



CAPACITY TO DECOLONISE

BUILDING FUTURES LITERACY IN AFRICA

THE CAPACITY TO DECOLONISE: BUILDING FUTURES LITERACY IN AFRICA

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Contents

Executive Summary	5
1 Introduction	6
1.1 Background.....	6
1.2 Objectives	7
1.3 Structure	7
1.4 Methodology	8
2 Why Decolonisation and What Aspirations and Efforts Pursued by Africans to Pioneer Decolonisation	8
2.1 The different layers of coloniality and post-colonialism.....	9
2.1.1 Acknowledging different forms of coloniality	9
2.1.2 Embracing Decoloniality	10
2.2 Decolonisation – from the Afrocentric frame to a shared frame.....	12
2.3 Captive imagination(s).....	17
3 Decolonising Anticipation	18
3.1 Defining decolonisation as the (re)framing of our anticipatory systems.....	19
3.2 Reframing (de)colonisation – a geographical and epistemological decentralisation	20

3.2.1	Colonising the future: some framing considerations	20
3.2.2	Exploring a renewed ‘old’ question.....	21
3.2.3	Dimensioning the colonisation process.....	22
3.2.4	Decolonising the future: thoughts on challenges and issues.....	24
3.2.5	Decolonising anticipatory systems: the need/case for Futures Literacy.....	25
3.3	<i>Futures Literacy as capability</i>	26
4	Capability building	30
4.1.	<i>The bio- and geopolitics of knowledge production</i>	30
4.2.	<i>From objects of study to actors of learning: participatory action research</i>	33
4.2.1.	Dealing with exogeneity: participatory research contexts from contact spaces to transformative spaces.....	34
4.2.2.	A manifesto of participatory action research: learning-by-doing for learning-by-being	35
4.2.3	<i>Resurgent agency: the power of participatory futures</i>	39
4.3.	<i>Design principles of endogenous capacity-building</i>	41
5	On the Research Approach.....	44
5.1	<i>Collective intelligence knowledge creation and codesign</i>	44
5.1.1.	Two perspectives on collective intelligence.....	44
5.1.2.	The co-design quandary.....	46
5.2	<i>Action research</i>	47
5.2.1.	In a nutshell: from definition to operation	47
5.2.2.	Anticipatory action research.....	49
5.3	<i>Colonisation of the future, action research and collective intelligence: the conundrum</i>	50
6	Summary – Conclusion to the Chapter	51
	References.....	53

A Short Glossary

This glossary aims at sharing some working definitions related to some of the key words and fundamental concepts that we are using to frame the project. The objective is to formulate these definitions in a rather simple, clear and easy-to-share language. We do not consider these definitions better or more valid than other definitions, but they form the basis on which we wish to design collectively the project, using a shared language.

Anticipation

Involves those activities whereby living organisms integrate temporality into their functioning. All living organisms anticipate (Rosen), humans manifest many different anticipatory systems and processes (ASP). Conscious human anticipation occurs in symbiosis with our ability to imagine. The fact that humans can imagine the future for different reasons, using different methods, in different circumstances enlarges the range of ASP. In particular, imagining the future for different reasons gives rise to two distinct kinds of anticipation: anticipation for future and anticipation for emergence.

Anticipation for Future (AfF)

‘The ‘being’ of AfF is the future as a goal – a planned/desired future that people bet on. [...] [Path-dependent,] AfF is the overwhelmingly prevalent form that the future takes when people use it in their everyday life.’¹

Anticipation for Emergence (AfE)

‘The future of AfE is one that is not a goal or target meant to structure the making of preparatory and planning bets. The later-than-now imagined in AfE is a disposable construct, a throwaway non-goal that is imagined without being constrained by probability or desirability.’²

Anticipatory Assumptions (AA)

Anticipatory assumptions define the frame and models that are used to invent the content of the fictions that are conscious human anticipation. AA are ‘fundamental descriptive and analytical building blocks for understanding FL and ‘using-the-future’.’³ Someone who is futures illiterate is unaware of the existence and implications on their AA and the role of AA for sensing and sense-making in the present.

Anticipatory Systems and Processes (ASP)

Systems and processes that enable humans to imagine the future. Anticipatory systems and processes (ASP) are what give humans the capacity to invent and create, sense and make-sense of imaginary futures.

Capability

A feature, faculty or know-how that can be developed or improved. Capabilities are largely social in nature created and enabled by context, including collaborative systems/processes that can be deployed and through which individual competences can be applied and exploited.

¹ Miller, R. (2018). *Transforming the Future: Anticipation in the 21st Century*, London, Routledge. (p. 20.)

² *Ibid.* (p. 20.)

³ *Ibid.*, (p. 24.)



Capacity	The extent to which an entity, person, group, or organisation can contain, receive or produce. This is potential that can be fulfilled (or not) through a combination of capability and environmental conditions.
Colonising the future	Looked at from the perspective of ASP a person or group that wants to see their current image of the future imposed upon the future.
Decolonising	The process of deconstructing, delinking from dominant structures, worldviews, anticipatory systems, and ways of thinking, knowing, doing and being, and reconstituting them such that no particular or single one predominates or is centred. The process is informed by postcolonial and decolonial literature, respectively on decolonisation and decoloniality.
Future	The time that is later-than-now. Hence, the future does not exist in the present. What exists in the present is anticipation expressed, in conscious human thought, as ‘images’/descriptions of imaginary futures.
Futures	When used in plural, the term indicates the plurality of ‘images’/descriptions of the later than now. Note this does not cover the diversity of temporal points-of-view and frames that intermediate our relationships/perceptions of time in all of its dimensions.
Futures literacy (FL)	FL is a multi-dimensional capability that begins with an awareness of the imaginary nature of the future, thereby opening up a learning frontier as people explore: a) the diversity of reasons and sources for imagining the future; and b) the role of imagined futures for what we see and do, perception and choice, fears and hopes.
Futures Literacy Laboratories - Novelty (FLL-N)	FLLs are one technique, among others, for detecting and working with people’s anticipatory assumptions. The design principles informing the actual implementation of FLL draw on theories of collective intelligence and ASP.
Public good	A resource that cannot be depleted by the use of it, and whose use or payment by someone does not affect its use by someone else. That is, a resource that is both non-rivalrous and non-excludable.

The Capacity to Decolonise: Building Futures Literacy in Africa

Executive Summary

While the essence of decolonisation themes and works has mostly stayed the same for decades – that is, dismantling colonial structures and systems that support them – the dimension of these works has often evolved from one generation of researchers and writers to another, in response to the evolution in the dimensions and forms or domains and meanings of coloniality itself.

A lot of decolonisation literature over decades has drawn attention to the destruction or foreclosure of alternatives that are often the key features of coloniality in all its forms. It has often hinted at stolen futures in which individuals, groups, peoples and nations are denied of other trajectories and what could have been in the absence of coloniality. However, not much has been explored in the form of how coloniality impacts our capacity to anticipate, our anticipatory assumptions, our capacity to use the future and our imaginations – that is the images of the future can, will and do hold.

This is one of the key areas this research has tried to explore. It has attempted to delve into and to make explicit the new areas of coloniality that has been brought about by our existing and emerging social, economic and geopolitical structures; and our new tools and technologies, ways of learning and of creating/reproducing knowledge etc.

Of course, in exploring the various forms of coloniality of the present era, the history and workings of coloniality itself and the implications it has had and is still having on the current realities of nations and peoples cannot be washed away. It must be highlighted and used to draw or understand the link from the past to the present and to newer forms of coloniality. This research report does just that. In addition to underscoring the new forms of coloniality, the report provides a unique contribution to the decolonisation corpus by exploring the intersections between decoloniality, anticipation, use of the future, futures literacy as a capability and how a more profound understanding of anticipatory systems through futures literacy-building contributes to our capacity to decolonise.

In doing this, the early sections of the research expanded the scope of the concept of colonisation from the geographical and the epistemological to the colonisation of the future, from space to time and space. The expanded scope also addresses how this colonisation of the future is perpetuated through various knowledge creation and reproduction traditions, and exclusive epistemic associations that control or filter who is able or allowed to have access. In these analyses the paper attempts to provide the fodder and alternative mental frames for discourses and actions that can lead to shattering the coloniality of power in knowledge creation.

Having focused on this need to shatter epistemic coloniality in the early sections and to move to a more embracing or broader frame of knowledge creation, the later sections focused on the theme of endogenous knowledge production and participatory action research through the democratisation of knowledge production/distribution, the co-design of knowledge production mediums or activities, and the co-creation of knowledge in an inclusive, collective intelligence manner.

In sum, the research advances decolonisation from the point of view of liberation; but not liberation as a physical (or verbal) call to arms against a perceived or real dominant 'Other', but liberation from imposed ways of sensing, seeing, understanding, doing and of using the future that foreclose alternatives and bend reality through a single or few dominant frames and narratives, to a pluriversalist approach that embraces new ways of thinking, of understanding, doing, sensing and of sense-making that is open to emergence and resilience.

Keywords Futures Literacy; Decoloniality; Resurgence; Anticipatory systems; Participatory action research; Collective intelligence

Paper type Project research paper

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The evolution of development studies has alerted both the international community and practitioners and researchers in Africa of the relevance of detecting resistance and hybridity in past and new forms of self- and community-expression in African communities. This quest is fuelled by a desire to decolonise not only the content of development projects, but also their

methodological and teleological implications. The main critique lies in the predetermination of future paths Africa should take implied in and by such projects.

A series of local actors working together with UNESCO and other local civil society have made use of the plasticity of futures to renew the design and implementation of projects intended to sustain and nurture well-being in Africa. The present paper seeks to review 20th and 21st century literature that highlights the connection between futures and human agency through the adoption of a capability-based approach to well-being and resurgence in Africa. Futures Literacy as a capability is depicted as a way to contribute to decolonising futures in Africa and worldwide.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the literature review are thus:

1. To review the thinking on decoloniality, anticipatory systems and the evolution of futures-oriented modes of knowledge creation in Africa and worldwide in order to situate Futures Literacy (FL) as a relevant capability within that context; and
2. To identify design principles for initiatives that cultivate FL as one way to contribute to decolonising thinking in African countries / communities, and beyond.

