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VOLUME 9 | 2026

EDITOR’S NOTE

Who Designed the Design

Volume 8 ended with a person

Specifically, it ended with a question about persons. Who sits inside the governance architecture?

Who reads the system before it breaks? Who holds the long view under short-term pressure and makes the call at 06h00 when the system is under pressure and the data is ambiguous?

We named that person the Weaver. And we argued — carefully, with evidence — that the institutions that outperform are not the ones with better frameworks.

They are the ones with people inside them who were deliberately developed to hold precision and wisdom and behavioural intelligence together as a daily practice.

That argument was about the person.

Volume 9 is about the standard.

Standards are strange things.

They begin as descriptions. Someone observes an outcome that works and writes down what produced it.

That writing becomes a guideline. The guideline becomes a framework. The framework becomes a requirement. Eventually, the requirement becomes invisible — absorbed so completely into institutional expectation that nobody remembers asking whether it was right.

Most institutions never ask who wrote the standard.

But that question matters. Because every standard carries

a hidden story. Somebody decided which outcomes were worth measuring. Somebody decided which failures would be penalised and which would be overlooked. Somebody decided what the right answer looked like — and built the scoring system accordingly.

For much of the post-independence era, African institutions have been measured against standards they did not design. It is worth being precise about what this actually means in practice. International standard-setting bodies do increasingly include practitioners of African descent. But a seat at the table is not the same as authorship of the framework. When the architects of a standard — however well-intentioned — have spent their careers in contexts that are structurally different from the institutions they are measuring, the standard will carry those



What if Africa defined institutional excellence for itself?



SPOTLIGHT THE BAOBAB

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EDITOR'S NOTE



blind spots regardless of the backgrounds of those who helped write it. The informal economy, the communal governance tradition, the compressed institutional timeline, the specific texture of African political economy – these are not footnotes to be accommodated.

They are the operating conditions that determine whether a governance standard actually works. A framework that does not emerge from those conditions will systematically misread the institutions it claims to assess.

And Africa does not have a compliance crisis.

It has a trust deficit.

This leads directly to Volume 9's question:

Not by rejecting global frameworks. Here, it is worth naming something that Lorato Kwelagobe's response implicitly acknowledges. The King Reports – the governance frameworks she references in their evolution from King IV to King V – are themselves South African in origin. They were crafted on this continent, from this continent's institutional experience, and have earned international standing through demonstrated rigour. The King Reports are not imported standards. They are African exports. That is precisely the argument Volume 9 is building toward: the standard-setting capability exists here. The Pula Code, the governance framework taking shape in Botswana, is not an act of rejection of other

standards. It is an act of authorship. Another example of the continent choosing to write, not just adopt.

That distinction is Volume 9's thesis in miniature.

There is a profound difference between an institution that adopts a standard because it was told to and an institution that authors a standard because it understood what excellence actually requires. The former produces compliance. The latter produces trust.

“ *Trust is not a communications outcome. It is a governance outcome.* ”

Volume 9 anchors in a conversation with Lorato Kwelagobe. Her framing is deceptively simple: the strongest brands are not built through messaging. They are built through behaviour. Every institution makes implicit promises about what it stands for, how it will behave, and what it will protect. The question her interview presses is the same one institutions everywhere must eventually face: does your governance reality earn the promise you are making?

The cultural tradition anchoring this volume is the baobab. Not as metaphor borrowed for effect – but as a design philosophy that African communities have been studying for millennia. The baobab does not grow tall. It grows wide. It stores water through droughts. It hollows as it matures – not through decay, but through the slow fusion of

multiple stems growing together over centuries, creating a vast interior that shelters community long after any individual stem has been forgotten. The baobab is, by design, intergenerational.

Volume 8's Zulu basketry asked: how do we distribute load so the structure holds under pressure? Volume 9's baobab asks: how do we build something that holds for people who are not yet here? That is the question of the continental standard.

The arc of this series has been building toward this moment. Volumes 6 and 7 argued that the right architecture produces the right outcomes. Volume 8 argued that the right architecture requires the right people inside it. Volume 9 argues that the right people need a standard worth holding.

Not a borrowed standard. An authored one.

The question is no longer whether African institutions can meet global standards. Some already have – quietly, without making it the story.

Volume 9 makes it the story.

Enjoy Volume 9

Katlego Majola

FOUNDER: KM NALA ADVISORY



THE CONTINENTAL STANDARD

THE CONTINENTAL STANDARD

From Compliance to Trust

Every volume of Rooted has introduced an archetype. Not as a personality type, but as a design outcome – the kind of leader or institution a particular governance architecture tends to produce.

