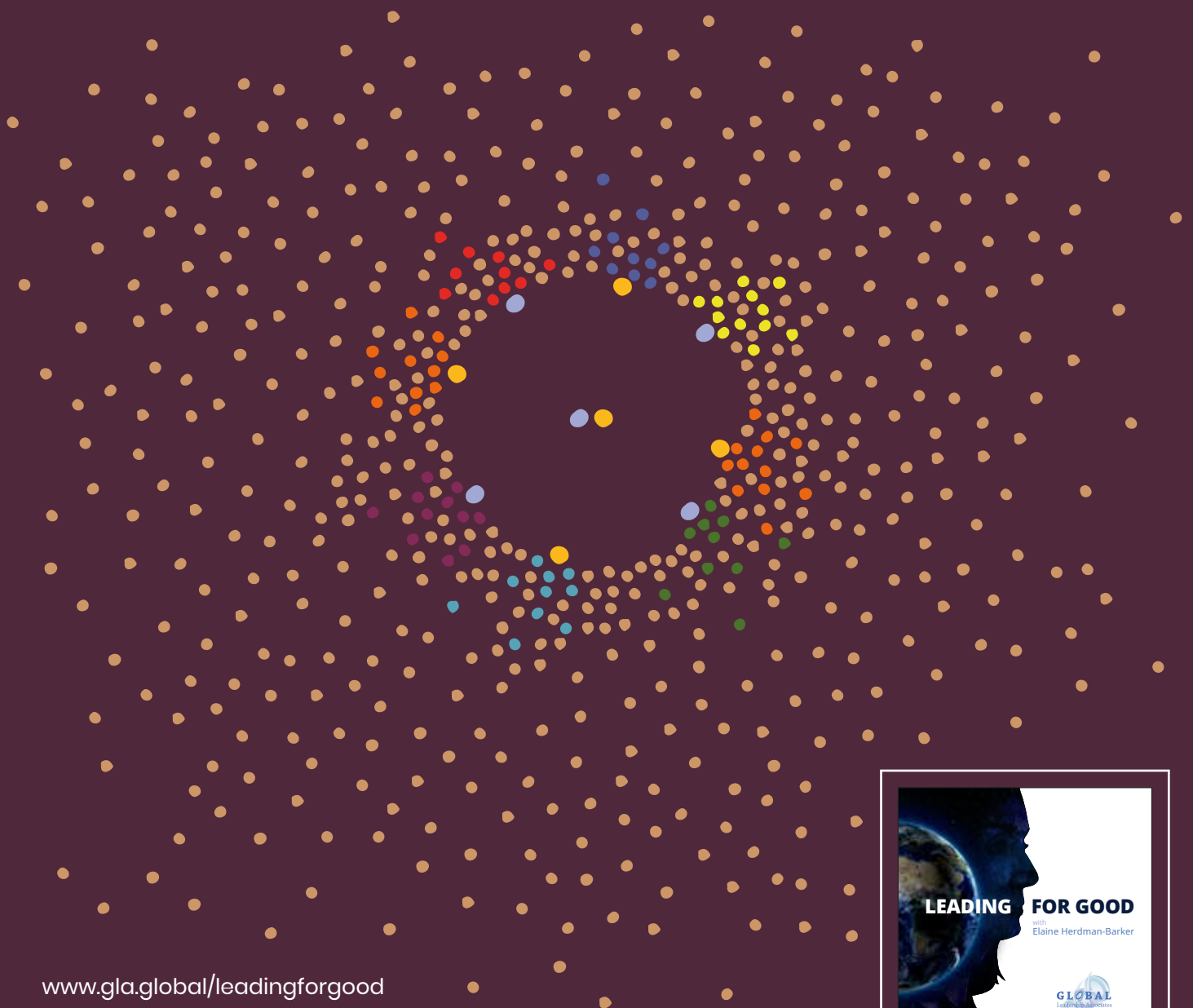


## The Shape of Distance; Part 1

Do leaders get parked in self-focus? What can Africa teach the world about leading through hardship? When all that we've worked for is swept away, how do we find the resilience to bounce back? And with billions of people outside the modern, urbanised world eager for development initiatives, how do we truly engage, neighbour with neighbour, globally?



Elaine Herdman Barker, Co-founder of Global Leadership Associates speaks in the first part of the Shape of Distance, with Steadman Harrison, President and Founder of Lead Beyond. Born and raised in America, Steadman, for the past 20 years, has made Africa his home. He's a passionate and long-term advocate for democratizing leader development, he's continually promoting solutions that are more affordable, accessible, and scalable. Drawing on his international experience, Steadman shares insights gleaned from working with leaders in areas facing significant social challenges. He reflects on what he's learnt from living in East Africa and discusses what Africa can teach about leadership, resilience, and shared humanity.

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*Today, I'm joined by Steadman Harrison to discuss his international experiences working with leaders in regions that often encounter significant social challenges such as hunger, displacement and conflict. Welcome, Steadman. Where are you today? Because you're often in different places.*

Great to be with you, Elaine. I just got back from five weeks' travelling running rapid fire programs in Turkey, Ireland, the Netherlands and the west coast of the United States. Now I've returned to Addis Ababa. It's great to be back in Ethiopia, looking out at a countryside that feels like the place I'm supposed to be; a neighbourhood that's a little different than other parts of the world.