Through a desktop review of and synthesis of relevant literature, this research piece is intended to support the design of an action research project that seeks to build local capacity to initiate the processes of rethinking why and how people imagine the future, and explore how this contributes to empowerment and agency.

1.3 Structure

This literature review is organised into five sections. The first section presents the context, objectives and methodology that underlie the following paper. In the second section, we outline the evolution of literature around and efforts to define, initiate and process decolonisation from structurally political and cultural perspectives to a systemic world matter that engages the stolen imagination of human beings. In the third section, we explore these findings in the context of anticipatory systems and processes that encourage us to decolonise the use of the future as a milestone in such a pursuit.

The groundwork laid in section four will provide the foundations for a capability-based approach to enhance agency in communities to imagine their own futures in context so as to

become more futures literate. And finally, in the last section, we apply research principles and techniques that embrace the decolonial desire for humbler, more participatory and context-adaptive learning methods.

1.4 Methodology

The research is based on a rapid review of relevant literature on the themes of postcolonial theory, decolonisation/decoloniality, anticipatory systems, futures thinking, futures literacy, participatory action research and collective knowledge creation. Relevant writings - from old and new writers - and thoughts on the identified themes were explored in putting the report together. Nourished by literature from African independences, Africana studies, critical indigenous studies and feminist theory, this report sometimes hints at the critique of indigenous essentialisation to focus on neither strictly past-inspired nor future-driven perspectives of what African resurgences are or could look like.

The researchers synthesised ideas from the relevant literature explored to lay a groundwork for the diverse thoughts on coloniality and decolonisation and how they, beyond the conventional views and use of the terms, are connected to anticipation and anticipatory systems and the capacity to use the future.

In addition, a draft of the report was presented to selected experts in the field of futures thinking and related areas, who were part of the 'Capacity to Decolonise' workshop. This report was designed to feed into, to critique and review this project they all carried. This synthesis condenses the research, expert views from the workshop, and the various critiques and reviews of the experts consulted.

2 Why Decolonisation and What Aspirations and Efforts Pursued by Africans to Pioneer Decolonisation

While situated in history through political struggles for renewed institutions and affirmation of African cultures (2.2), colonialism and the matrix called 'coloniality' in its many forms have nurtured thoughts documented and theorised for over a century (2.1). The persistence of the 'coloniality of power' is deeply rooted in African imaginaries, which calls for renewed agency. And this agency may perhaps be fostered by disentangling African imaginations from the dominant tropes and diversifying the images that shape those imaginations by reclaiming and broadening narratives (2.3).

2.1 The different layers of coloniality and post-colonialism

2.1.1 Acknowledging different forms of coloniality

Decolonisation references, and is indeed an acknowledgement of, past or present colonisation. It is thus important to do a quick appraisal of what colonialism/post-colonialism has been and is now, in order to be able to place the objective of this research in perspective.

The main engagement with the issue of colonialism historically has been as an act of domination and subjugation of an entity, state, country, or group of people by another.⁴ It is an act that was rooted in and mostly driven by imperialism – which at its height was the use of superior military force to exert a state's influence over another or to extend a state's political authority and control over other states and peoples. Typically, the aim for colonising other states was mainly economic and geopolitical. Taking a look at colonial projects, a fundamental understanding of colonialism and colonial projects shows that their impacts often linger long after the colonial project itself has stopped through the prevalence of race as an omnipresent social construct in local and global power dynamics.

‘Coloniality refers to long standing patterns of power that emerged because of colonialism, but define culture, labour, inter-subjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. [...] In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day.’⁵

As explained by decolonial thinker Maldonado-Torres quoted above, these lingering impacts imply that colonial projects are articulated around a series of overlapping layers. Beside the physical empire and structure in the colonised state, colonialism also embodies a more fundamental violent project that invades and destabilises the mental universes of a people – ridding them of pre-existing knowledge (epistemicide), language (linguicide), culture (culturicide).^{6,7} It sets up their knowledge, language, culture, mores, values, imaginations and mental frames, and their anticipatory systems/futures to be regarded as inferior or as secondary, thus effectively replacing them with that of the colonisers or at the very least

⁴ Schaefer, R. (2015). Minorities. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. 10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.32091-8.

⁵ Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). ‘On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept.’ *Cultural Studies*, 21. (p. 243.).

⁶ Duncan, O. (2020). Decolonization, Decoloniality, and the Future of African Studies: A Conversation with Dr. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatseni. <https://items.ssrc.org/from-our-programs/decolonization-decoloniality-and-the-future-of-african-studies-a-conversation-with-dr-sabelo-ndlovu-gatseni/>

⁷ Oelofsen, R. (2015). Decolonisation of the African mind and intellectual landscape. *Phronimon* 16 (2), 130-146.

relegating them to the background, beneath the colonisers'.⁸ Its violence is threefold: macropolitical, micropolitical and economic. It takes the form of centralised governments with control devices structuring our Nation States, but also of our market economies based on extraction and debt.⁹

Coloniality emerges from the domination of reason, more specifically of lazy reason as articulated by de Souza Santos. While he refers to four forms of lazy reasons, this paper focuses on three: arrogant reason, metonymic reason and proleptic reason. The former is thought so 'unconditionally free [that it forgets] to prove its own freedom', while the second is claimed as the only form of rationality as epistemological filter. Lastly, 'proleptic reason [is] a kind of reason that does not exert itself in thinking the future because it believes it knows all about the future and conceives of it as linear, automatic, and infinite overcoming of the present.'¹⁰ In that sense, coloniality of power is an accomplice to the hegemony of epistemological research methods and findings and to the invention of time as a linear, predetermined object.¹¹ The predetermination of future(s) imposed by dominant epistemologies is one of the most prevalent and fundamentally problematic forms of colonial legacy, hereby challenged by decolonial literature.

2.1.2 Embracing Decoloniality

The analyses of the lingering effects or lasting impact of the artefacts from colonial projects on the structures, institutions, systems, worldviews, bodies, psyche and development of societies that have just come out of a colonial experience are often brought together and dissected under the label of 'post-colonialism'. Its emergence results from a significant shift in both substance and methodology. First, in the object of study: re-owning one's ability to define one's claims in one's own words means finding and identifying new words.¹² Post-colonial studies, and later decolonial studies, focus on both transcultural approaches and interdisciplinarity. It is based on the premise that if colonialism affects all aspects of life and understanding of the world, so should decolonising attempt(s).¹³ The interrogation of personal experiences similar to the shift

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kisukidi, N. Y. (2020). *Préface* in Mbembe, Achille (2020). *De la postcolonie : Essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*. Paris: Karthala, 2^e ed (2000). (p. VII-VIII.).

¹⁰ de Souza Santos, B. (2014). 'Chapter VI: A Critique of Lazy Reason. Against the Waste of Experience and Toward the Sociology of Absences and the Sociology of Emergences.' In *Epistemologies of the South. Justice Against Epistemicide*, London: Routledge. (p. 165.)

¹¹ Tlostanova, M. V., & Mignolo, W. (2012). *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press.

¹² Edward, S. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. (p. 380.)

¹³ Mestiri, S. (2018). *Décoloniser le Féminisme : une approche transculturelle*, Paris : Vrin.

observed in Black feminist movements from the 1970s and the engagement of other sources of knowledge such as intuition and emotions are also key.¹⁴

From a development perspective, according to the historian Fischer-Tine, post-colonialism is the study of the relations between nations and other nations (or areas) they once ruled. The sustained relationship has been seen to pose a development question, one that explores whether the colonised should going forward control its own development.¹⁵ Post-colonialism, thus, attempts to dissect the multifaceted legacies of former empires/colonists on the trajectories, present conditions and futures, of the societies they once colonised. It provides one of key theoretical frameworks through which the developmental pathways of former colonies are analysed.¹⁶

‘[D]espite postcolonial theory’s conceptual fluidity, the major project of the discourse remains coherent: first, investigating the extent to which European history, culture, and knowledge were part of the practice of colonization, and its continuing aftermath; second, identifying and analyzing the causes and effects of continuing international exploitation; and third, transforming those epistemologies into new forms of cultural and political production, and enabling the transformation of global material injustice for disempowered.’¹⁷

These analyses have focused on a number of key questions which include the understanding of how peoples from formerly colonised societies have adapted to their colonisers’ cultures and worldviews; the impact of such adaption on the ‘original’ cultures and worldviews; what aspects of such ‘original’ cultures survived; and how can these independent and post-colonial societies retrieve ‘themselves’ or self-express in ways that are not dictated or limited by the confines of their inherited colonial reference frames or in ways that retrieve substantial and useful parts of their pre-colonial reference frames.

However, postcolonialism and the body of works it has generated (and is still generating) have also appeared to be a means to an end rather than an end in itself – at least from the viewpoint of writers/intellectuals whose perspectives have been shaped from deep interaction with the mores of former colonised states and peoples. The main end of postcolonial analyses, it seems,

¹⁴ Harris-Perry M. V. (2011). *Sister citizen: Shame, stereotypes, and Black women in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

¹⁵ Mann, M. (2012). Post-colonial Development in Africa. *Foreign Policy Journal*. June 3, 2012. <<https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2012/06/03/post-colonial-development-in-africa/>>. Accessed 26 April, 2020.

¹⁶ Gomba, O. (2015). What Is Postcolonial Intellection to Us: A White Scarecrow in The Field? In *An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*, 4(9), 137-150.

¹⁷ Roy, A. (2008) Postcolonial theory and law: A critical introduction. *Adelaide Law Review*, 29 1/2.

has been to provide the discursive framework for analysing colonial legacies, and to hold up alternative mental frames. While this work is essential for decolonisation of *being(s)*, it still refers to Western-influenced systems of knowledge production to question the current matrices of power.

Pushing this work to another more holistic frame, decolonial theory pursues ‘the openness and freedom of thought and ways of life; the cleanliness of the coloniality of being and knowledge; the detachment of the rhetoric of modernity and its imperial imaginary.’¹⁸ Questioning the ontology and axiology of current systems of thought, including postcolonial studies, it offers grassroots-based discourses, epistemologies and methodologies around the decolonisation of land, cultures, institutions, systems and reference frames of the formerly colonised peoples and states and the embrace of alternatives.^{19,20}

Present in political agendas since before the independence, decolonisation incarnates a variety of processes and teleology(ies) behind said ideologies and writings, but also about the people who advocated for its pursuit.