Volume 9 introduces a different kind of archetype. Not a leader or an institution, but a standard. The Continental Standard is not a score, a ranking, or a certification. It is the condition an institution reaches when its governance reality consistently earns the trust its identity claims.

Most governance frameworks measure inputs and processes. Did the board meet? Were the policies followed? Was the audit clean? The Continental Standard measures something harder: does the institution's behaviour, over time, produce the belief of those it serves?

An institution can comply with every governance requirement and still not be trusted. It can be rated, certified, and audited – and still be disbelieved. The gap between compliance and trust is where institutional excellence actually lives.

Lorato Kwelagobe's answer to this volume's second question captures the distinction precisely: 'An institution may invest heavily in branding, but if its governance practices are weak, public trust will eventually erode. Conversely, strong governance strengthens brand equity because

stakeholders gain confidence in the institution's integrity, reliability, and long-term sustainability.' That is not a marketing insight. It is a governance theorem. And it applies to every institution on the continent – from a national park to a central bank, from a tourism board to a municipality.



The Three Dimensions of the Continental Standard

The Continental Standard emerges from three conditions that governance frameworks rarely measure simultaneously. Individually, each is necessary. Together, they are sufficient.

Why Trust, Not Compliance

The governance reform literature overwhelmingly focuses on compliance. More frameworks. Better oversight. Stronger audit mechanisms. These are necessary. They are not sufficient.

STANDARD AUTHORSHIP	GOVERNANCE VISIBILITY	INTERGENERATIONAL REACH
Does the institution operate by standards it authored, adapted for its own context, or simply adopted from elsewhere? Authorship is not autonomy. It is accountability for the design.	Can stakeholders read the institution's character from its behaviour – not just from its communications? Governance is visible when what the institution does in the room matches what it says outside it.	Do the institution's decisions account for stakeholders who are not yet in the room? The continental standard requires governing for people not yet born, not just people currently present.



FEATURE

THE GOVERNANCE OF TRUST A Conversation with Lorato Kwelagobe

Lorato Kwelagobe is a founder, board member and Chairperson of the Marketing Committee at the Botswana Tourism Organisation. She brings 17 years of cross-sector experience in brand transformation, governance, and strategic communications across telecommunications, oil, agriculture, and financial services. She is currently completing the Oxford Global Business programme at Said Business School.

This conversation is drawn from written responses provided in May 2026. Views expressed are Lorato Kwelagobe's professional opinions in her personal capacity. Editorial perspectives in green boxes are contributed by KM Nala Advisory.

Section 1 — Setting terms

Q1 Setting your own terms

The Rooted series makes an important point: African governance is often measured against frameworks designed elsewhere. From your experience positioning Botswana as a destination, what does it actually mean to set your own terms — and how do you know when you have succeeded?

Setting your own terms means building systems and standards that are rooted in your own context while remaining open to global best practices. Globally, we are seeing a transition from what some describe as King IV to King V governance principles. That evolution is welcome and provides a strong foundation, particularly because these frameworks have delivered meaningful results. However, Botswana also has an opportunity to design approaches that reflect its unique business environment, culture, and development priorities. This is why I am encouraged by the work underway on the Pula Code. It represents an effort to create a governance framework that is not simply adopted from elsewhere, but one that is informed by Botswana's realities and aspirations. Success, in my view, is not measured by how closely we mirror international models, but by whether our institutions become more effective, trusted, accountable, and capable of delivering sustainable outcomes for citizens and investors alike. When a framework strengthens confidence, improves decision-making, and produces tangible results while remaining true to local needs and values, that is when you know you have succeeded.



“Success is not measured by how closely we mirror international models, but by whether our institutions become more effective, trusted, accountable, and capable of delivering sustainable outcomes.”

— Lorato Kwelagobe



FEATURE

Q2 Where governance and brand meet

Brand governance and institutional governance are often treated as separate disciplines. In your work, where do they converge – and what does that convergence reveal about how African institutions should think about their public identity?

A brand is not simply a logo, a marketing campaign, or a visual identity. It is the thread that connects every aspect of an institution – its people, processes, culture, customer experience, leadership, and governance practices. Every touchpoint contributes to how stakeholders perceive an organisation. This is where brand governance and institutional governance converge. Governance defines how decisions are made, how accountability is maintained, and how an organisation upholds its responsibilities. Brand governance ensures that the values and promises an institution communicates are consistently reflected across all its actions. When these two areas are aligned, the brand becomes a credible reflection of the institution's character rather than simply a communication exercise. For African institutions, this convergence reveals an important lesson: public identity should not be built primarily through messaging, but through behaviour. Reputation is earned through transparency, accountability, ethical leadership, and consistent delivery. An institution may invest heavily in branding, but if its governance practices are weak, public trust will eventually erode. For African institutions, the opportunity is to view governance not merely as a compliance requirement but as a strategic asset. When governance and brand are aligned, institutions build identities that are authentic, resilient, and trusted. Ultimately, the strongest brands are those whose reputation is supported by the quality of their governance and whose governance is visible through every stakeholder experience.