*Wonderful. And I know you have extensive experience managing large-scale projects. You've reached more than a million people in over 70 countries. Recently, you facilitated training sessions across Africa, engaging with more than 10,000 leaders, elders, inter-religious councils, women, youths, and marginalised groups as part of the EU-funded Prevention of Electoral Violence initiative. But many of our conversations, Steadman, touch on today's worldwide challenges.*

*For example, by the end of 2024, an estimated 123 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to conflict, persecution, human-rights violations, and climate disasters. Perhaps we can discuss the far-reaching implications of these challenges. They raise important questions about leadership, what's required of us, and whether a good society and good leadership can truly be said to exist if we're not spending efforts on better understanding our worldwide neighbours?*

That's a heavy reality. And I think I live with the gravity of these things. We find the levity in the midst of all of it as well, but I really do see so much need for good leadership. We can unpack what that means at this time in history... You know, there's a quotation I borrow from a very old piece of literature: 'I believe that we're here for such a time as this, and we have to step forward and seize our moment; do what we can with what we have.' It doesn't have to be a lot but taking the little things that we can and contributing them exactly where we are.

*Thank you, Steadman. And maybe you could tell us a little about where you are, where you've been and where you're heading...*

That journey started in North America. I come from the south, which gives me a little bit of an accent and hopefully some hospitality and other traits! I started my career in Greensboro, North Carolina, when I encountered the Center for Creative Leadership. Quite early on, I went on sabbatical to Africa, Eastern Africa, Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya – and just fell in love! I saw a piece of the world that I wanted to understand better and learn from. I also had a benefactor that pressured me a bit to make Ethiopia home. He really wanted leadership development for this nation, so I found myself in a country that has its complexities...

Ethiopia has 88 ethnicities and languages. It's a federalism, but it's pulled apart because of that ethnicity. It's an ethnic federalism that almost feels like different countries in different corners. You can go to Somali region and feel like you're in Somaliland or Somalia... You can go to the southern nations and feel like you're closer to Kenya or Sudan. And the realities of daily life look different in each of these places... It's the second largest country in the continent. It takes about four days to travel across the nation in any direction by truck or car. But Addis is a bit of an island... It's unique in that it's been the capital of the African Union, the hub for the United Nations and the diplomatic core. And so you find a really large expat community here.

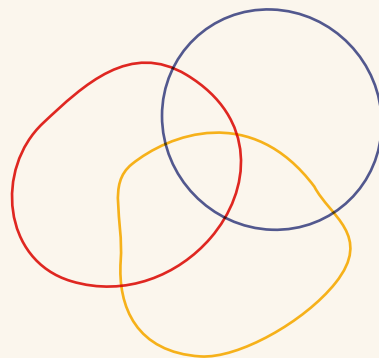
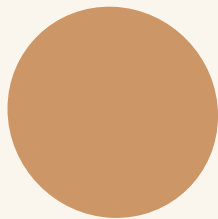
*And when you talk about complexities, what was required of you to settle there, do the work you do and build the teams you built?*

I think the things that allowed me to thrive are genuine curiosity, this learning disposition that we talk about so much. I really am curious! I want to know what it is that drives my neighbours: the way they think, the ideals and hopes they have... So rather than coming with a preloaded, prescriptive set of theories or things to teach, I think we're really engaging in dialogue and we've been doing that for almost 20 years. luminaries. They planted the seed of looking beyond... Beyond my title, income and material nature to something deeper and more profound.

*You started in 2005?*

Right. And maybe that complexity in the backdrop is wired a little around the nation's independence. When people think of Africa, they often think of colonial presence; British, Belgian and Portuguese influences. But Ethiopia remained independent – aside from a little flare up with an Italian presence during World War II. They were quickly pushed out, but that independence has driven a lot of unique ways of being and doing here.

In any case, over a 20-year span, I've learned to listen more carefully, slow my pace, ask questions and be patient. I'm wired to want to see results quickly but I'm now seeing the fruit of things we started working on 10, 20 years ago. So it really is about patience in that space – and that's complex by itself.



*That makes me wonder about leadership in Africa... Forgive my shorthand, but – bringing a value system from the Global North into Ethiopia – to what extent does that feel helpful and sometimes jarring?*

The helpful side of it is being the outsider. As consultants, I think we all experience the outside-in perspective: being able to ask questions and see things from a different perspective. But going back 20 years, I think I was super cautious; preloaded with concerns of bringing a Global North perspective, jumping to conclusions too quickly, holding a Hippocratic Oath of just doing no harm. I really was prewired to tiptoe through conversations. Over time, I've been freed up to be a bit more authentically myself and to recognise that I have a lot more in common than I ever imagined two decades ago.

One of the things this journey has taught me is that, as humans, we all have so much in common. Here in Africa, a lot of things we want for our world are already present: community; a collective perspective, an 'other mindedness' that we strive for and try to get outside of from our individualistic perspectives in the west or Global North. And you see that just naturally happening in the neighbourhood. For example, my neighbours were concerned to know how we were doing when wife came back today. They're involved in our lives much differently than other places in the world. And that's a security for me.

*I often think of you as a citizen of the world, Steadman, and how that seems to permeate your way of living?*

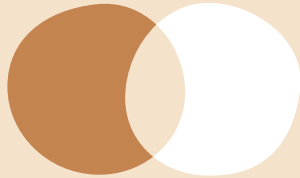
I want to come at that with a great deal of humility. I was reflecting... My wife recently moved out of being an educator, so this is the first season that we've not been glued to the academic calendar. That meant she was able to travel with me, and it was the first time she got the rhythm of what it felt like to be really present in these different places.

I have friendships in most of these locations. I try to be where I am as if I was going to be there for the rest of my life. That was a lesson I learned in university in England. Now when I'm travelling, I try to be in a place in such a way that I'm connecting with the community. I go to a local church. I fellowship and make connections and find restaurants at a different pace than as a visitor. I really do want to try to be there.