2.2 Decolonisation – from the Afrocentric frame to a shared frame

2.2.1. Reclaiming African institutions, bodies, and cultures

The conversations around decolonisation and what it means in and for Africa – and perhaps those of African ancestry – have largely started around the need for self-reclamation and self-ownership after the colonial experience.^{21,22} Early on, decolonial activists and philosophers – although not always followed by politicians who had divergent interests in the matter – stripped away concerns around de-Westernisation, considered irrelevant in an already-influenced environment.²³ One of the earliest proponents of decolonisation is Frantz Fanon, who believed that ‘struggles for decolonisation are first and foremost about self-ownership’. That they are also struggles to repossess and take back, if necessary by force, those things that

¹⁸ Mignolo, W. (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Duke University Press, (p. 30.)

¹⁹ Mestiri, S. (2018). *Op. cit.*

²⁰ Tlostanova M. V., & Mignolo, W. (2012). *Op. cit.*

²¹ Thiong’o, N. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in Africa Literature*. London: Heinemann Educational (p. 114.)

²² Fanon, F. (1961). *Les damnés de la terre*, Maspero. Translated as *The Wretched of the Earth*, Richard Philcox (trans.), New York: Grove Books.

²³ Mbembe, A. (2015). *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive*. Public Lecture delivered at the *Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research (WISER)*, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Accessed 26 April 2020.

belong to peoples of formerly colonised states and peoples – both the tangibles and the intangibles.

Fanon also believed decolonisation is about self-appropriation. He thought decolonisation is not and should not be about design or tinkering with the margins of structures handed over by colonial projects, but about reshaping, recrafting and recreating without looking to the pre-existing models or using them as paradigms.²⁴

For Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who is one of the foremost African thought leaders on the subject, decolonisation is essentially a 're-centering project'. In this 're-centering', Africa and Africans – the peoples, their original worldviews, values, anticipatory systems etc. – are put right back at the centre where it belongs in matters pertaining to Africans and in the relations of Africans with people from other parts of the world.²⁵

Under the influence of Latin American decolonial voices Walter Mignolo and Nelson Maldonado-Torres who described the 'colonial matrix of power', Baba Olubanjo Buntu has also advanced the decolonisation debate from the Africa-centred perspective. In his analysis, Baba Buntu thought decolonisation (or decoloniality as he puts it) can be premised on three concepts (as developed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013):

- coloniality of power: the asymmetrical nature of the global power structure and politics;
- coloniality of knowledge: who generates what knowledge and for what purpose is it used e.g. to drive or support imperialist or neo-colonial ambitions;
- coloniality of being: how whiteness has gained a 'supremacy' or 'pre-eminent' status over other races and the dehumanisation of 'the other'.²⁶
- An Ecuadorian jurist even adds 'coloniality of earth', defined as the prevalence of 'Western cartesian separating the subject from the object while rejecting alternative 'decolonial world sensing' that privileges fluid relations between entities within Mother Earth'.²⁷

This articulation around the notion of power and commodification of the world reflects early evolutions of decolonial literature. Very early on, from Ozay Mehmet to Donna Haraway

²⁴ Mbembe, A. (2015). *Op. cit.*

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Buntu, A.O. (2019). Lost in the Afrikan City: The role of youth in decolonising Afrikan urban development. *Urban Governance Paper Series – South Africa Cities Network*.

²⁷ Dolhare, M. I. (2020). 'My land, your land, or Mother Earth? Decolonizing land law in Bolivia' (provisional title), Decolonial Comparative Law Workshop, 6-7 October 2020, Wits University.

passing by Frantz Fanon, decolonial thinkers went beyond the cultural or economic frame to challenge the ontological consequences of capitalist imperialism, not only in the global South but also globally.²⁸

Coloniality emerges as the logic under all forms of colonialism since 1500 affecting the consciousness and subjectivity (Fanon's psycho-affectation), racial identity (Ndiaye, 2009), economy (Mehmet 1992), gender (Butler 1992; Mestiri 2018), thinking, social and political processes (Foucault 1966; Mignolo 2010, 2015) of groups declared as peripheral. This axiological and epistemological logic discursively shapes our global coloniality resulting from, but not limited to, Western imperial expansion. Coloniality is therefore seen as the other façade of modernity that it constitutes. The simultaneous and continuous colonisation of time (linear history from the East to Hegel's West to end in Fukuyama's US) and space (discovery of new territories) is one of the key features of the colonial matrix which decolonial thinkers and activists propose alternatives to. To deal with his three areas of coloniality mentioned above, Baba Buntu proposes three counter positions which are: rethinking, re-envisioning and rebuilding what it means to be (a decolonised) African. Rethinking in this context means going against the status quo or what is considered the norm, and the standard. It means to 'draw knowledge from outside of what has been positioned as the main theoretical frame'.²⁹

Re-envisioning entails drawing inspiration from other (local) sources, to see with native eyes and to give voices to indigenous knowledge in places of discourse, knowledge creation, research, conception, policymaking, planning and implementation. Re-envisioning means exploring and finding answers to foundational questions such as: what is 'African'? What makes something – an idea, worldview or an anticipatory system – 'African'?

2.2.2. Reclaiming our imaginaries

Adapting some of Baba Buntu's key questions for re-envisioning, we can come up with our own human questions, such as: what does it mean for an anticipatory system, worldview or episteme to be decolonised; does it mean the created knowledge, anticipatory system become decolonised because it is produced outside of the established centres of current dominant and supposedly colonial or imposed epistemes; or is it because it was produced by peoples of/from

²⁸ Haraway, D. (2016). Anthropocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin'. *Multitudes* 65. Ozay Mehmet. 1999. *Westernizing the Third World: The Eurocentricity of Economic Development Theories*. Frantz Fanon. 1952 (trans. 1991). *Black Skins, White Masks*.

²⁹ Buntu, A.O. (2019). *Op. cit.*

formerly colonised societies (irrespective of where they are located), or because it represents or fits within the indigenous (and decolonial) ways of thinking or imagining the futures of these ‘other’ – formerly colonised – societies, or because it is produced using their ‘original’ epistemes and worldviews (even if not produced by them)? Baba Buntu believes that the answer lies somewhere in between a combination of all the answers to these questions in African contexts.³⁰

Furthermore, the evolution of decolonisation as a concept, aspiration, and practice from a cultural perspective to an epistemological matter allowed room for interrogations around our thoughts and knowledge-production systems.³¹ These learnings are of interest to modern societies and their peoples, whose ways of being, knowing, imagining and of sense making have been dislocated. Their mental frames and imaginations have also been invaded or overrun by the dominant traditions, narratives and worldviews inherited from past dominant structures and supported by present hegemonies. Tlotsanova and Mignolo offer a valuable distinction between entrapment and belonging. The colonial matrix is such because it is intrusive, pervasive while not providing a shared frame for belonging, simply Otherness. Once this alterity in our own localities is revealed and critiqued, African thinkers and practitioners come to wonder: what could be their decolonised, resurgent, self-reflective anticipatory systems and processes?

Tshepo Madlingozi, for instance, saw decolonisation as a framework with a bifocal outlook. According to Madlingozi, a decolonising project or framework should be both backward-looking and forward-looking.

It should look back to clearly identify the past it criticises and strives to undo or break away from. It should look forward by laying the foundation for the post-decolonial, all-inclusive system in which a diversity of epistemological foundations, worldviews and anticipatory systems are embraced, and belongingness and pluriversality – as against universality – are seen as norms. In the form of decolonisation Madlingozi advocates, no particular or single worldview, episteme, and anticipatory system is ‘centered’.³² No one predominates anywhere, and the ‘Others’ are at all times acknowledged and represented.³³

³⁰ Mbembe, A. (2015). *Op. cit.*

³¹ Odora Hoppers, C. A. (2000). African Voice in Education: Retrieving the Past, Engaging the Present and Shaping the Future. In P. Higgs, N. C. G. Vakalisa, T. V. Mda, & N. T. Assie-Lumumba (Eds.), *African Voices in Education*, 1–11. Lansdowne: Juta.

³² Madlingozi, T. (2018). *The Proposed Amendment to the South African Constitution: Finishing the Unfinished Business of Decolonisation?* <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2018/04/06/the-proposed-amendment-to-the-south-african-constitution/>

³³ Achille Mbembe. (2015). *Op. cit.*

For Bayo Akomolafe, decolonising is not about compensating for what was seemingly lost by the colonised, but in reclaiming collective imaginaries, hopes and alliances that have been forgotten in the ensuing malformed relations and interactions between all – former colonisers and colonised. Akomolafe also sees decolonisation not as a process of re-centring, or attempting ‘to return to a pure image of what it means to be indigenous (an image that may no longer be true)’ but as one of opening up liberally/unreservedly to new means and ways of knowing, of doing, of defining and of sense-making that acknowledge the intertwining middles, the entanglement of epistemic traditions of the colonised and the coloniser – without ascribing centrality or dominance to any – and the realisation that again, nothing is ever completely broken or completely whole.^{34,35,36}

Herein is drawn the distinction between resurgence (redefinition of the self, reconstruction of the Oppressed) and essentialisation. The latter is an intellectual and political trap ESKIA Mphahlele warns us against. ‘Auto-colonising’ as enunciated in one of Madlingozi’s writings can entrap those who seek to decolonise – often fallen into by a section of the intellectual elites and policymakers (Mobutu’s authenticity politics). These efforts are themselves often too fixated on colonialist discourses that again centralises what the genuine works of decolonisation aim to undo.

Decolonial literature tends to revolve around coloniality in an autoreferential manner that denotes entrapment in our Otherness, the loss of our power to define ourselves and our surroundings. Decolonisation implies a struggle against the resistance to forms of oppression that have overdetermined us as Africans and shaped our understanding of our own authenticity entrapped between cliché and assimilation. If values and codes to anticipate tomorrow are predefined, our legacy systems are challenged. Africans are invited to create new reasons for and ways to articulate, imagine the future of the past.

