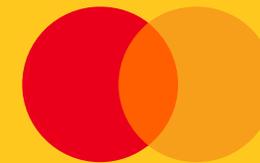


Decoloniality of Evidence

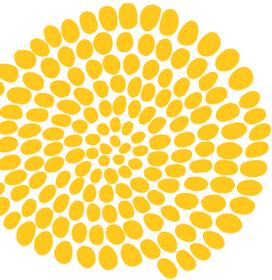
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Adeline Sibanda | September 2023



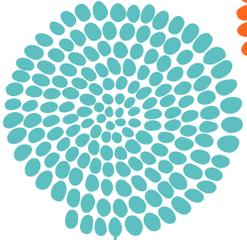
mastercard
foundation

Presentation

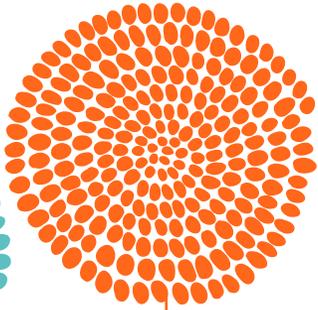
Overview



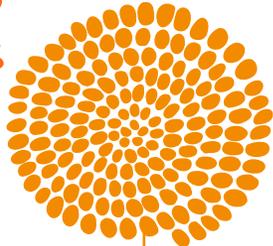
Questions arising from the theme



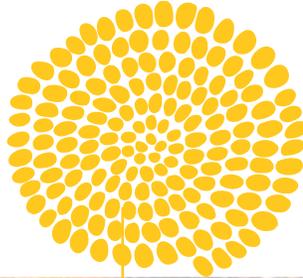
Colonialism



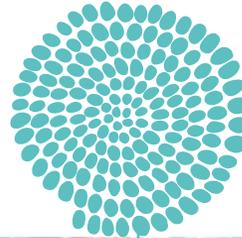
Decoloniality of evidence



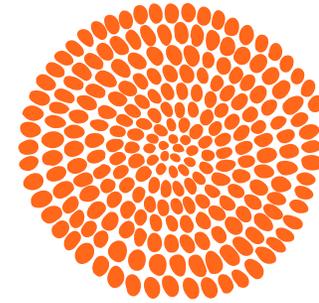
Valuing evidence differently



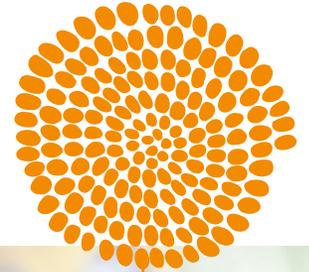
Equity and inclusion



Power, voice and agency



Ubuntu Philosophy



Future of decoloniality of evidence

Questions

from the conference theme

1

Are we really coming together?

2

Who is coming together?

3

Could we be missing some groups of people as we come together?

4

Whose knowledge and by whom?

5

Which types of knowledge do we value?

6

How is the knowledge base gathered?

7

Who gets to use the knowledge base?

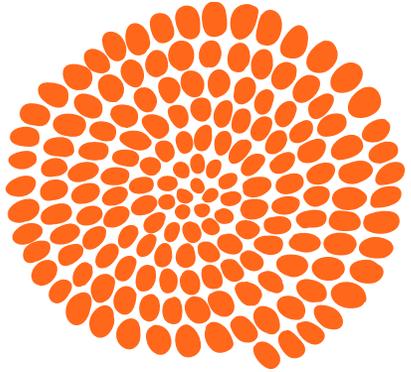
8

What power structures govern the evidence ecosystem?

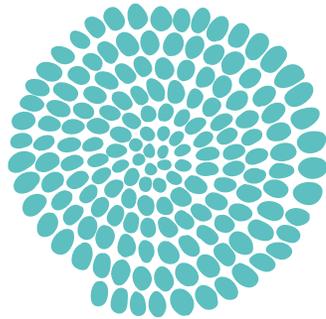
What do you see?