*Other things that we hear about, in all parts of the world, are brutalities, injustices, poverty, polarisation... Very different to what you're speaking about. And I was reading a book on morality by rabbi, philosopher and author Jonathan Sacks recently. One line said, "You change the world by changing people, and you change people by engaging with them; recognising that they too are people with values and ideals of their own." Now, "changing people" didn't resonate with me, so I needed to find something to go alongside it. And I've just started reading a book by Marilyn Robinson about a post WorldWar II interracial couple. It's called Jack. There's a line in there that makes my skin tingle: "But once in a lifetime, you look at a stranger and you see a soul." I love the tenderness in that and the sentiments of both of their reflections. Now, I was happy to hear you use the word humility earlier... There's a place for a different language wherever we are, isn't there?*

Yes. And I think, as you listen to people talk, whether it's in English or in other languages, you find an ease with vocabulary that perhaps we've lost in the Global North and in the West. I'm going to build on those quotations and also credit a friend of ours, Chuck Palus. Chuck and I were talking about sense making – going back to a book that he had fingerprints on with 'Bill Drath: Leadership as Meaning Making in a Community of Practice.'

## *Making Common Sense: Leadership As Meaning-Making in a Community of Practice...*



Right. And Chuck was reflecting. He said, “Steadman, I think what we’ve been doing through leadership beyond boundaries, in our most recent chapter of our work, is soul making.” And that really resonated. What I realise is that we have to have done some substantial soul making ourselves before we can have an impact in the soul-making work of another. So my journey has been one of soul making. And I think when I said I fell in love with Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya, I mean that trip woke something up in me that I didn’t turn back off.

*We all have realisations as we get older; we all think, “Oh, that’s insightful.” Even, “that’s a moment of genius. I really think I’ve got something there”. But as you say that journey doesn’t stop. After all these years working in so many countries, what are you realising as if for the first time?*

That this journey from self to other is really the journey. I realise that there’s a prewired disposition in the human to protect and care for ourselves. It’s healthy, but when I look around, particularly in this space that we call leadership, I see so many people who’ve been parked in self focus. And what I recognise is that it’s this journey from “What’s in it for me? Am I safe? Do I have my needs met?” to genuinely seeing and caring for the other.

That’s such a powerful, simple thing for me, at every level of leadership, from working with 15 or 16 year-olds to working with prime ministers. It’s this journey, this shift of thinking between ‘what’s my perspective?’ and ‘what’s in this for me?’ towards the other; that self to other. We call it ‘the Me to We flip.’ It’s a really powerful piece that I think is needed everywhere particularly right now as I look at our moment in history.

*And what's required of an individual to be thinking about differently to make that flip of Me to We? It continues to evolve. We think we've got the idea of "we" then find there's a lot of "me" in there. Tell me more about that...*

We play with this a lot; our conversations inside this little organisation called Lead Beyond talk a lot about 'the generous we. Unfortunately, the first people we see in life are most like ourselves. We have an easy comfort with them. We speak the same language, we do the same things, we spend our time in the same places. And it's easy for us to see another person who's somewhat in the mirror and reflects a lot of our perspectives, hopes, dreams, aspirations. The 'generous we' moves beyond people like us to someone who's quite different again, spanning across genders and perspectives and political views.

The polarised world wants us to only hear the folk that reflect our ideals and our thinking in the echo chamber. But to be able to stretch and engage in conversation across this gap, hold human relationships and value what another person says and thinks, whether you agree with it or not, is the big step. But it's little steps that get us there, and we have to be willing to get beyond ourselves and ask the question: who's most different in this room? And what can I learn from them?

*Lovely. And it's so easy to diminish others, isn't it? There's such a false sense of security in diminishing somebody that's not like you. And I wonder here about the place of poverty and social struggle as a context in all of this because I'm imagining that many of the places you've worked in are poverty stricken: there's inadequate access to shelter, money, education, good health, political stability. How does that affect how you come to work and what you experience in the people that you're working with?*

Lots of layers here, so bear with me, Elaine. The first thing I thought about was my recent trip to the west coast of the USA. I was there working with World Vision and Reed Global a new organisation to me, but they've been around for about 35 years. Anyway, we were in the city of Seattle, Washington and I was shocked at the homelessness: the number of people sleeping on the streets, the drug use, the kinds of poverty that were staring me in the face in a country that I think of as more developed. So I did come back to Addis, and it woke me up.

I walked just out of my neighbourhood and I passed a woman who was begging. Now, I walk with a bit of tunnel vision because if I walk to work, I'm going to pass perhaps 50 or 100 people begging – which I did that day. But that first woman caught my attention, and I started thinking about how numb I can become to the realities here when I've been living in it for so long, and how shocked and awake I was going to Seattle and seeing that afresh.

Early on, I learned from anthropologists that poverty is a culture, not a financial metric. And that helped me understand a lot of things.

Access to all kinds of help can be there, but poverty cultures often pull down a person that's starting to get a little further along. There's a proverb that says the nail that stands up gets hammered down... So what you see in a poverty culture is a young woman who's starting to take her education and public health seriously, is striving for new intentions, is entrepreneurial... The family, by which I mean the people you'd expect to love her the most and want the best for her, can quickly pull her back down into what they believe to be her place, rather than letting her learn, grow and change.