Decolonising the works and conversations about decolonisation (and the misconceptions around decolonisation) itself has, thus, become imperative.³⁷

³⁴ Akomolafe, B. (2015). *Decolonizing Ourselves*. <http://bayoakomolafe.net/116/>

³⁵ Akomolafe, B. (2017). *Finding the Dark: Decolonizing Darkness* (Excerpt from ‘These Wilds Beyond our Fences: Letters to my Daughter on Humanity’s Search for Home’). <http://bayoakomolafe.net/project/1313/>

³⁶ Césaire, A. (1950). *Discourse on colonialism*. Re-issued (2000). New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

³⁷ Madlingozi, T. (2018). *Decolonising ‘decolonisation’ with Mphahlele*. <https://www.newframe.com/decolonising-decolonisation-mpahlele/>.

2.3 *Captive imagination(s)*

‘Perhaps we have not sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not content simply to impose its rule upon the present and future of the dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing precolonial history takes on a dialectical significance today.’

– Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 210

Postcolonial literature has focused grandly on the role of colonisation in past narratives and narratives of the past. Observing its prevalence to this date, one is invited to question whether colonisation still lingers thanks to its hold on narratives of the future. At first glance, this may appear to be contradictory.

Indeed, the future is imaginary; it does not exist yet. Futures studies is therefore the study of why and how we use our imagination.³⁸ Imagination deals with the power of the mind to see and to hold/form images, concepts, descriptions and representations that do not exist or have not been physically experienced (yet). This ability to see and to perceive with our minds phenomena that do not exist yet is essential to creating new forms, recreating/reforming old paradigms, and to thinking about and (re)inventing our futures.

Our imaginations are, however, shaped in diverse ways, and by various factors like our cultures, mores, values, physical and social environments, technologies, worldviews, education, political systems etc., and those of others with whom we have interacted. Besides, these factors were also shaped by the imaginations of people before us.

On the one hand, what this means in terms of one of the key challenges of decolonising our imaginations is that our built systems – education systems, political systems, physical and social environments, cultures, worldviews etc. – were based on or have been heavily influenced by the systems and values inherited from the past and whatsoever conditions and forces have shaped that past. Extricating our imaginations from the confines of these established norms and structures, and thinking about or rethinking our own futures in a manner that is not

³⁸ World Futures Studies Federation. (2019). ‘Conversations on the Future we want’ – Interview with Riel Miller by Claire Nelson. *Human Futures: Insight for the Futuratti*. September 2019 Issue.

determined nor restricted by the inherited structures and does not perpetuate their existence – thus opening them up to emergence – is very important.

On the other hand, beyond the impact of inherited structures on the imagination of societies and their peoples, is the challenge of the globalised world and the post-normal times we live in and their effect on our collective imaginations. Recent Afrofuturist visions depicted in mass media, especially from the United States, tend to magnify and expand the reach and scope of these dominant tropes in our own domains, thus creating viral replications that further perpetuate those tropes and give them the ability to colonise our imaginations. Therefore, decolonising our collective and individual imaginations, to open up to alternatives beyond the dominant tropes and to see beyond the dominant but limited narratives continuously held up to us as the only relevant images, is an important and urgent task.

Following Maldonado-Torres among other fellow decolonial writers, we argue that sdecolonizing is about the formation, the emergence of new words and new imaginaries that characterize power.

The question then is how do we decolonise our collective and individual imaginations? How do we reclaim and diversify our images of the future beyond those fed to us during colonial times and preserved by the global media and mainstream narratives?

3 Decolonising Anticipation

As we had established in section 2, the kind of images we hold now – our imaginaries – and the processes through which they are formed influence our expectations, views and use of the future. In short, it influences our anticipation and the systems that sustain or limit that anticipation. Thus, reframing and broadening the cornucopia of images that our minds and senses are exposed to, and the processes through which they are created or sourced, is important to decolonising our anticipation and anticipatory systems (3.1). It is also useful, even essential, to reframing our understanding of decolonisation beyond the geographical and epistemological to the coloniality of the future (and our anticipation) itself (3.2); and can thus help us identify and build the critical capabilities – futures literacy being one – that we need to decolonise our anticipation and our futures (3.3).

3.1 Defining decolonisation as the (re)framing of our anticipatory systems

An anticipatory system was defined by Robert Rosen, one of the pioneers in the study of anticipatory systems, as a ‘system containing a predictive model of itself and/or its environment, which allows it to change state at an instant in accord with the model’s predictions pertaining to a later instant.’³⁹ It has also been defined as a ‘special class of adaptive control systems.’⁴⁰

The concept of anticipation covers all efforts focused on sensing, producing, understanding and making sense of future evolutions and likely future possibilities. In relation to futures studies as a branch of knowledge and Futures Literacy as a capacity, anticipation is seen as the ‘combination of capacities’ that enables humans to be able to think through, assess and make sense of future possibilities and trajectories, and to be open to emergence.⁴¹ Anticipatory systems and processes can also be defined as the systems and processes that support, or on which the capacity of humans to think through, assess and make sense of future possibilities are based/built.

Anticipatory systems not only explore and encompass the ‘combination of capacities’ that enables us to anticipate, but also the nature of the systems within which we have to anticipate and which makes our capacity to anticipate possible (or not) in the first place. Thus, ‘evoking and exploring (the) anticipatory systems’ of a group of people provides an ‘effective way to unpack (the images of) the future’ and the imaginations of that group, and perhaps more importantly to understand how the members of the group use the future.⁴²

Exploring and understanding anticipatory systems of a group and how members of the group use the future is important to the work of decolonising imaginations. If decolonisers seek to reclaim themselves or others, ‘retrieve (them)selves’ or ‘bring [themselves] back from [their] lostness’ in the future, then they must answer some key questions such as: how can they – and we – reclaim, retrieve, bring back or unearth the anticipatory systems and processes of modern societies from under the rubbles of past dominant structures and present hegemonies under which they have been buried for a long time? ⁴³ How do we know that the unearthed

³⁹ Rosen, R. (1985). *Anticipatory Systems. Philosophical, Mathematical and Methodological Foundations*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

⁴⁰ Louie, A. H. (2010). Robert Rosen's anticipatory systems. *Foresight*, 12(3), 18-29.

⁴¹ Miller, R., Poli, R., & Rossel, P. (2013). The Discipline of Anticipation: Exploring Key Issues. *Working Paper 1, Local/Global Capabilities Scoping Project*, Paris: UNESCO/Rockefeller

⁴² Miller, R., & Poli, R. (2010). Anticipatory systems and the philosophical foundations of futures studies. *Foresight*, 12. DOI:10.1108/fs.2010.27312caa.001.

⁴³ Sherman, G.L. (2009). Martin Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity: A Philosophical Contribution to Student Affairs Theory, *Journal of College and Character*, 10:7, DOI:10.2202/1940-1639.1440

anticipatory systems and imaginations would not have significantly embedded the elements of the rubbles under which they had been buried? How can we be sure that what we seek to unearth has not been weathered beyond recognition and the efforts to reclaim or retrieve will not only bring back more of the same?

Such interrogations reflect Fanon's comments around a reaffirmation of African cultures beyond their past and Canadian Native American Leanne Simpson's desire not to dismantle Audre Lorde's master's house but to build our own houses.⁴⁴

Framing decolonisation as the quest for the effective right to reclaim our own futures shifts our gaze from the rigid authenticity often used in postcolonial contexts to a renewed understanding of what it means to be human and express our humanity. Reclaiming, also called 'resurgence', becomes the process of recreating that gives the subject the power to define or redefine themselves through their own eyes, and through frames of their own choosing. This requires the realisation of the captivity of our imaginations as highlighted in the second section, and the capability to understand how to reactivate and expand them to build new images of *the future*.

3.2 Reframing (de)colonisation – a geographical and epistemological decentralisation

3.2.1 Colonising the future: some framing considerations

Colonisation as experienced worldwide for over two centuries is about the systemic imposition of a particular, exclusive or definite way of sensing, of knowing, of understanding and of surmising that precludes or discredits all others. Influencing policymakers from Thomas Sankara to Aminata Dramane Traoré, decolonial thinkers have embraced the implications of colonialism beyond the economic and political and had foreseen consequences of systemic impoverishment and North-South interdependency. Such a holistic understanding of colonisation has opened up alternatives, renewed the means applied and motivated societies and their peoples to shift away from the imposed single still image and to refuse to conform to a single view of what is true and believable and real. ^{45,46}

⁴⁴ Simpson, L. (2011). *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Recreation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*, Winnipeg, Arbeiter Ring Press. (p. 32.)

⁴⁵ Akomolafe, B. (2015). *Op. cit.*

⁴⁶ Césaire, A. (1950). *Op. cit.*

3.2.2 Exploring a renewed ‘old’ question

In Futures studies, questions about the future being subject to a colonisation process date back to as early as 1975 (Dator, 2005). For some authors, the future was a key dimension for colonisation such that Futures Studies were seen as ‘... *becoming the tool for the colonization of the last frontier - the non-Western future itself.*’⁴⁷

There is indeed evidence that the practice of using the future as an established stream of knowledge has been shaped by Western thinking.⁴⁸ As for most of the outcomes of Westernisation of mind-sets and behaviours, this has resulted in marginalisation processes affecting several parts of the human society, particularly non-Western cultures, women, and all categories of people whose future is determined by others, for example farmer organisations and the role international agricultural development actors play in determining their futures.^{49,50}

Let us consider the future as a resource. In that sense, it has the same characteristics as the air we breathe; it is a public good, as per the definition set in the glossary. This means that, in practice, when one uses the future, it will not prevent others from using it and it will not reduce the quantity of the future someone else can use. But, what the colonisation of the future means is that the public good nature of the future can be changed into something else in a process that will limit or impede others to use it. This process is however not recent. In the past, the use of the future has usually been restricted by institutions such as social castes (pythias, shamans...) or religious organisations, or by specialised professionals (oracle, fortune tellers, soothsayers, mediums...). Often technology and the alleged capacity to master it have been the means of such an exclusion process (crystal ball, trance, tarot, bones reading...).