“Reputation is earned through transparency, accountability, ethical leadership, and consistent delivery. Public identity should not be built primarily through messaging, but through behaviour.”

— Lorato Kwelagobe



“Sustainability is no longer just a marketing message. We live it and continuously prove it.”

— Lorato Kwelagobe

Q3 When governance must earn the brand promise

Botswana has positioned itself as a premium sustainable tourism destination. That is simultaneously a governance claim and a brand promise. How do you ensure the governance reality earns the brand promise – and what happens when it doesn't?

Botswana's positioning as a premium sustainable tourism destination is both a brand promise and a governance commitment. The brand can only be credible if the governance systems behind it consistently support and protect what is being promised. Ensuring that the governance reality earns the brand promise starts with aligning policy, regulation, and operational practices with the country's sustainability objectives. Conservation policies, responsible land-use management, community participation,

environmental protection, and ethical tourism standards must not exist only on paper; they must be actively implemented, monitored, and enforced. From a destination branding perspective, governance acts as the foundation of the brand. Marketing may attract visitors, but governance determines whether the experience matches expectations. When governance and brand promise are aligned, the country strengthens its reputation, attracts high-value visitors, encourages investment, and builds long-term resilience within the tourism sector. However, when governance fails to uphold the brand promise, the consequences can be significant. The gap between perception and reality quickly becomes visible in today's connected world. For Botswana, sustainability is no longer just a marketing message. We live it and continuously prove it. Our visitors, local communities, conservation partners, and investors all experience the same reality that our brand communicates.



FEATURE

Section 2 – Governance as competitive advantage

Q4 When governance becomes a competitive advantage

You have worked across telecommunications, oil, agriculture, and tourism – each with different governance cultures. Where have you seen governance function as a genuine competitive advantage, and what distinguished those environments from the ones where it was merely compliance?

I have seen governance become a true competitive advantage when it is embedded in decision-making rather than treated as a compliance exercise. In telecommunications, where technology and regulation evolve rapidly, strong governance improved risk management, accelerated decision-making, strengthened accountability, and built stakeholder trust. What set these organisations apart was leadership commitment, clear accountability, and a culture where governance informed strategic decisions rather than simply meeting regulatory requirements.

Q5 Reclaiming the narrative

African institutions often struggle to control the narrative about their own performance – external indices, rating agencies, and international media shape the story. How do you reclaim that narrative, and is that a marketing problem, a governance problem, or both?

ROOTED EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE · Reclaiming the Narrative

This question sits at the heart of the continental standard argument. The answer is clear: reclaiming the narrative is a governance problem. Marketing is the last step, not the first.

African institutions that attempt to reclaim their narrative through communications before they have closed the gap between promise and experience will find that the new narrative is disbelieved as readily as the old one. Credibility cannot be communicated into existence. It can only be earned.

Botswana's tourism story offers the most instructive example. Botswana did not reclaim its destination narrative by investing in better marketing. It invested in conservation governance, community authority, and consistent standard-keeping over three decades. When the international media describes Botswana as Africa's premier conservation destination, they are describing a governance outcome, not a marketing achievement.

The sequence matters: governance first, behaviour next, visibility third, narrative last. Institutions that reverse this sequence spend enormous resources on communications and produce diminishing returns on trust. Reclaiming the narrative, for an African institution, ultimately means doing the governance work until the behaviour speaks for itself.

Q6 Gender equity as a governance discipline

You have led the Womanomics Africa initiative. What does gender equity look like as a governance discipline – not a programme, not a target, but an embedded governance standard?

Gender equity as a governance discipline means embedding diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity into leadership pipelines, succession planning, board composition, and decision-making processes. It is not about meeting quotas; it is about ensuring that qualified women have equitable access to leadership and economic opportunities.

Through the Womanomics Africa initiative, our focus has been empowering the girl child and creating pathways for women to participate meaningfully in leadership. Botswana is a positive example, with increased appointments of women to ministerial, CEO, and board positions. Going forward, I believe strong skills development, leadership readiness, and supportive gender equity legislation will be critical to

expanding women's economic participation across Africa.