## *Heart-rending*

So it takes all kinds of rule breaking to break poverty cycles. But understanding that culture helps unlock all kinds of human potential by giving them a different set of rules. Usually, working with youth to say, 'Hey, you can do things differently than the people you grew up with! It can be okay; you've got shelter, you've got safe spaces.' But we can become quickly jaded, and it's good to wake up to those realities wherever we are as we travel this world. So, coming back, I want to be more awake this season and less numb to the hard realities all around us.

*And being in these situations, Steadman – whether in Seattle or Addis Ababa; wherever – how you hold yourself and your attention and your resilience at a neighbourhood level, an individual level, or at a country level – what you've been working towards can be swept away, can't it? How, as individuals who are there supporting people, do you deal with that? How do you rebound back?*

It's a good time to have this conversation! If you asked me the same thing in January last year, you might have gotten a long, quiet pause; a distant stare off into the distance... I hit real burnout for the first time late in 2024 as I had a lot of disappointments at the close of the year. Some stemmed from what I call country hurt: a sense that a lot of things were being swept away despite thinking we'd achieved things, having worked with so many government leaders – and in the context of Africa, where the saying is, "It's our time to eat" – people made amazing promises. They said all the right things. Then you see them take power and all of a sudden, right-hand turns that look so familiar – they're just painful to watch.

And, you know, we talk about this: when you have power, don't leverage it for your own people, for your own household, for your own group. And yet, amazingly, time and time again, I've seen all kinds of harm, like real harm done when people get power... But as I say, burnout hit in late 2024. I've worked through that, but that was not an easy thing to step from burnout back into a place where I could be a contributor... I really did need to take some time to process it and I had a lot of questions. On top of that, our U.S. government closed USAID, this soft power tool that gave us access to the means to do a lot of good. That was gone and our business model was in question. We lost 80% of our business. That all came after the burnout.

*That's a lot to cope with. You've often spoken, Steadman, about bringing people together. And, in a recent podcast, Mark Leishman spoke about the power of convening people... I was wondering, in this context, where there are disappointments, and things happening at country and world levels, what works to help support individuals so that people don't get lost and leave the work they love?*

I think something I learned from you and from your colleagues, Elaine, is about the power of networking and genuine relationships. So I've watched as this moment in history has pulled so many people apart. And I've seen who's stayed connected and the way in which that's been a healthy mechanism for them. It's easy to draw into isolation, but what I see working is when people connect and keep those network connections stronger during times of need.

Global Leadership Associates has introduced me to lots of wonderful people. During burnout, I found myself reaching out to great coaches and having conversations that I wouldn't otherwise have had. When I'm at my healthiest and best, I want to be the one who's connecting those relational dots, reaching out to people that I feel are vulnerable; asking how they're doing. I think the power of facilitators is building bridges to different people who may be in weaker spaces to bring them together so that they actually have a common ground. That presence, peace and calm perspective allows people to have a conversation that they wouldn't be able to have otherwise.

*So when we're working at our best, we're convening relationships and facilitating dialogue. Do you think it's fashionable in leadership circles to speak this way about convening, connecting and supporting? I sometimes see a tendency to hunker down, to attempt to drive through. What can we learn from your experience and from some communities in Africa where there are such incredible challenges? What can we take and apply in leadership in the Global North that would be attractive for people to pay attention to?*

We've noticed less hunger for learning and leadership development than there was in the late 90s and in the first 10 years of the millennium. It seemed like almost an expectation that people were going to continue this developmental journey. They were going to find ways to better understand themselves and others so they could have a better impact. It's amazing to see how the appetite for development among senior leaders has planed off to a certain degree. So I feel that.

Now, I don't know if I'm reading it correctly, but I will say what is the flip side... When you go to a community outside of urban, modern Africa, a place where modernity hasn't had quite the same impact, the appetite for development is amazingly potent...Like it's in your fate! People will ask you, "Please just even share a model with me. Help me

understand something about myself. How does one become a more effective and better leader? How can I help my community?" Those, appetites represent the majority of the world. So it's easy to think about the modernised, urbanised world and say, "Oh, that's the vast majority."

I think there're probably 7 billion of us that are very much hungry and ready and desiring development. And there might be, I don't know, a billion of us that have said, 'Oh, no; I've arrived, I'm fine.' I think we probably need to mix with our global neighbours a little more to understand what it is that we need to wake up to in terms of opportunity. People want good things for their neighbourhoods, communities and backdrops. And we can lean into that.

*That's lovely. In our last podcast, Leng Lim, was talking about how, instead of saying good morning – it was “Hello, big family!” I thought that turn of attention and language was beautiful, so inclusive. I wonder whether part of the backdrop we're talking about is that we feel there's a finishing line... I've attained this and it's enough, which the world is telling us it's not.*

It was our colleague in California, Carol Dweck, that introduced me to that idea. People either see themselves as always going on an endless journey, or they see themselves as having arrived. And you can kind of go into someone's office and feel the vibe as to whether this is a person on a journey or someone celebrating arrival. You see pictures of them shaking hands with all the greats, you see their wonderful certificates, and you get the sense that they really don't want to be challenged, or learn, grow or change much further. They've arrived, they're safe, they're smart, they're powerful.

Then you meet people who are constantly interested in what it is that will come out of the next conversation. And I do think we just need to lean towards those people. And that's probably what's kept me here... Why am I still here 20 years on? It's because I find people genuinely hungry and interested in this learning process – that's what keeps me going.