When the use of the future is restricted to a certain group of people, be they individuals or organisations, it becomes a club good. In addition, if others have to pay to access this good as a service it becomes a private good, meaning that those who cannot afford it cannot use it.

⁴⁷ Sardar, Z. (1993). Colonizing the future: the ‘other’ dimension of futures studies. *Futures* 25 (3). 179-187. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287\(93\)90163-N](https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(93)90163-N)

⁴⁸ Son, H. (2015). The history of Western futures studies: An exploration of the intellectual traditions and three-phase periodization. *Futures* 66, 120–137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2014.12.013>

⁴⁹ Bourgeois, R., Penunia, E., Bisht, S., & Boruk, D. (2017). Foresight for all: Co-elaborative scenario building and empowerment. *Technol. Forecast. Soc. Change* 124, 178–188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.04.018>

⁵⁰ Gunnarsson-Östling, U. (2011). Gender in futures: A study of gender and feminist papers published in *Futures*, 1969–2009. *Futures* 43, 1029–1039. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2011.07.002>

To the contrary, in our contemporary world, things have not changed. The process of transforming the public nature of the future as a resource into a club or private good is an on-going process, which is how the future is being colonised.

3.2.3 Dimensioning the colonisation process

This on-going process connects three phenomena: an intellectual and institutional one, an instrumental and procedural one, and a political and societal one (figure 1).

The intellectual and institutional process consists in the prevalence of the anticipatory systems and anticipatory hypotheses of ‘those who know better’; in other words, the use of the future is captured by an elite (a club) or a profession (business). In 1993, Sardar identified this elite as formed by ‘*white, mainly American, male scholars*’, with the capacity to ‘*control the discipline and decide who is and who is not important in, and what is and what is not important for the field.*’⁵¹ This elite imposes thus its present vision of the future as a target to achieve or something to be prepared for as the future to come, therefore colonising tomorrow.^{52,53}

The future becomes a club good through the established practices in Futures Studies that follow the standards of an established science that is shaped by Western epistemologies. The public good nature of the future as a resource tends to become a club good through the establishment of norms and barriers of entry such as the recognition by a community of peers or the possession of a degree in Futures Studies/foresight or similar branding. The result is the creation of a group of people who are able to abide by and reproduce the same dominant standards. Most associations of professional futurists for example have their own entry rules; among them, a common one is the godfathering by members of these associations, or publication records in recognised journals. This institutional and intellectual process goes one-step forwards when professionals or organisations make the use of the future a service one has to pay for to get it delivered. The development of private expertise in using the future is witnessed by the proliferation of organisations and experts who make a living from this activity.

The instrumental and procedural colonising aspect consists in the imposition of exclusive technologies, dedicated instruments, and specific vocabulary that allow the members

⁵¹ Sardar, Z. (1993). *Op. cit.* (p. 179; 183.)

⁵² Miller, R. (2015). Learning, the Future, and Complexity. An Essay on the Emergence of Futures Literacy. *Eur. J. Educ.* 50, 513–523. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12157>

⁵³ Poli, R. (2015). The implicit future orientation of the capability approach. *Futures* 71, 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2015.03.002>

of the club to reproduce themselves and exclude others. The tool (technology) is an entry barrier that creates either a club, because of the initiatory nature of the mastery of the tool, or a business, because of the cost of learning the tool, which becomes marketable mainly in the form of expertise.

The political and societal phenomenon relates to the way in which ‘those who know better’, after using their tools, share with ‘those who do not know’ their truth about the future. It is in this political and societal process that the expression ‘colonising the future’ takes its full meaning. After having convinced people that using the future is something that requires particular skills and knowledge and specific instruments, people are not only deprived from their capability to use the future, futures that are occupied by others are imposed on them. In particular, the result of this process is the imposition of an idea of the future to be used as a target either for something that is going to happen (probabilistic future) or desirable (preferred future). In both cases, the colonisation process results in a separation between ‘doers’ and ‘beneficiaries’, whereas this dichotomy should not exist when considering the future as a public good.

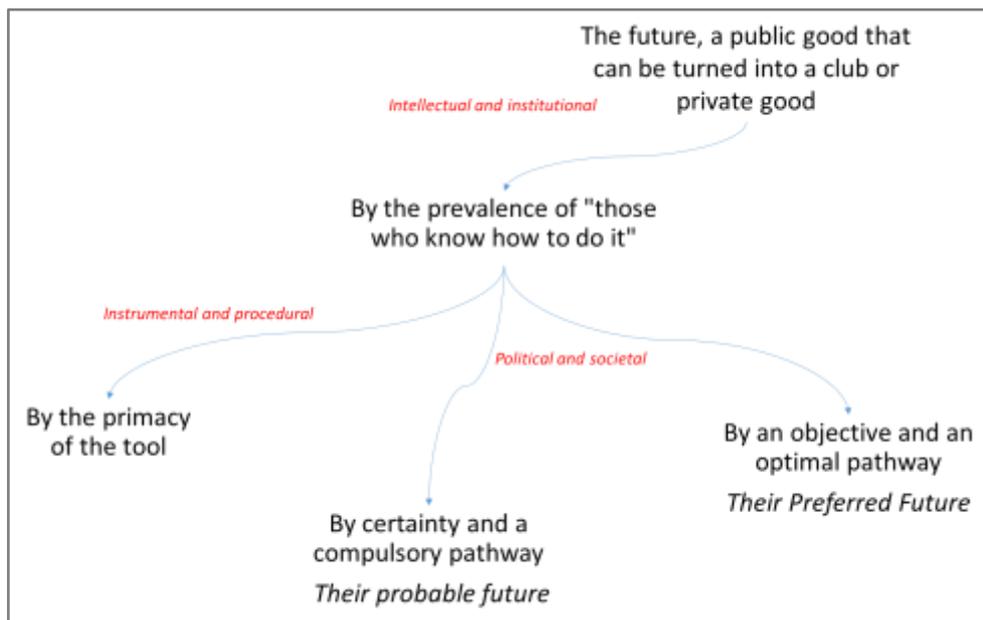


Figure 1. The three dimensions of the colonisation of the future⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Source: Authors in the text, Bourgeois, R. (2020).

3.2.4 Decolonising the future: thoughts on challenges and issues

Given that we all have anticipatory systems, even if we don't use them explicitly, if some impose their own anticipatory systems on others, we are in a situation of coloniality, where there is an overall structure of knowledge that shapes all types of knowledge in accordance with its values.

Decoloniality would thus mean first to delink from that overall structure of knowledge in order to engage in an epistemic reconstitution of ways of thinking, languages, ways of life and being in the world that the rhetoric of modernity disavowed and the logic of coloniality implement.⁵⁵

The first challenge towards such a process is to characterise the features of this overall structure of knowledge. A first attempt is proposed below in the yellow box of Figure 2. The second challenge is to identify who and what is affected by this overall structure of knowledge. An attempt is made as per the orange box of figure 2. The third challenge is to decide to what extent there is a need and a possibility to proceed to an epistemic reconstitution or to engage into an epistemic production of an alternative overall structure of knowledge. This is what the project intends to contribute to.

Figure 2. Features of the current use of the future and the colonised⁵⁶

- Features of the mainstream Western use of the future***
- An elite of mostly Western educated practitioners
 - Dominated by white males
 - Futures studies as a specific field
 - Dedicated Journals with standard scholarship rules
 - Dedicated professional organisations/units
 - Dedicated curricula
 - Professional associations and community of peers
 - The use of the future for decision-making

⁵⁵Quoted from an interview of Walter D. Mignolo referring also to Quijano: <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/21/interview-walter-mignolo-part-2-key-concepts/>

⁵⁶ Source: Authors in the text, Bourgeois, R. (2020).

- The future as a target to achieve
- Tool/technology based
- Reduction of uncertainty
- Determinism based on trends and quantification
- Linear time
- Lazy rationality (metonymic reasoning)

Who and what is colonised

- Non-Western cultures
- Agency
- Women
- Non-recognised professionals
- The use of the future for emergence and novelty
- The capacity to determine our own future
- The capacity to become future literate
- The value of uncertainty
- Imagination
- Interdisciplinary knowledge creation

3.2.5 Decolonising anticipatory systems: the need/case for Futures Literacy

The commodification process encountered by Humanity's futures reflects the plurality of coloniality which composes decolonisation thoughts and efforts.

Having recognised the tendency of some segments of the society to want to impose their anticipatory systems and futures on others, one of the key questions of this project comes into focus, which is: how do we decolonise anticipation and our anticipatory systems?

Besides, there is a need to unearth anticipatory systems, and alternative processes of using the future for sensing and making sense of the present in order to be able to more fully appreciate the potentials of the present. However, to be able to do this effectively we must regard, as we have earlier defined them, anticipatory systems as systems that explore and support the 'combination of capacities' that enable us to be able to think through, assess and make sense of future possibilities, and to be open to emergence.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Miller, R., Poli, R., & Rossel, P. (2013). *Op. cit.*

Here, the relationship between understanding anticipatory systems and how we use the future and futures literacy as a capability which enables us to better understand the sources of our fears, hopes and expectations, and to make sense of and take advantage of complexity and uncertainty, comes into view. And building and improving on our futures literacy capability is considered as one of the key ways of both better understanding and decolonising our anticipatory systems.^{58,59} Consequently exploring futures literacy, how we can build it as a capability, and to what end then becomes important.

3.3 Futures Literacy as capability

In simple terms, being futures literate means being able to understand why and how humans imagine the future. In that sense, it is a competence accessible to all since everyone uses the future all the time. The most recurrent examples are Miller's references to a baby's cries for food, relief or attention. In more specific contexts, the maximisation of options when waiting for a bus of unpredictable timing reflect the role of anticipation in the present for decision-making. Anticipation is a key feature of our short and long-term decision-making in the present.

To then understand the correlation between futures literacy and agency, we are encouraged to take a step back and return to the relation between development and fear, between development and images of the self in the eyes of the Other and the self.