Section 3 – The Weaver and the continental standard

The questions in this section address the Weaver archetype from Volume 8, the naming of a continental institution setting the standard, and what it would take for Botswana to become the benchmark. Editorial perspectives are contributed by KM Nala Advisory.

Q7 The most difficult integration
Volume 8 introduced the Weaver – the leader who integrates analytical precision, African governance wisdom, and behavioural intelligence. In the careers of practitioners at the governance-brand intersection, what is the most difficult integration?

ROOTED EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE · The Hardest Integration

Across the practitioners the Rooted series has worked with, the most consistently difficult integration is between African governance wisdom and analytical precision – not because they conflict, but because the institutions that reward one typically distrust the other.

Analytical precision is rewarded by international partners, rating agencies, audit firms, and governance certification bodies. It produces documents. It responds to external scrutiny. Institutions that demonstrate it receive recognition.

African governance wisdom is relational, long-term, and contextual. It reads the room before the data does. It holds accountability in ways that survive political cycles. It governs for the community not yet in the room. But it is rarely what external frameworks measure – and rarely what international recognition rewards.

The Weaver is the practitioner who has refused to choose. Who has learned to demonstrate analytical precision to the audiences that require it, while drawing on African governance



FEATURE

wisdom for the decisions that actually matter. The institutions that achieve the continental standard are the ones whose governance architecture rewards both integrations simultaneously – rather than forcing practitioners to choose.

Q8 One institution worth studying

If you were to name one institution on the African continent – public or private – that is currently setting a standard others should study and learn from, which would it be and why?

ROOTED EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE · The Auditor-General of South Africa

The institution Rooted nominates is not one most people would choose: the Auditor-General of South Africa. Not because it is perfect. Because of what it protects – and what that protection requires.

Most institutions on this continent create value. The AGSA does something structurally different: it protects trust itself. Its constitutional mandate is to audit public accounts independently and report without political interference. It does not generate insight. It maintains the condition under which all other governance institutions can be believed.

When the AGSA releases an audit finding that is damaging to a powerful institution, it is exercising the most difficult governance discipline on the continent: institutional courage under structural pressure. The findings do not disappear because they are inconvenient. The reports are published. Irregular expenditure is named. The accountability mechanism holds.

The lesson is not that the AGSA is invulnerable. It is that the institution was designed to be worth defending. An institution worth studying is one where the answer to this question is unambiguous: what would the continent lose if this institution stopped

telling the truth? In this case, the answer is: everything.

Q9 Botswana as the benchmark

What would it take for Botswana to be the benchmark in tourism and governance – not just a good example, but the institution others come to study? And what is still in the way?

ROOTED EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE · From Practitioner to Teacher

Botswana's governance reputation was built on what it did. The benchmark requires something harder: being studied for what it teaches others to do. That shift – from practitioner to teacher – is itself a governance transition.

Three things are required. First, the Pula Code must deliver. The authorship impulse is a governance signal, but signals must be followed by outcomes. The benchmark is not announced. It is demonstrated through results that others cannot replicate without

understanding the design behind them.

Second, CBNRM must deepen from revenue sharing to genuine decision authority. The gap between communities that receive revenue from tourism and communities that hold genuine authority over the governance decisions affecting them is where Botswana's most important governance work remains.

Third, Botswana must be willing to document and share what it has learned – its failures alongside its successes. The benchmark institution does not wait to be studied.

It creates the conditions in which other institutions can learn from its architecture, not just admire its outcomes. The obstacle is not capability. It is the assumption that doing the work well is sufficient. For the benchmark, doing the work well is the prerequisite. Teaching others to do it is the standard.



CASE STUDY



BOTSWANA TOURISM:

When a Brand Becomes a Governance Standard

Most countries market tourism. Botswana governs it.

That distinction is not rhetorical. It is structural. Botswana’s ‘High Value, Low Volume’ strategy – the policy that has defined its tourism identity for three decades – is not primarily a marketing strategy. It is a governance choice. It trades volume for integrity. It accepts fewer visitors in exchange for a higher quality of experience, a more rigorous conservation standard, and a more durable relationship between tourism and the communities and ecosystems that make it possible.

The governance decision came first. The brand followed.

Botswana’s tourism success does not come from attracting the most visitors. It comes from governing the visitor experience better than its competitors. That is a continental standard – and one other African nations are beginning to study.