*Does that link to your thoughts about the youth in our communities? Because since I've known you, you've highlighted the significance of youth engagement in bringing about change. And I wonder: do you see this as a universally applicable catalyst for community transformation?*

Coming back to this idea that I can be numb because I've been swimming in a context, I've been seeing problems from the same perspective. One of the things I think my colleagues and I tuned into early on was the idea that a young person hasn't gotten jaded. They're not numb; they're actually quite awake and sensitive to the world around them. They're still seeing the problems in their neighbourhood with a relatively fresh perspective. They see the way it impacts them; their friendships and relationships. And that inclination to try to do something about it is something we can just turn up the volume on.

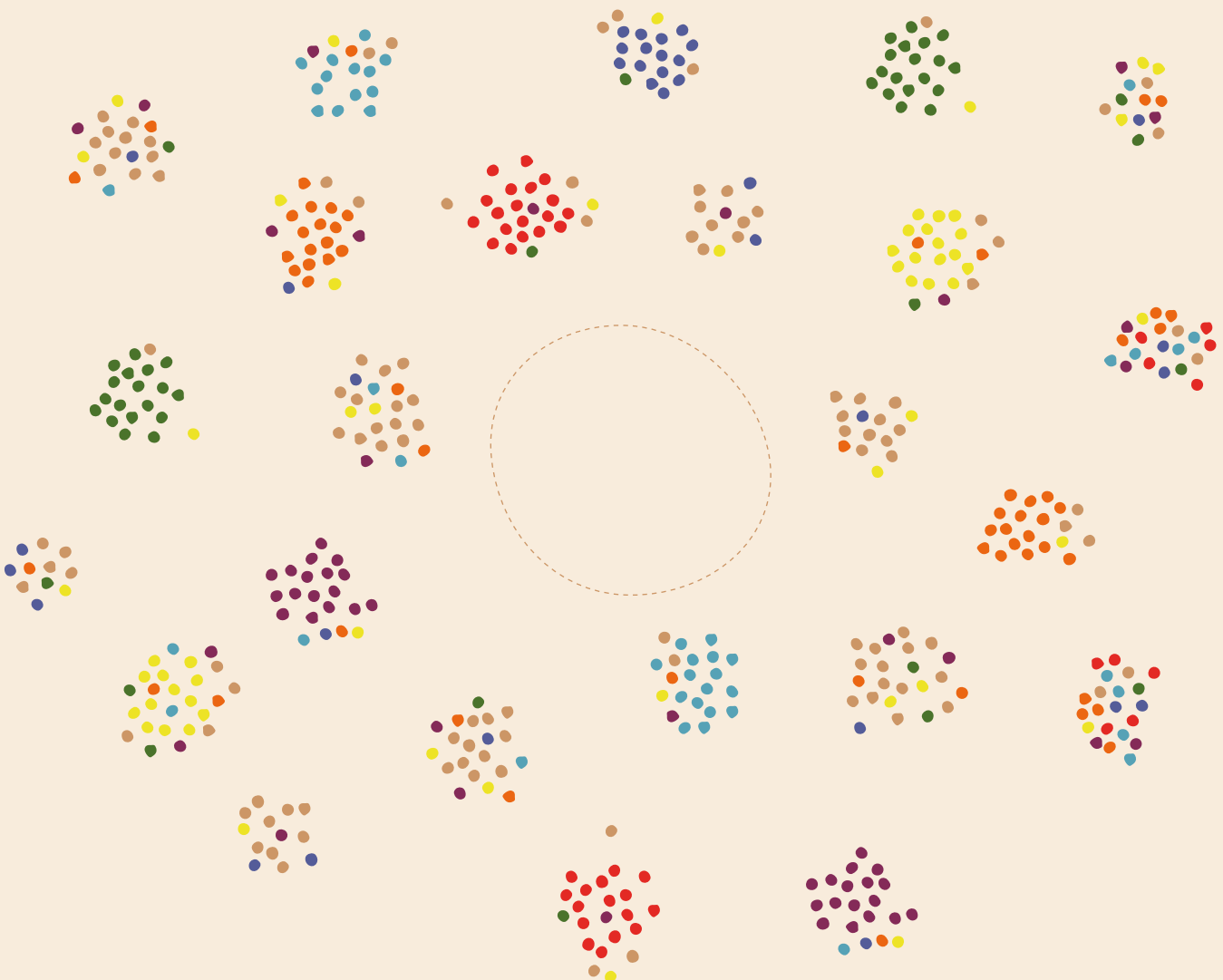
Working with young people – particularly young women; young men are quickly being brought into mental-model norms in the workplace and education... But oftentimes, these young women are a little more sheltered from some of those mental-model, heavy-set expectations. There may be expectations that they'll be married, that they're going to do household work – whatever those

things are. But bending those rules for them is often much easier than bending the rules for the young men in our communities. So we bring in women entrepreneurs, say, as community workers to showcase what their successes looks and sounds like, how they achieved what they've achieved – and then we get out of the way! It's like playing matchmaker and seeing all kinds of things take place. And as you can hear, Elaine, I get excited about this!

*It's lovely to hear! What can America, Europe, the Global North and so on learn about good leadership based on your experience in other parts of the world?*

Well, I do think that Africa has a lot of lessons to teach. We could talk about resilience, honour for the other, natural inclination to defer – particularly to elders – all kinds of lessons. A lot of things we see shifting in the Global North and West worry me. And I'm wondering how we get the attention of young people to have human connection, human experience and conversations when tools like their phones are constantly in their face... Where are the people investing in those kinds of relationships? Where are those social clubs? Like Big Brother and Big Sister opportunities? Scouting events? Things that get people into the world around them, engaged in conversation and dialogue with nothing technologically in between? What will the world look like in 10 or 20 years?

I'm starting to sound like an elder myself, but I'm concerned about it! What can we do to engage youth and their elders in genuine conversation?