Our imaginaries are surrounded by images and representations. Using the example of Jews' overdetermined constituencies, Sartre defined authenticity of the Jew or of the Black as the obedience to the rules of the game, to a system that has set the 'ensemble of limits and restrictions that form [the Jew] and determine his possibilities'.⁶⁰ Authenticity is thus assimilated with the obedience to (a certain) representation(s) of the self, while inauthenticity is the abandonment of this orthodox way of being as a subaltern in favour of assimilation.⁶¹ What strikes us here is not quite the types of stereotypical behaviours themselves, but the rigidity of the frame: binary linearity. In a settler-colonialist or colonialist environment, Leanne Simpson defines it as the 'rigidity of colonialism' in opposition to the 'fluidity of

⁵⁸ Miller, R., & Poli, R. (2010). *Op. cit.*

⁵⁹ World Futures Studies Federation. (2019). *Op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Sartre, J. (1974). *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*. trans. G. Becker, New York, 1976.

⁶¹ We reuse the expression as defined by: Gayatri Spivak. 1988. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 271-313.

[revisited] traditions'.⁶² Overdetermined individuals as much as those who determine them evolve on two parallel uncooked spaghettis, as two straight lines in the air.

Now imagine this at the scale of an individual or a community determined by the eye of the Other, we make our mark by opposing ourselves to the Other, already biased by a particular image of the said Other. Our conception of the world is composed of fragmented pieces (images), but rather than questioning the images, we wish to reveal the lens that led them to come to existence.

The hidden or overlooked lenses which distort or shape the methods of and reasons for thinking about the future are called anticipatory assumptions and are of six different kinds. 'Anticipatory assumptions are what enable people to describe imaginary futures.'⁶³ For instance, believing that monolingualism as a feature of preferred futures for Africa in 2040 outlines in some of the speakers' reasoning linguistic diversity as a problem. Such a problematisation, regardless of its desirability, is an anticipatory assumption. Formed in the present, this correlation has direct implications for the future that we learn about by imagining futures that we can learn from.

The term 'using the future' shines a light on the instrumentalisation of our imagination, calling attention to the following question: do we think about why and how we use this amazing instrument? Being futures literate means understanding the nature and functioning of our anticipatory systems and processes (ASP) as the mental frames and support systems through which we imagine and then make sense of what we imagine.

Such awareness is one thing; competence – mobilising our understanding, processing this capacity as a practice to determine which tools for thinking about the future are most adequate – is another. The latter is a capability, both reflexive and constructive. Reflexive because our very practice to become more futures literate redefines the ways we use the future, hence strengthening our futures literacy. Constructive, because the 'constant use of the future plays a role in building up the world around us.'⁶⁴ We reuse Miller's Popperian analogy and assert that by changing the conditions for using the future, we change the role that futures play in our present.⁶⁵

⁶² Simpson, L. (2011). *Op. cit.*

⁶³ UNESCO. (2018). *Transforming the Future: Anticipation in the 21st Century*. Routledge. (p. 24.)

⁶⁴ UNESCO. 2018. *Op. cit.* (p. 17.) Generally, capability refers to futures literacy (are we futures literate? Competent in futures literacy?), while capacity refers to the quantity of expertise (the degree to which we are futures literate).

⁶⁵ Popper, K. (1990). *A World of Propensities*. Thoemmes Press. (p. 17: 'Our very understanding of the world changes the conditions of a changing world; and so do our wishes, our preferences, our motivations, our hopes, our

The resurgence of our consciousness is nurtured by an increased understanding of why and how the Other influences our reasons for, ways to and contexts in which we create images and narratives of the future, in which we anticipate. Once this realisation sinks in, our repository of actions in Durkheimian terms, our bandwidth, our spectrum of possibilities is significantly increased: we are capable to choose the reasons why we use the future, to choose how we anticipate and what it could mean about who we are, how we express ourselves and what the world means to us.

This recovered freedom is not contradictory to recent evolutions of both postcolonial/decolonial studies and futures studies which urged for a humbler position, further from the hubristic instrumentalisation of the future which has incarcerated our imaginations in the first place. By revealing that we can anticipate for the future (planning and preparation) but also for emergence, we invite fluidity and allow the unknown, not as our doom but as a natural component of our ecosystems. Not only the known unknowns – the so-called risks, in an anthropocentric approach to knowledge –, but also to the unknown unknowns, the unexpected, cognizant of our ignorance and admiring of the surprises that Nature holds for Humanity and its surroundings.⁶⁶

By extension, Futures Literacy can be seen as the ability to integrate the future into our present decision-making processes or to make sense of the present.⁶⁷

Reclaiming our wholeness, our fluidity requires a **methodological playfulness** that opens the door for complexity and resurgence. Decolonisation, in that sense, is a transformation. More simply, our images of the future shape our agendas and the inability to diversify the foundations of our imagination is at the core of our inability to transform. ‘More than a shortage of images, the African continent suffers from the absence of a thought of its own and from the inability to produce its own metaphors of the future.’⁶⁸ Sarr’s interrogation is about processes: imagination does not lack, it is not used, or misused because of the orthodox and unauthentic processes deployed to create metaphors of the future. If Sarr argues that an absolute intellectual sovereignty is required in order for these African thoughts to be fertile, the capacity to decolonise requires not only instruments for it to come to be, but specific

dreams, our phantasies, our hypotheses, our theories. Even our erroneous theories change the world, although our correct theories may, as a rule have a more lasting influence’).

⁶⁶ Sardar, Z. (2015). Postnormal Times Revisited. *Futures* 67. 10.1016/j.futures.2015.02.003. (p. 28.)

⁶⁷ UNESCO. (2018). *Op. cit.*

⁶⁸ Sarr, F. (2016). *Afrotopia*. Paris: Philippe Rey. (p. 12. Our own translation from the French: « Plus que d'un déficit d'image, c'est de celui d'une pensée et d'une production de ses propres métaphores du futur que souffre le continent africain. »)

capabilities that activate our understanding of its relevance and necessity.⁶⁹ In that sense, the means we use discursively shape the ends we seek to attain through our decolonisation strategies.⁷⁰ In short, we cannot separate method from the imaginaries they embody. Futures literacy, as a capability, directly contributes to efforts pursued to decolonise.

Futures Literacy Laboratories - Novelty (FLL-N) are one field tested tool for cultivating futures literacy as a capability. FLL-Ns are learning by doing processes that aim to develop futures literacy capability of participants by making their anticipatory assumptions explicit and observable. Besides revealing the anticipatory assumptions of participants, FLL-Ns also help to reframe these anticipatory assumptions in a way that allow them to rethink these assumptions and open up alternative ways of viewing or imagining the future in a particular area, thus helping to strengthen their ability to use the future and improve their futures literacy capability.⁷¹

If our imaginations are anchored in our contexts, the methods used to expand them should also be context-dependent, customised as to fit purpose, meeting local champions' expectations (see section 4). Following the progressive learning curve identified by Dewey and Kolb, FLL-Ns are collective intelligence knowledge creation processes. If Kolb's understanding of learning is a 'process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience', the 'experience should be based on connection to the collective unconscious' in Jung's words.⁷² Learning triggers different kinds of abilities, including Kolb's four phases of the model of experiential learning. Futures literacy tools involve learners' 1) concrete-experience abilities which could be qualified as, although not limited to, curiosity and openness, 2) reflective observation abilities: to reflect on and observe their experiences through different angles, 3) novelty: the ability to invent and detect novel phenomena, around a topic participants care about, and 4) active experimentation abilities: to use their novel ideas to make decisions.⁷³

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* (p. 17: « Pour être féconde, une pensée du continent porte en elle l'exigence d'une absolue souveraineté intellectuelle.»)

⁷⁰ Alfred, T. (2005). *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of actions and Freedom*. Broadview Press Ltd. (p. 22-23. Glen Senn Coulthard. 2014. *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minnesota: University Press (p. 157).

⁷¹ UNESCO. (2018). *Op. cit.*

⁷² Jung, C. (1933). *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. Routledge. (p. 233.)

⁷³ Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning. Experience as the source of learning and Development*. Prentice-Hall. (p. 30. We chose to replace Kolb's 'abstract conceptualizing abilities (AC)' with Miller's 'novelty' as the phrasing behind Kolb's AC implies a quest for scientific theorisation which rigorous narrowness seems to contradict the fluid decolonising approach we have embraced so far.)

in order to produce action-learning/action-research experiences with four outcomes: a) participants become more futures literate; b) new questions are posed regarding a specific topic participants care about; c) the underlying anticipatory systems and processes of participants are revealed; and d) the effectiveness of different FLL designs are tested. There are many different kinds of FLL with the variation depending in part on the AA that are targeted by the Lab design. FLL-N refers to the Novelty version that aims to scaffold the Lab's learning voyage in such a way that participants engage not only with Anticipation for Future, but also with Anticipation for Emergence.

Recent research, followed closely by FL practitioners, is hinting at the necessity to develop existing or new tools to explore, build, strengthen, and make use of our futures literacy.⁷⁴ The project currently launched at Wits University aims at exploring the customisation of futures literacy learning processes in this quest for self- and community-based decolonial resurgence.

4 **Capability building**

Engaging the imagination of communities' imagination to strengthen their resilience is based on a philosophy of endogenous knowledge production (4.4) fueled by the shattering of the coloniality of power rooted in the parameters of knowledge production (4.1). Such a postcolonial definition of the actors of knowledge production (4.2) has also followed the evolution of the definition of learning as a life-long journey (4.3), made even more relevant by its capacities for healing, well-being and transformation sought in the making.

4.1. The bio- and geopolitics of knowledge production

'I am invisible, understand, simply because they refuse to see me. (...) When they approach me, they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me.'⁷⁵ This famous passage from Ellison's *Invisible Man*, a novel about a Black man in the United States sets the stage for critiques of any form of discourse that subjugates one human being in the eyes of another. Historically, research is associated with European colonialism, being characterized as 'knowledge about indigenous peoples [...] collected, classified and then represented back to the West.'⁷⁶ Late 20th century critiques of ethno-anthropology have made similar observations, questioning the very

⁷⁴ de Boer, A., Wiekens, C., & Damhof, L. (2018). 'How Futures Literate are you? Exploratory research on how to operationalize and measure Futures Literacy'. *6th International Conference on Future-Oriented Technology Analysis (FTA) – Future in the Making*, Brussels: 4-5 June 2018.