The Okavango: A Governance Achievement

The Okavango Delta – UNESCO’s 1,000th World Heritage Site (inscribed 2014), covering a permanent swamp of 600,000 hectares and up to 1.2 million hectares of seasonally flooded grassland – is not primarily a natural phenomenon. It is a governance achievement. Known as ‘the river that never finds the

sea,’ its waters empty into the Kalahari Desert rather than an ocean. It sustains 130 mammal species, 482 bird species, and over 1,000 plant species, many of them rare or endangered.

Its preservation reflects over three decades of consistent policy choices: the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act of 1992, which enforces stringent anti-poaching rules and governs land-use across the Delta; strict zoning regulations that place approximately 7% of the Delta under the strict protection of the Moremi Game Reserve and designate a further 65% as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) where land use is tightly controlled; and, most significantly, the community-based natural resource management framework that gives local communities formal governance authority over wildlife revenues and conservation decisions.

Today, eco-tourism generates between 11% and 13% of Botswana’s GDP, providing upwards of 25,000 direct jobs and returning significant revenues directly into rural community trusts. That economic outcome is not a marketing achievement. It is the consequence of a governance architecture that treats community sovereignty over natural resources as a precondition for ecological integrity.

CBNRM: When Communities Hold Governance Authority

The Community-Based Natural Resource Management framework is particularly instructive for the continental standard conversation. It is not a participation

programme. It is a governance architecture built on a foundational principle: local communities will actively protect natural resources when they hold genuine governance authority over them – not consultation rights, but decision rights.

Under the CBNRM framework, villages form registered Community Trusts – legal entities that include the Khwai Development Trust and the Okavango Kopano Mokoro Community Trust, among others. These trusts hold exclusive, long-term lease rights over specific Wildlife Management Areas granted by government. They negotiate directly with premium safari operators, enforce land-use agreements, and receive concession fees that fund local infrastructure, healthcare, and education. The CBNRM Act of 2025, which commenced operations on 12 January 2026, formally codified and strengthened this architecture – establishing a dedicated government department to register community trusts, monitor funds, and ensure transparent, equitable operations.

The community is not a beneficiary of the standard. The community is the standard. The framework is not without its tensions. The 2014 moratorium on commercial hunting – while designed to protect declining species – stripped away a significant income stream from several community trusts, forcing a transition to photographic tourism. Human-wildlife conflict, as elephant and predator populations grow, continues to test the limits of community conservation



CASE STUDY

tolerance. These challenges are real. But the governance lesson they offer is equally clear: the system that acknowledged community authority in the first place is also the system capable of navigating the tensions that authority produces.

The Pula Code: Corporate Governance Authorship

Volume 9's most significant institutional development in the Botswana governance context is the Pula Code — Botswana's national code of corporate governance, designed by the Botswana Accountancy Oversight Authority to reflect the country's own institutional realities and development priorities rather than simply mapping international models onto a different context.

The name itself is significant. Pula — rain, and the Botswana currency — carries the cultural weight of life, abundance, and the acknowledgement that what sustains the community must be cared for collectively. A governance code named for rain in a semi-arid country is making

a philosophical claim: that governance, like water, is a shared resource whose stewardship determines collective survival.

The Pula Code represents the movement from adopted standard to authored standard. Not the rejection of global corporate governance principles — but their deliberate reauthorship in a form that carries local legitimacy and contextual fit.

Whether the code delivers on that ambition will depend on implementation. But the authorship impulse itself is the governance signal worth studying.

What the Tourism Model Teaches Governance Practitioners

- Governance decisions create the conditions for brand value — not the reverse. Botswana did not build a premium brand and then design governance to match it. It made governance choices that, over decades, created

the conditions in which a premium brand became possible.

- Community governance is not a social programme. When communities hold genuine governance authority — not consultation rights, but decision rights — the quality of stewardship improves because the stakes are real. The CBNRM framework is proof.
- Consistency over time is the hardest governance discipline. Botswana's High Value, Low Volume strategy has been tested repeatedly by short-term revenue pressures. The institutions that have held the standard when it was inconvenient are the ones that have made the brand credible to the world.
- Trust is a compounding asset. Every year that Botswana's governance delivers on its brand promise adds to a stock of institutional trust that makes each subsequent promise more credible. That compounding dynamic is not available to institutions that treat governance as compliance.



SPOTLIGHT

SPOTLIGHT
THE BAOBAB

THE BAOBAB: The Architecture of Endurance

Before it was a symbol, it was a system.

The baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) does not look like a tree that was designed to endure. It is grotesque by conventional arboreal standards: vast, bulbous, leafless for most of the year, its canopy sparse and seemingly disproportionate to its enormous trunk. Yet it is among the longest-lived organisms on earth – specimens have been dated at over two thousand years, and some authorities suggest they may live considerably longer.