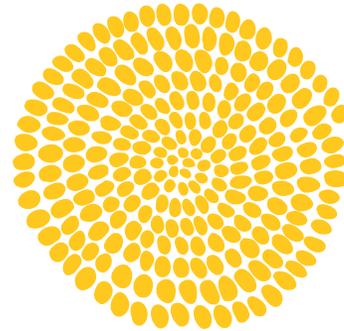
Why is our past important?



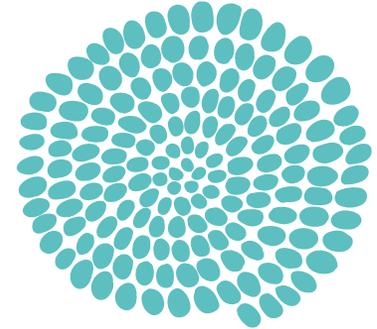
Our past has shaped **who we are today** and will shape **our future**.



There are many events, experiences and contexts that have **shaped our mindsets**



These include historical experiences such as colonialism have influenced to a great extent **what we see, what we value and our “truths”**.



The power asymmetries and inequalities in all facets of our lives are a direct result of our history and need to be interrogated.

Phases of colonisation

First phase was the colonisation of lands and physical spaces then the next phase was the colonisation of the mind through education and other disciplines.

ODORA-HOPPERS & RICHARDS 2011

Effects of colonialism?

Our mindsets are shaped by our colonial past. Power asymmetries continue, underpinned by coloniality.

Colonial power structures define the current systems e.g. financial systems, market systems, including the evidence ecosystem etc.

Our mindsets or our worldviews have been influenced by the institutions that have shaped us.

Reinforced in institutions such as education, our practice, business, work spaces, etc.

Looking down on practice of African culture and African values.

Challenging the power structures?

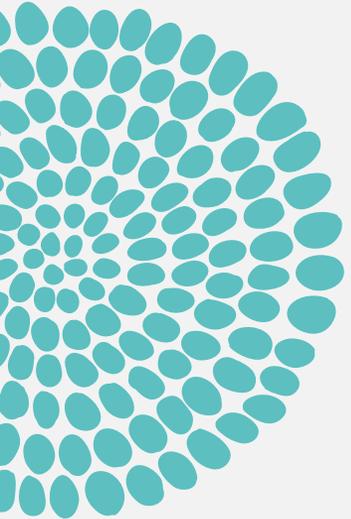


- The structures that define unequal power relations need to be challenged
- Challenge naturalized inequalities that are based on the assumptions that Western ideas, institutions and people have greater valuediscovering self
- Denigration and destruction of any practice of African culture has to be challenged
- The current knowledge/evidence production system needs to be challenged

Decoloniality

Decolonisation is the dismantling of the physical occupation and direct colonial administration; however, this did not give rise to a “post-colonial world”. African leaders today continue to manage and maintain the global system after replacing direct colonial rulers.

Decoloniality speaks to the deepening and widening of decolonisation movements in spaces that experienced the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism and underdevelopment. Decoloniality seen as epistemological and political movement and as a necessary “liberatory language”.



Decolonising the mind

In Africa, the colonization of the mind still persists through our education systems, how we undervalue African traditions, cultures and even ways of knowledge production.

NGUGI WA THIONG'O 1998

What is the problem?

Most evaluations (& research) in Africa today is rooted in dominant Western approaches. This presents two problems.

- 01.** Western evaluations (& research) methods and approaches, when used in Africa, may in fact lack validity, leading to low quality products, wrong conclusions, and bad development outcomes.
- 02.** Western evaluations (& research) approaches may encourage subjugation of African culture through neo-imperialism and the 'colonization of the mind.'

Frehiwot 2019

Decoloniality of evidence



Decolonising evidence production (research/evaluation/synthesis) must deal with the colonial systems that have shaped the Global South



It is about dealing with our education system, our mindsets, what we value as evidence



It is about restructuring and reconstruction of the power relations in the way evidence production has been influenced and constructed; interrogating the design, conduct and knowledge production.



It is about evidence producers recognising and employing Indigenous knowledge systems, Indigenous ways of being such as culture, language and indigenous ways of doing such as the values and traditions.