*To me, we need to be raising dialogue about social issues and bringing them into the centre of leadership circles because they're just the kind of conversations that we have as friends, parents and neighbours. When leaders talk about these big, messy, troublesome matters, it feels to me that not only is there a chance it will open up their relationships at work, but actually how culture deals with the challenges.*

*And this dealing with challenges loops me back to 2024 and your experience of burnout. What do you think can help us break out of our echo chambers and find healthier, more generative paths through trouble; the hard stuff?*

Rest! I think we sometimes totally underestimate what our work takes from us and what genuine rest is – like a vacation... A week or two doesn't fill the tank.

In my own case, I went to Jordan to open an office and arrived there again in burnout. The week that USAID closed, everyone got their 'stop work' orders and I found myself in a friend's home. He'd opened his house up to me in the north of Jordan; a little town called Ajloun. It was cold and I was sitting by the fire reading good books, disconnected because all of the plans had come unraveled. And there was such great health to just being still, listening and rediscovering – through journaling – what it was that made me tick and then lean on family. I think my wife played a great role. It was amazing to hear the things that we were learning and processing, and doing that together, not just individually.



*And rest isn't necessarily a term that we hear leaders prioritising in their language. Is it?*

In fact, when I bring the language of rest into focus – talking about sabbatical – it feels very religious. People kind of cock their heads sideways... But sabbatical is a huge part of my journey. I mean, 10 years into an early career, taking six months off from work and actually seeing the world from a different perspective changed my life. Taking a sabbatical after a very heavy lifting period as a CEO where I was able to reconnect with the things that I really cared about in terms of development, was a huge reset. Most recently, a somewhat forced sabbatical and a lengthier rest to heal myself and understand and process what I was feeling. That's the only reason I'm back at work doing well. I wonder, actually, what would've happened if I'd just tried to push through that could have been so destructive. I wonder if I would've done more harm than good – even if the work I was trying to accomplish was worthwhile.

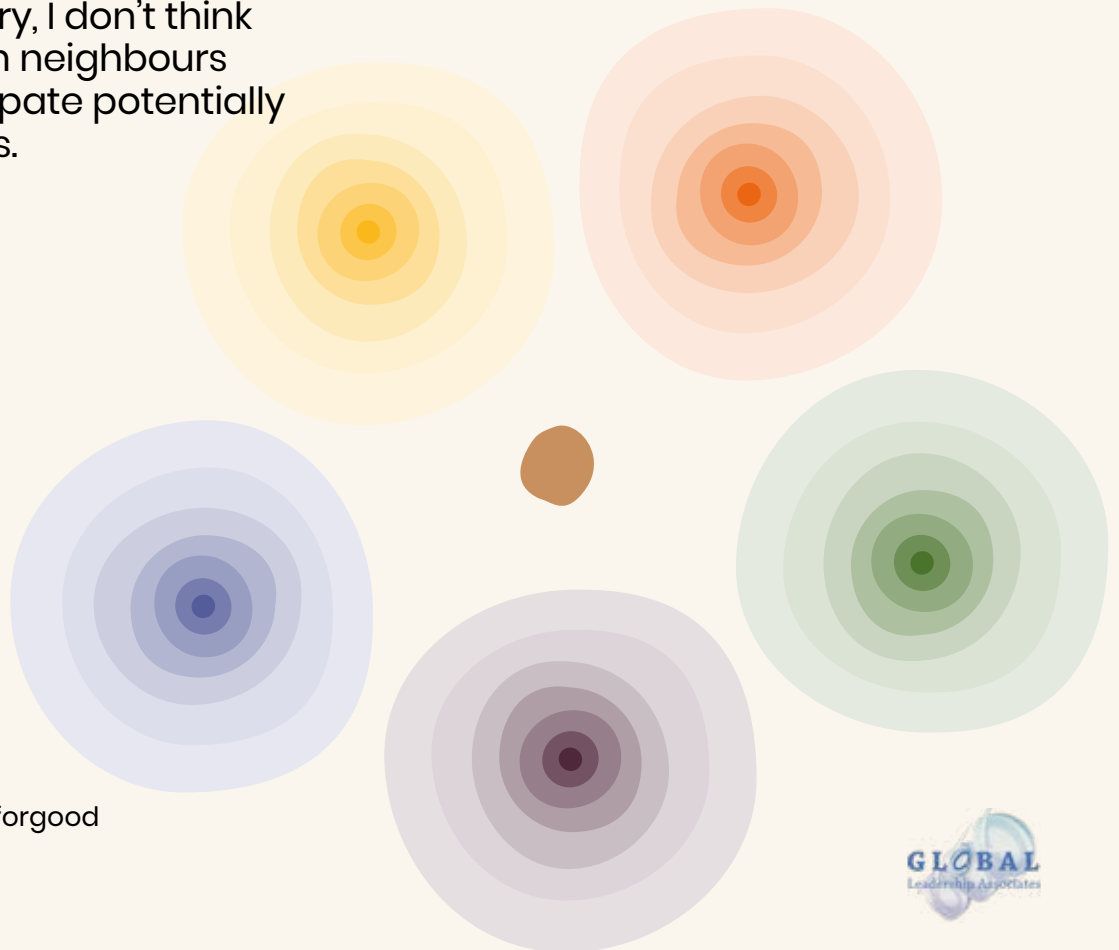
*And what do you think leaders need to bring into their framing of good work and leadership in order to see rest as not a weakness?*

A couple of themes that we've mentioned, but this idea that we're on a journey that doesn't end... For example, I don't look forward in the traditional sense to retirement. I see it as a lifelong journey of learning. But we do need to slow down and ask ourselves – from different perspectives and through different lenses – who we are and what we're processing. Then this theme about soul making is coupled with soul tending. I can't be in the process of soul making for others if I'm not tending to my own soul... And the big revelation for me last season was that I had lost the tending of my own soul and put way too much energy and effort outward – and not enough inward.