⁷⁵ Ellison, R. (1965) *Invisible Man*, London, Penguin Books. (reissued 2016). (p. 3)

⁷⁶ L. T. Smith, (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London: Zed Books. (p. 1)

epistemology of the field of studies: who was studying whom, from where knowledge was drawn, how knowledge was collected and analysed, and more generally, what knowledge was considered valuable.

Power resides in the ability to make such decisions, and thus determines the agency of the researcher.⁷⁷ A power made even more ambiguous as the object of study would then learn from the researcher about her or himself.⁷⁸ Scheurich and Young remind us that ‘when any group [...] significantly dominates other groups for hundreds of years, the ways of the dominant group (its epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies), not only become the dominant ways of that civilisation, but also these ways become so deeply embedded that they typically are seen as ‘natural’ or appropriate norms rather than as historically evolved social constructions.’⁷⁹ Not only the universalisation, but the assimilated naturalisation of a certain set of epistemologies (ways of knowing) and ontologies (ways of being) are at the core of the unlearning process in the way we now conduct research in Africa and worldwide. Having diagnosed our bias under the name of racialisation or more specifically ‘coloniality of power’, we now aspire to unlearn in order to construct a new spectrum of shared meanings. Liberatory epistemologies thus inform the research methods used to generate knowledges.^{80,81,82,83}

Drawing on the role of performativity, thinkers such as Kusch state that we can make ‘no form of affirmation [as enunciators] without being involved and [thus] transformed in our act of affirming.’⁸⁴ Discourses shape learning and therefore knowledge. Historically, the learning curve was left to the exogenous, external researcher, precluding the necessary humility required for amore holistic grid of understanding of indigenous cultures.⁸⁵ Building on the philosophy of the Freirean pedagogy of the oppressed, post-colonial research rapidly

⁷⁷ Nagar, R. (2002). Footloose researchers, Traveling Theories and the Politics of Transnational Feminist Praxis. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 9, 179-186. (esp. p. 179: ‘a reflexive analysis of how the production of ethnographic knowledge is shaped by the shifting contextual, and relational contours of the researcher’s social identity.’)

⁷⁸ Mamdani, M. (2011). The importance of research in a university. *MISR Working Paper*, No. 3, 2011. (p. 6: ‘to relegate Africa to providing raw materials (‘data’) to outside academics who process it and then re-export their theories back to Africa.’)

⁷⁹ Scheurich J., & Young, M. (1997). Coloring Epistemologies: Are our Research Epistemologies Racially Biased? *Educational Researcher*, 26(4). (pp. 4-16.)

⁸⁰ Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (Perspectives on Gender)*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

⁸¹ Smith, L. T. (2000). Kaupapa Maori research. In *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*, ed. Marie Battiste, Vancouver, British Columbia University Press. (p. 225-247.)

⁸² Sarr, F. (2016). *Afrotopia*. Paris, Philippe Rey. (p. 12. Our own translation from the French: « Plus que d'un déficit d'image, c'est de celui d'une pensée et d'une production de ses propres métaphores du futur que souffre le continent africain. »)

⁸³ Voluntarily using feminist theorist Waldby’s plural form of knowledges as also reproduced by Tlotsanova and Mignolo.

⁸⁴ Kusch, R. (1978). quoted by Marina Tlotsanova and Walter Mignolo, *op. cit.*. (p. 10.)

⁸⁵ Mohanty, C. (1988). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review* 30, 61–88. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1988.42>

assimilated the Batesonian notion of metalogue, the ability to ‘learn from actors without imposing on them an *a priori* definition of their world building capacities.’^{86,87,88} In doing so, one shifts the ‘geography of reasoning’ from the enunciated to the enunciator to cite Lewis Gordon’s expression.

Following this principle, participatory action research emerged as an option for greater dialogue between researchers and their objects of study, especially in development practice.⁸⁹ The biopolitics and geopolitics of power of knowledge persisted, however, as participatory approaches were reduced to extractive data collection instruments.⁹⁰ Following Fanon’s call for the dropping of the ‘White mask’, Mignolo and Maldonado-Torres call for ‘epistemic disobedience’ as a way to ‘delink’ from the Western epistemological assumption that there is a ‘detached and neutral point of observation’.^{91,92}

In that sense, decolonial studies engages with the politics of knowledge creation parallel to the politics of self-determination.⁹³ This requires a ‘definitive rejection of ‘being told’...what we are, what our ranking is in relation to the ideal of humanitas and what we have to do to be recognised as such’.⁹⁴ Knowledge is seen as part of a circular process for learning. Any design of a learning curve should therefore be structured around the needs of a community and its members. Questions asked by the community can be listed as follows: what we wish to liberate ourselves from, what we wish to learn about ourselves, and the world that surrounds us and our relations with it. We can then draw a positive correlation between the level of investment of the community in the learning process and their empowerment, which promotes an ‘iterative cycle of research, discussion and action’.⁹⁵ Decolonised communities are therefore not only subjected to studies and analyses, but are understood as actually actors of learning,

⁸⁶ Freire, P. (1972). *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London, Penguin Books.

⁸⁷ Bateson, G. (2000). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

⁸⁸ Latour, B. (1999). On Recalling ANT. *The Sociological Review*, 47. (p. 18-27.)

⁸⁹ Schurr, C. & Segebart, D. (2012) Engaging with feminist postcolonial concerns. *Geographica Helvetica*, 67, p. 147-154. (esp. p. 148-149.)

⁹⁰ Kapoor, I. (2005). Participatory Development, Complicity and Desire, *Third World Quarter*, 26, p. 1203–1220. (esp. p. 1205.)

⁹¹ Mignolo, W. (2009). Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and decolonial freedom. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(7/8). (p. 160.)

⁹² Maldonado-Torres, N. (2011). Thinking through the decolonial turn: Post-continental interventions in theory, philosophy, and critique—An introduction. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1(2), 2011, p. 1-15.

⁹³ Nakata, M., Nakata, V., Keech, S., & Bolt, R. (2012). ‘Decolonial goals and pedagogies for Indigenous studies’, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), p. 120-14. (esp. p. 123.)

⁹⁴ Mignolo, W. (2009). *Op. cit.* (p 161.)

⁹⁵ Catalani, C., & Minkler, M. (2010) Photovoice: A Review of the Literature in Health and Public Health. *Health Education & Behavior*, 37(3), p. 424-45. (esp. p. 445.)

thereby contributing to the redefinition of learning experiences, but also of their own empowerment (human agency).

4.2. From objects of study to actors of learning: participatory action research

Participatory research comes in many forms: the reality check approach (immersions into the households of the ‘unheard’), photovoice (using photographic techniques to identify, represent and enhance one’s community ⁹⁶, theatre for development,⁹⁷ digital storytelling (first person voice-storytelling supported by technology combining art therapy with participatory media production, orality and creative writing), co-operative inquiry, participatory rural appraisal,⁹⁸ participatory learning and action (PLA), participatory learning research and of course, participatory action research.⁹⁹

Participatory futures cover a broad range of citizen-centered approaches to the exploration of possible futures, starting with the fundamental acknowledgement of the plasticity of futures. Amongst the objectives identified by the futurists Ramos, Sweeney, Peach and Smith for NESTA, the ‘translat[ion] of collective images of the future into new collective actions and behavior in the present’ resonate the most with the objectives of participatory action research.¹⁰⁰

Participatory action research is sometimes distinguished into two formats. The first is collaboration between professional practitioners and academic researchers, or practitioners with professional researchers. The second consists in working directly and immediately with persons affected.¹⁰¹ This distinction has not been preserved in critical indigenous studies insofar as it preserves the classification of co-researchers’ agency depending on the given label: ‘service user’, ‘practitioner’ or ‘patient’. Indeed, the desire to learn in order to know oneself, heal and transform is rightly embraced by all, regardless of status.

As affirmed by Robertson, action research is a project for social justice and social change and therefore committed to ‘reciprocity, reflexivity and reflection’.¹⁰² When structured around a

⁹⁶ Catalani, C., & Minkler, M. (2010). *Op. cit.* Wang, C., and Burris, M.A. (1997). Photovoice Concept, Methodology and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behaviour*, 24, 369-387.

⁹⁷ Abdullahi, J. and Salaudeen, H. (2017). Theatre for Development and Women Empowerment in Northern Nigeria: A Study of 2015 Kuyambana Development Communication Field Experience. In H. Abdulaheem, S. Aliyu, & R. Akano (Eds.), *Literature, Integration and Harmony in Northern Nigeria*. Kwara State, University Press.

⁹⁸ Kapoor, I. (2005). *Op. cit.*

⁹⁹ See more: <https://participatesdgs.org/research-activities/the-sustainable-livelihoods-foundation/>.

¹⁰⁰ Ramos, J.M., Sweeney, J., Peach, K., & Smith, L. (2019). Our futures: by the people, for the people: How mass involvement in shaping the future can solve complex problem. *NESTA*. (p 15.)

¹⁰¹ Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory Research Methods: a Methodological approach in Motion. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 13(1). (p. 8)

¹⁰² Robertson, J. (2000). The three Rs of action research methodology: Reciprocity, reflexivity and reflection-on-reality. *Educational Action Research*, 8(2), 307-326. (esp. p. 310.)

community, we refer to these methods as community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR methodological principles put a strong emphasis on empowerment and community- and individual- capacity-building through a balance between research and action, and ensuring shared reflection, critical dialogue, knowledge cocreation, and agency.¹⁰³ Action research is consequently tailored to meet its participants or co-researchers' expectations. The benefit from their involvement emerges from the contextualisation of the activity to nurture reflection on co-researchers' practices and on facilitating researchers' theories.