The baobab's longevity is not accidental. It is architectural. Every structural feature that appears to be a flaw is, on examination, a design choice made for endurance over performance, for community over competition, and for intergenerational continuity over short-term optimisation.

The Trunk as Governance Architecture

The baobab does not grow tall. It grows wide.

Most trees compete for vertical advantage – racing to place their canopy above competitors and claim the sunlight. The baobab invests instead in horizontal expansion: a trunk that can reach fifteen metres in diameter, its fibrous parenchymal tissue holding moisture against the drought that is always coming. Unlike trees with a hollow woody core, the baobab stores water within its spongy, cellular tissue – a distributed, structural reserve that cannot be emptied by a single rupture. It sacrifices the competitive advantage of height for the survival advantage of reserve capacity.

In governance terms, this is the choice between performance and resilience. Institutions optimised for performance in favourable

conditions are often catastrophically fragile when conditions change. Institutions designed for endurance hold their function through conditions they cannot predict or control. The baobab's trunk is a governance philosophy made structural: distribute the reserve so widely that no single failure can drain it.

The Hollow as Community Design

As the baobab ages, many specimens develop a vast interior cavity. This is not heartwood decay in the conventional sense. It is the product of multiple stems growing together and fusing over centuries, their shared structure eventually enclosing a communal space within. The tree that was growing separately becomes, through long convergence, a shared container. Across African cultures from West Africa to the Kalahari, this interior has served as a gathering space for community deliberation, shelter, and storage.

This hollowing is not weakness. It is the institution maturing into its social function. The governance institution that achieves the continental standard does something analogous: it becomes a container for community capacity rather than a vessel for its own authority. The governance question the baobab asks is not: how large has this institution grown? It is: how much space has it made for others to grow within it?

Intergenerational by Design

The baobab's most important governance principle is the one most difficult to replicate: it is intergenerational by design. Every structural investment the tree makes – how wide to expand its trunk, how deeply to anchor its roots, how much moisture to store in its fibrous tissue – is calibrated not for the conditions of the current season but for the conditions of many seasons over many centuries.

Volume 11 of Rooted will address intergenerational stewardship directly. The baobab introduces the concept here: the continental standard is not a standard for

today's institutions serving today's stakeholders. It is a standard for institutions that intend to outlast the people who built them – that make decisions today with the communities of 2050 and 2075 already present in the governance calculation.

The baobab is pollinated by bats, which navigate by sound rather than sight. They act, in the language of Dr Apanisile's RPLA™ framework from Volume 8, at the pre-probabilistic layer – sensing structural reality before it becomes visible. The tree that endures for two thousand years is served by pollinators who act before events announce themselves. That is not coincidence. That is the ecology of endurance.

What the Baobab Offers

- Width over height – the governance institution that builds distributed reserve capacity, community trust, and structural resilience will outlast the one that optimises for performance in the current season.
- The hollow as maturity – an institution that has achieved the continental standard creates space for others within it. Authority matures into hosting. Multiple stems fuse into a shared community space.
- Intergenerational investment – governance decisions should carry the people not yet in the room. The continental standard requires designing for 2050, not just for 2026.
- Endurance through crisis – the baobab's moisture reserve is not a resource for comfortable conditions. It is distributed through fibrous tissue precisely for the drought. The institutions that hold the continental standard have built reserves – of trust, of diagnostic capacity, of community relationship – for the moments when the environment turns hostile.

“The baobab does not optimise for the conditions it currently enjoys. It designs for the drought that is always coming.”



THE CONTINENTAL STANDARD INDEX

From compliance measurement to trust diagnosis



The Bead & Blueprint has a single test: does the tool change how a practitioner thinks, or does it merely look elegant? The Continental Standard Index (CSI) is designed to be used at a

board meeting, in a governance review, or as the framework for a strategic planning session. It asks four questions that governance reporting consistently avoids.

“ *The system is not the score. The system is what the score is actually measuring.* ”
 — After the Kente tradition

The Kente Connection

Kente cloth — the woven tradition of the Akan and Ewe peoples of Ghana — is woven in strips. Each strip is produced separately, on a narrow-band loom, by a weaver whose skill is measured not by the single strip but by how the strips, when assembled, create a unified design. The final cloth has no meaning until the strips are joined. And the pattern that emerges from the joining is not

visible in any individual strip — it exists only in the relationship between them.