Decoloniality of evidence CONTINUED



There is need to be consciously aware of the paradigms that underpin the entire knowledge production and evidence synthesis processes



It is important to reflect on the inclusivity of world views



The ways of knowing and ways of perceiving reality of Africa are best articulated using relation paradigms or what Chilisa calls African Relation Paradigms



As knowledge producers and evidence synthesisers, Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, philosophies, should inform the realities that we seek to articulate

A central black circle labeled 'Evidence Ecosystem' is surrounded by five other circles of different colors: orange, yellow, orange, yellow, and teal. Each surrounding circle contains text describing a role in the ecosystem. The background is a faded image of people in traditional attire.

Evidence Ecosystem

Evidence Synthesizers
(systematic reviews
+)

Evidence Brokers

Evidence users
Policy makers &
other users

**Evidence evaluators/
innovators**

Evidence Producers
Primary research
evaluations

Valuing evidence differently

- ① Requires that we **shift the paradigm** we use in evidence production
- ② We need to reconsider what we value as **“credible” evidence sources**
- ③ There is need to question whether what we consider **“the golden standard”** does not discriminate against the people we purport to serve?
- ④ How do we ensure that we do not **subjugate African cultures** in our evidence production
- ⑤ Where do we place **Indigenous knowledge systems?**
- ⑥ Could we begin to place the African people, the culture and the **Indigenous knowledge systems at the centre?**



Equity and inclusion

- Equity and inclusion are pivotal to the work we do.
- The Agenda 2063 emphasises broad based inclusive participatory, and systems approaches
- Systemic barriers in the evidence system need to be addressed – includes attitudes, policies, practices, traditions, language and values that discriminate certain groups from participating
- Barriers so entrenched that they maybe “unintended” or “unseen” by those who do not experience them
- Reflexivity becomes very important, interrogate own biases/ privileges
- Where are the voices of the communities, the young men and women, differently abled groups etc
- How do we ensure that we do not leave any group behind?

Localisation



Is localisation being used as a metaphor or a buzz word that is aimed at window dressing?

Localisation is about shifting power, resources and ownership to local people, putting them at the centre



What is preventing the localization agenda within the evidence system?

Persisting power imbalances between the Global North and South



What needs to be done to actualize this?

A shift in mindsets!

Power, voice and agency

Knowledge production is a power issue, and the power to influence theory and practice is particularly important