*Thank you, Steadman. And I wonder if we could just go to the question of Africa and what Africa's experiences of dealing with complex challenges can teach or help the rest of the world...*

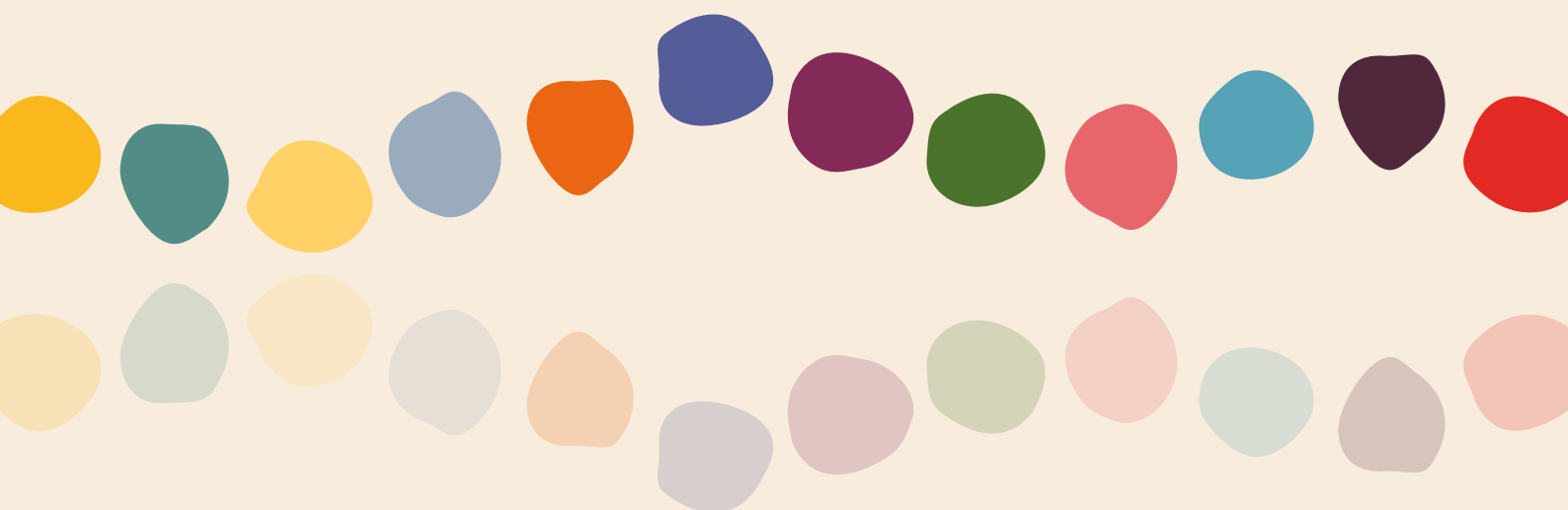
Yes, we talked about the power of being an outsider looking in. I feel much more of an outsider now to the United States than ever before. I go back to a country that genuinely feels like it's a bit in shock; not knowing quite who it is. I think one of the things that the continent of Africa has taught me is that people expect hard times ahead so they're not shocked when there's a drought. They're not caught off guard when there's a flood, they're not surprised when there's civil war. They have this longer memory which means they hold expectations lightly regarding good times. There can be moments of really great good and they'll lean into that and enjoy it while it lasts. There's a sense of ebb and flow; almost an expectation of hard times ahead of good times. As a young country, I don't think that my American neighbours and friends anticipate potentially devastating times.

I felt like we had arrived when I was a college graduate, in between wars in the world. There was this sense that the global map was fixed, that we could just relax and enjoy the prosperity we'd achieved. And I really did think that my children and grandchildren were going to inherit the same peaceful construct that I was enjoying at the time. I didn't foresee things like Ukraine and Russia, Gaza and Israel, North Sudan, South Sudan... All the things we see around us that are so disruptive – including in our backyard in the United States – the polarising inability for groups to hear each other. So Africa expects these waves and they seem a little more prepared for the next wave that might come.



*It's compelling, isn't it? For most of us, Covid played into that worldwide... Despite warnings for many years that something like it might happen, it was a totally unexpected thing. And interestingly, Leng Lim also spoke about the harmonising – as he sees it – of good and bad in China. Not that it's a perfect harmonising, there isn't a perfect sound, but there are always ups and downs that are playing out together. I think perhaps he was making the point that he often sees in the Global North, a desire for things to be good. We expect all good, and that doesn't prepare us for looking at historical ebbs and flows, but also what is currently present that we just don't want to look at. How do you work through that?*