The CSI is built on this logic. Institutional excellence is not visible in any single governance dimension. It emerges from the relationship between four dimensions that most governance frameworks treat separately. The continental standard is the pattern that emerges when all four are

DIMENSION	WHAT IT ASKS	STRONG SIGNAL	WEAK SIGNAL
Standard Authorship	Did this institution design its governance standards to fit its own context — or adopt them unchanged from elsewhere?	The institution can explain why its standards are designed as they are, and what contextual logic they reflect.	The institution's governance documents are indistinguishable from template frameworks produced elsewhere.
Governance Visibility	Can stakeholders read the institution's character from its observable behaviour — not from its communications?	Stakeholder experience consistently matches stated values and commitments.	The gap between what the institution says and what stakeholders experience is regularly noted but rarely addressed.
Community Hosting	Does the institution create space for others to grow, contribute, and hold authority within it?	Community voices hold genuine decision rights, not only consultation rights.	Stakeholder 'engagement' is a communication exercise. Community input does not change outcomes.
Intergenerational Reach	Do the institution's decisions account for stakeholders who are not yet present?	Governance decisions explicitly model impact over 10–25 year horizons.	Governance decisions are optimised for the current financial year. Long-term consequences are noted but not weighted.



The CSI Evaluation Matrix

Practitioners can use the following matrix to assess their institution across four levels of development. The goal is to move from Level 1 (Reactive Compliance) toward Level 4 (The Continental Standard). Most institutions will be at different levels across different dimensions – that unevenness is itself a governance diagnostic.

DIMENSION	LEVEL 1: REACTIVE	LEVEL 2: INTENTIONAL	LEVEL 3: ADVANCED	LEVEL 4: CONTINENTAL STANDARD
Standard Authorship	Rules are copy-pasted templates. The team cannot explain the logic behind them.	Global templates are tweaked slightly to fit local legal requirements.	Standards are actively rewritten to align with the organisation's specific operational realities.	Frameworks are built from local cultural and contextual values, raising accountability beyond global baselines.
Governance Visibility	Values exist only on the website. Internal behaviour directly contradicts stated ethics.	Behaviour matches values only when strict audits or regulations force compliance.	Leadership and staff naturally exhibit organisational culture; deviations are caught and corrected.	The organisation's everyday behaviour is so distinct that it defines its market identity without marketing.
Community Hosting	Communities are ignored or viewed purely as public relations risks to be managed.	Public forums gather community input, but decisions are rarely changed by it.	Community members hold seats on advisory boards, giving them a formal voice.	Communities hold formal, legally binding decision rights and directly share in economic revenues.
Intergenerational Reach	Decisions are optimised entirely for the current financial year or immediate political cycle.	Planning looks 3–5 years ahead, focusing on institutional growth and market survival.	The organisation actively models and mitigates environmental and social impacts 10 years out.	Strategic decisions explicitly account for and protect the interests of stakeholders in 2050 and beyond.



THE AUTHORSHIP AXIOM

Contextual authorship is an elevation of accountability – not an exemption from it. Authoring a standard means designing a framework that is more rigorous and more enforceable because it leverages local social capital, cultural accountability, and community relationships that Western compliance checklists cannot see. If a contextual modification makes a rule easier to bypass, less transparent, or less accountable, it is not authorship. It is erosion.

Tool 1: The Standard Authorship Audit

Apply this to any governance framework currently in use by your institution:

- For each major governance requirement, ask: who wrote this, and for what institutional context? If your team cannot answer, the standard was adopted, not authored. Adoption is not failure – it is a baseline. Authorship is the goal.
- Identify the three governance requirements most frequently cited as burdensome or inappropriate to your context. For each, ask: what would the right standard look like if we designed it ourselves? That question is the beginning of authorship.
- Apply the Pula Code logic: what would it mean to name your

governance framework after something that carries cultural and contextual meaning for your institution? What values would that name commit you to? What accountability would it create?

stakeholder – or does it obscure it?

The Authorship Litmus Test

When evaluating whether a newly designed, context-specific standard is valid or dangerous, apply three filtering questions:

- The Transparency Test: does this authored standard make our decision-making process more visible to our weakest

- The Enforcement Test: if this standard is breached, is the mechanism for holding leaders accountable more direct and more effective than the standard it replaces – or is it diluted?

- The Universal Minimum: does this standard uphold baseline international human rights, financial integrity, and ecological safety, while introducing a superior local mechanism to achieve them? If the answer to any of these questions is no, the modification is erosion, not authorship.