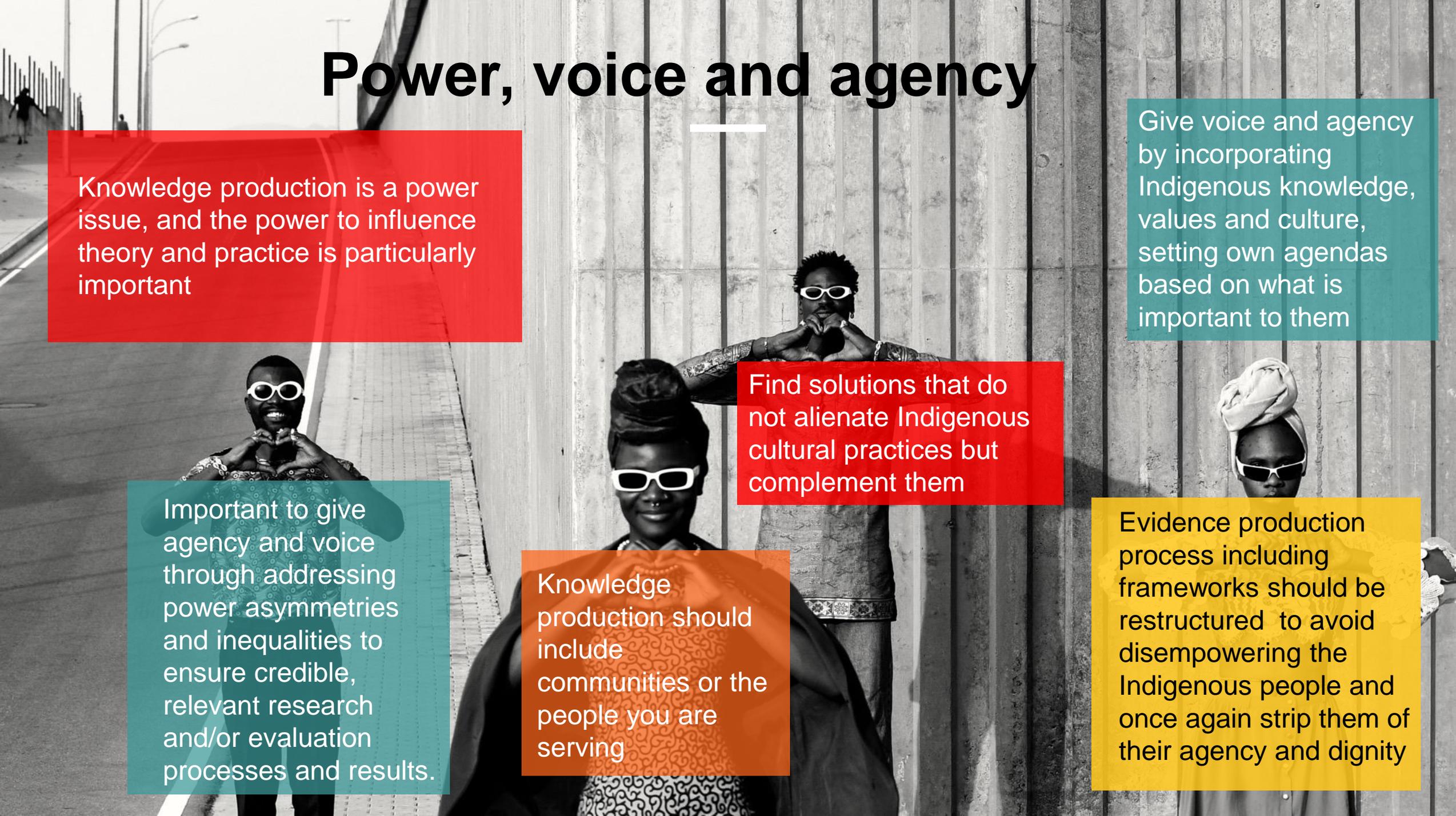
Give voice and agency by incorporating Indigenous knowledge, values and culture, setting own agendas based on what is important to them

Important to give agency and voice through addressing power asymmetries and inequalities to ensure credible, relevant research and/or evaluation processes and results.

Find solutions that do not alienate Indigenous cultural practices but complement them

Knowledge production should include communities or the people you are serving

Evidence production process including frameworks should be restructured to avoid disempowering the Indigenous people and once again strip them of their agency and dignity



Ubuntu philosophy

I am what I am because of who we all are.

BASED ON A SET OF EXPLICIT VALUES THAT INCLUDES

Caring

Reciprocity

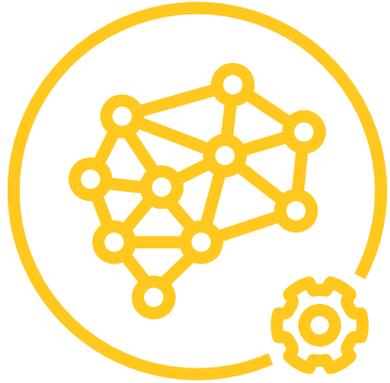
Cooperation

Compassion

Empathy

For human beings to develop, flourish and reach their full potential, their relationships need to promote the wellbeing of others and the environment

African Relational Paradigm



- Chilisa et al. (2015), propose an African relational paradigm, rooted in an African world view
- Rooted in African philosophical assumptions of relational ontology, axiology, epistemology, and methodology
- The paradigm incorporates Ubuntu values
- Articulates African practices of the spirit of collectivism, communalism, and cooperation
- Recognize the Indigenous peoples' interests, knowledge, and experiences: “religions, cultural traditions, norms, language, metaphors, Indigenous knowledge systems, community stories, legends, folklores”

Future of decoloniality of evidence

To truly speak of decoloniality of evidence, we should ensure the transparency, “unbiased”, accountability, inclusivity, practicality and applicability of the knowledge production processes.



Thank you.



mastercard
foundation