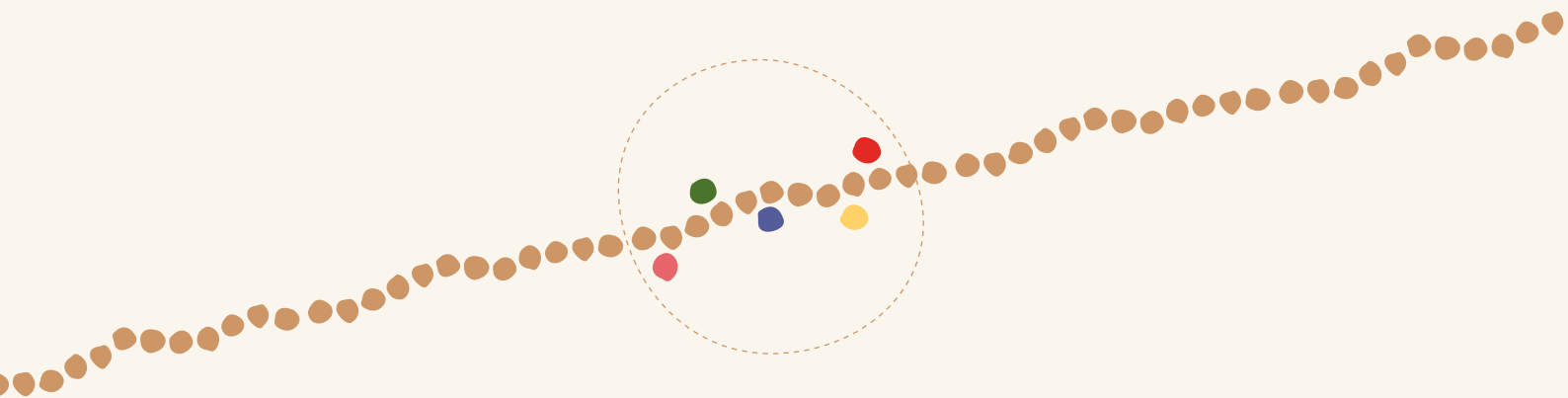
There's a blindness, it seems, because, again, if we just fix our attention with the blinders on, we don't have to recognise quite how hard things are to our left and right. That concerns me. All the problems that people with mental-model assumptions think of when they think Africa – refugees, poverty, lack of jobs. The United States feels to me like it's swimming in so many of them. So how do we catch ourselves and see ourselves more clearly; hold up the mirror at this time in history?



*I love that. How do we catch ourselves and see ourselves in the mirror of history? Because 'global' is a very overused word... I mean, I work in Global Leadership Associates; its very common in corporate marketing, isn't it? But I often wonder how global we really all are, despite working internationally... How much do we look at the historical movements? How much do we not want to look at our neighbourhoods? Maybe one of the things that all of us can ask ourselves is: What are we missing? What are we not looking at?*

I do think that part of the journey is having the courage to take a harder look.

Now, to be very candid, it's tempting not to make eye contact with a woman begging for her daily bread walking through my neighbourhood. There's almost a courage in having to face the fact that this is my neighbour, and to stare that down and think: what does it require of me? It's painful; not an easy thing. What does it look like to walk through the village? Because the village still exists all around the world.



*And that links to a question I have, Steadman – just before we hear some closing statements... It's just to stay for a moment with the world that you and I live in. Sometimes, I wonder about a current change in trends and language, wondering if we – in the Global North – are changing our relationship to global disadvantage and deprivation, and whether we're beginning to look away from what we don't want to see because of the problems closer to home – which is understandable. People are looking to their own lives. But what's it going to mean if we do turn away from us and how we are living life?*

I know it's not quite this simple, but I do listen to stories of burnout; the temptation towards isolation, the turning down of dialogue. It feels to me like some of these nations are in burnout. There's an opportunity there to rest, to take a pause and reflect. But there's not a pause and reflect! Instead, it's an isolation, a 'me-first mentality. 'The self' is being dominated in terms of the attention that it gets; 'the other' is being diminished and turned off or put away; moved across borders – controlled in many ways. It's amazing to think about what's happening that's literally pulling societies apart and not allowing for anything healthy to happen together. I hear you talk a lot about togetherness and I really do want for people to take a look at their neighbour and find the ability to love someone different than themselves. And I'm not seeing that happening the way that it needs to...So maybe more coaching, maybe more counsel, maybe more rest from all of the 'what's next?'... Because it seems to be making quite a global mess.

*And I wonder, Steadman, if you'd be so kind as to leave us with some observations or reflections. And I want to ask if you could include: how do we know what's good? Because I always have this impression that it's a bit like trying to pin jelly to the wall. The moment I think I know what's good, it drips away... More gets lost as I pin it...*

We talked about the Me to We flip; the move from self to other. And I'll just say that I have a tremendous bias for other mindedness... There's an altruism there; something that's requiring of the self almost getting backgrounded and diminished. And that's the thing I see that I would say is the good. So in the world around us, when people hold genuine other mindedness, they act differently and behave differently; they make choices differently. What I see in my own country in the United States right now is an inability towards other mindedness...

We mentioned the echo chamber earlier... It's just a shouting match over the things we believe to be true and best. There's no 'other minded' perspective. Taking that, I see us at a level where we're not going to be able to make progress. Slowing down and hearing one another takes effort. The good is about the other... And taking that into perspective; wanting good things for our neighbour – old principles of treating our neighbour as we would want to be treated ourselves. Those golden rules need to be brought back into focus. And we really have to ask the question, in a global world, who is our neighbour? Where does the neighbourhood end? I don't think it does. So those are definitely important.



*Thank you, Steadman. It's been wonderful speaking with you – thank you so much for the time you've devoted to this conversation.*

I appreciate, Elaine, the courage that you have. I think that all of those things that we were talking about regarding courageous introspection, holding the mirror up – that's what these conversations are really all about. And I think your podcast aims at taking a courageous look to ask the question: who are we? What are we capable of becoming? So don't let the jelly slip off the wall. There's a lot of good, and I think that you can hold on to it, and I think you're doing that through your work. So thank you.

*That means a lot.  
Thank you so much. Steadman.*