Tool 2: The Trust Gap Diagnostic

Apply this conversation to any institutional leadership team:

- Ask five stakeholders – separately and without prior preparation – to describe what your institution stands for. Compare their answers to your institution's stated values. The gap between those answers is your trust gap.
- Identify the last three occasions when your institution made a

governance decision that was inconvenient or costly in the short term but necessary to maintain the long-term standard. If your team cannot name three, your governance culture is compliance-oriented, not trust-building.

budget and could only communicate its values through observable behaviour, what would stakeholders conclude? That conclusion is your actual brand. The gap between that conclusion and your aspiration is your governance investment target.

- Apply the Botswana Tourism test: if your institution had no marketing



• THINK • LISTEN • ACT

THINK



LISTEN



ACT



The Discipline of Institutional Trust

The Regenerative Institution has the right architecture. The Weaver Institution has the right architecture and the right people. The Continental Standard Institution has the right architecture, the right people, and the right standard – one it authored rather than merely adopted, and one that earns trust rather than merely demanding compliance.

THINK: Radical Frameworks

- Read Onora O'Neill's A Question of Trust – the foundational argument that trust is not about transparency; it requires intelligible, competent, and honest behaviour, consistently delivered. O'Neill's thesis directly challenges institutions that mistake information disclosure for accountability.
- Read Shoshana Zuboff's The Age of Surveillance Capitalism – on what happens when institutions optimise for their own data rather than the trust of those they serve.
- Read Botswana's CBNRM literature – the governance architecture of community-based natural resource management as a working model of distributed authority.
- The Authorship Question: ask your team – did we write our current operating standards, or simply receive them? What would we change if we authored them ourselves?
- The Reality Question: ask your team – what is the trust gap between our stated values and what our stakeholders actually experience? Where is it widest, and what governance change would most reduce it?
- The Mo Ibrahim Foundation African Governance Report – read it as a trust index, not a compliance ranking.
- The Botswana Tourism Organisation's annual sustainability reports – as governance documents, not marketing materials.
- The Oxford Saïd Business School programme on Global Business – for practitioners who want to engage global standards from a position of authorship rather than adoption.

LISTEN: Practitioner Voices

- The Good Governance Africa Podcast – practitioner voices on continental governance excellence in practice.

ACT: Strategic Interventions

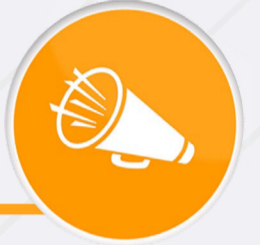
- Execute the Authorship Audit: identify the three governance requirements your institution finds most burdensome and design what the right standard would look like if you authored it for your exact operational context.
- Enforce the Authorship Guardrail: before implementing any authorship modification, apply the three-question Authorship Litmus Test. If the change makes a rule easier to bypass or less accountable, discard it. Authorship is elevation, not exemption.
- Run the Trust Gap Diagnostic: ask five core stakeholders separately what your institution stands for. The gap between their answers and your mission statement is your governance investment target.
- The Behaviour Test: apply the Botswana Tourism test. If you had no marketing budget and could only communicate through observable behaviour, what would stakeholders conclude today?
- The Inconvenience Pivot: identify one critical decision your institution must make in the next six months that is highly inconvenient in the short term but necessary for long-term integrity. Make it. Document it. Make it visible. This is the single most powerful trust-building action available to any institution.
- Table the CSI Score: run a full Continental Standard Index review using the Evaluation Matrix. Present the result to your board as a live trust diagnostic – not a routine compliance sign-off. The level spread across four dimensions is your governance investment map.

A note on the Continental Standard Index: most institutions will find, on first attempt, that they score strongly on Governance Visibility and poorly on Standard Authorship. This is not a failure. It is the exact structural baseline that Volumes 6 through 9 have been building toward. Authorship is the work of the next chapter.



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The Economics of Trust

What does it cost when governance bodies lose institutional trust — and what does it return when they earn it?

Volume 9 defined the continental standard and located it in trust rather than compliance. Volume 10 quantifies the argument. If trust is a governance outcome, what is its economic value? And if institutional trust erodes, what is the measurable cost – to the institution, to the communities it serves, to the economy it operates within?

Volume 10 anchors in voices from across the continent on the gap between global risk standards and African governance realities – and what it would take to close that gap on African terms.



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS



Got something to say? CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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- Essays, case studies, and practitioner reflections on: the economics of institutional trust
- What governance failure actually costs in rand, dollar, and shilling terms
- Institutions that rebuilt trust after losing it

Submission deadline: 20 JUNE 2026

info@kmnala.co.za

Length: 600–800 words | Include a 2-sentence bio

**We prioritise practitioners, continental voices,
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**FINAL NOTES +
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**“Leadership begins when we choose to act
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