4.2.1. Dealing with exogeneity: participatory research contexts from contact spaces to transformative spaces

Participatory approaches result from the perception of research contexts as 'transformative spaces' (Segebart, 2012) or 'contact spaces' as in the eponymous title of Askins & Pain's article.¹⁰⁴

Herein lies the source of tension within participatory research as practiced today: working and walking the fine line of the 'indigene-colonizer hyphen'.¹⁰⁵ Participatory research contexts foster renewed relations between different worlds, what Nagar calls 'situated solidarities' in the midst of intersectionality.¹⁰⁶ Empowerment sought through the creation of knowledge emerges from the negotiation between the external researcher and the community she addresses. Participatory research is inherently, about external-internal relations with a blurred identification of the initiative agent as in the case of exogenous sources of funding for research despite a prospectively endogenous call for projects.

Research, even when intended to promote capacity-building, reflects the dynamics of power that ironically are the subject of study. Indigenist researchers are then encouraged to emphasise the agenda at play, and to recall the project of early decolonisation theorists with

¹⁰³ Catalani, C., & Minkler, M. (2010). *Op. cit.* (p. 425) quoting Israel, B. A., Schulz, A. J., Parker, E. A., & Becker, A. B. (1998). Review of community-based research: assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 19, 173–202.

¹⁰⁴ Askins, K., & Pain, R. (2011). Contact Zones: Participation, Materiality, and the Messiness of Interaction. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23(5), 803–821.

¹⁰⁵ Jones, A., & Jenkins, K. (2008). Rethinking Collaboration: Working the Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln & L. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 471–486.

¹⁰⁶ Nagar, R., & Geiger, S. (2007). Reflexivity and Positionality in Feminist Fieldwork Revisited. In A. Tickell, E. Sheppard, J. Peck, & T. Barnes (Eds.), *Politics and Practice in Economic Geography*. London: SAGE Publishing, p. 267–278. (esp. p. 269.)

respect to the notion of Afrocentricity. 'Afrocentricity is a perspective which allows Africans to be subjects of their own historical experiences rather than objects.'¹⁰⁷

Different from the colonisation-centered definition of decolonisation of these earlier days, this form of Afrocentricity is conceived as both resurgence and resistance. We are encouraged to view resistance as the 'emancipatory imperative for Indigenist research'.¹⁰⁸ However, reading between the lines of work produced by Indigenous researchers, we understand resistance as a series of context-induced practices and behaviors arising as a philosophy of being in the face of adversity. Context is situated in both time and space: '[t]he 'local' that localizes critical theory is always historically specific.'¹⁰⁹ It is then, too restrictive to limit Indigenous agency to their opposition to the dominant system, in short, to reduce it to an epistemology of denunciation. In relation to the Other who could also act as a co-researcher, we are encouraged to think beyond primary resistance as a reactive mechanism defining our methods in opposition to Western models, and rather, embracing resistance as fluid and adaptable resilience through reflexivity and reciprocity.

As expressed by most authors cited in this section, embracing participatory action research should not be considered a rejection of dominant forms of research axiology. European researchers in various fields, such as development geography, have also had to address the global West/South divisions. As well, they have had to consider the distinctions between indigenous elite and non-elite groups, although without necessarily addressing Spivak's theorization of subalternity. How do subalterns express themselves or, as she writes, 'Can the subaltern speak?' How do they share ideas and paradigms with the rest of the world? Can the implantation or persistency of (neo-)colonising processes be prevented in our knowledge creation systems? Regardless of exogenous researchers' involvement in various projects, what can be done when our minds have already been colonised by methods and ideas of knowledge creation? How do we become subjects of research and knowledge? How do subalterns own their ideas?

4.2.2. A manifesto of participatory action research: learning-by-doing for learning-by-being

First, we acknowledge that participatory research can never be virginally unspoiled by epistemological assumptions. This implies that forms of recolonisation never cease to emerge.

¹⁰⁷ Asante, M.K. (1993). *Malcolm X as Cultural Hero and Other Afrocentric Essays*. Trenton, Africa World Press. Quoted by Rigney, L. (1999). Internationalization of an Indigenous anticolonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenist Research Methodology and its principles. *Wicazo sa review*, 14. (p. 110)

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* (Rigney, L. (1999), p. 116.)

¹⁰⁹ Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2008). Introduction: Critical Methodologies and Indigenous Inquiry,' In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln & L. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, p. 1-28. (esp. p. 12.)

The liberating power of participatory action research, however, lies not in the absence of colonising efforts, but rather, in the systemic challenge to any attempt to colonise the process itself.

Second, we acknowledge that knowledge cocreation is a negotiated process, which requires thorough cooperative design involving all actors. Referring to Lather, Robertson identifies maximum reciprocity as a capital trust-inducer to allow room for shared meaning and reflexivity leading to collective reflection.¹¹⁰ Empowerment thus stems from the humility of all parties. Humility exists as a form of ethics and commitment, a responsibility, reflected in every step of the process. This begins from the initiative of the inquiry to the measurement of success indicators. Beyond the ‘insider’/’outsider’ dichotomy, the identity of the researcher influences ‘the type of information they are able to collect during fieldwork’ even in South-South research. Here, we take as an example of a Nigerian mother conducting research work on and with women in post-conflict Liberia.¹¹¹ Co-researchers are invited to acknowledge not only their doing (research), but also their being (identity) and the way they are perceived into the design of the research experience. The acknowledgement of the consequential alteration of one’s identity by and through the involvement of several identities reduces the gap between individuals by revealing their differences, rendering them common. It also creates a contact space where negotiation of meanings through, but not limited to, *logos* can take place. This is what de Souza Santos describes as the principles of intercultural interpretation.¹¹²

Third, ‘self-determination intersects with the locus of power in the research setting.’¹¹³ Being at the forefront of the inquiry is an essential research design principle for Indigenous-led transformative knowledge creation. As such, participatory action research is initiated by and rooted in a collaborative participatory performative inquiry. One of the pioneer research methodologists, Tuhiwai Smith, recommends a list of eight questions when seeking to conduct participatory action research work:

1. What research do we want done?
2. Whom is it for?
3. What difference will it make?
4. Who will carry it out?

¹¹⁰ Robertson, J. (2000). *Op. cit.* (p 311.)

¹¹¹ Bob-Milliar, G.M. (2020) Introduction: Methodologies for researching Africa, *African Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa011>, referring to the work of Yacob-Haliso, O. (2018). Intersectionalities and access in fieldwork in post-conflict Liberia. *African Affairs* 118/470, 168–181.

¹¹² de Souza Santos, B. (2014). *Op. cit.* (p. 212-235)

¹¹³ Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2008). *Op. cit.* (p. 3.)

5. How do we want the research done?
6. How will we know it is worthwhile?
7. Who will own the research?
8. Who will benefit?¹¹⁴

To cite Ifowodo's Ph.D thesis chapter title, one of the main role of research works lies in its ability to match the word with the wound.¹¹⁵ More than producing knowledge per se, participatory action research at the inquiry of its direct beneficiaries provide them with an opportunity to put words on their suffering. Damaged by the erasure of their own relevance in the global sphere, altered by their imagination held captive, entrapping their agency, African co-researchers are searching to learn, act and heal, three concepts often wrongly captured under the notion of 'emancipation' or 'empowerment'. The reflective posture is indeed common to the three, as it requires humility, time and self-understanding through iterative experimentation. One could even see in learning both 'power to' (increased access) and 'power on' (what is known cannot enslave), 'power over' (ability to decide) in action, and 'power from' (self-positioning) in healing. All three concur to a profound transformation of prevalent structures of power.¹¹⁶ While research is about power in its plurality of forms, healing, however, covers a subjectivity that escapes from interpersonal power relations. This is what an Indigenous-led and Indigenous-owned research inquiry can and is invited to capture.

Fourth, this is not 'made for Africa' knowledge. Fals-Borda and Rahman define participatory action research as the 'enlightenment and awakening of common peoples', while Bergold and Thomas articulate its aim around the 'reconstruction of their knowledge and ability in a process of understanding and empowerment.'¹¹⁷ Such expressions around purpose connote a desire to invite the margin into the center without questioning its codes. More bluntly when applied to African actors, it embraces the catch-up philosophy that leads us to simply 'add Africa [to the larger globalised soup] and stir'.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, capability-based approaches to knowledge provides researchers with a 'potent tool to deprovincialise their object of study'.¹¹⁹ The outcomes of the research and the methodological tools and approaches embraced in this

¹¹⁴ Smith, L. T. (2000). *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁵ Ifowodo, O.E. (2010). Chapter 4: Till the Wound and the Word Fit: Healing the Postcolonial Body-Politic in Derek Walcott's Omeros. In *Re-Constructing Identities: History, Trauma and Healing in The Post-Colonial Narrative*, Cornell University,.

¹¹⁶ Mestiri, S. (2018). *Op. cit.* (p. 119-125.)

¹¹⁷ Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012) *Op. cit.* (p. 8: for both their quotation and Fals-Borda and Rahman's, see note 19.)

¹¹⁸ Abrahamsen, R. (2016). Africa and international relations: Assembling Africa, studying the world. *African Affairs*, 116/462, 125–139. (esp. p. 127.)

¹¹⁹ Bob-Milliar, G.M. (2020). *Op. cit.* (p. 8.)

quest should be freed from the ‘we’ and ‘they’ dichotomy to unearth or create a transformative understanding of knowledge useful to its readers, without a need to capitalise on Western *répertoire d’action*.

Fifth, participatory research as hereby defined does not further the commodification of knowledge. Yes, there is a direct correlation between empowerment on the one hand, and skill development and network-strengthening for resilience on the other. There is, however, an omnipresent danger of a transactional approach to skill development as part of a productive economy rather than a transformational approach much more favored in Indigenous literature. The reflexivity that is sought does not take the form of a discovery of an exogenous truth. The transformative role of learning is self-awareness, the knowers’ understanding of the world they are immersed in. From Gouldner to Robertson passing by the duo Berger and Luckmann cited by the latter, reflexivity as a mutual benefit can be assessed through critical inquiry. Gouldner’s questions are the following: ‘How has this research transformed you? Has it penetrated deeply into your daily life and work? Has it varied your self-awareness of your work as a [*purposefully removed by the authors of this review to leave room for any profession or status to be referred, not simply the main researcher’s*]?’¹²⁰ Co-researchers are invited to recontextualise their practice. We are therefore keen to believe alongside Denzin and Lincoln that the ‘purpose of [decolonised] research is not the production of new knowledge per se.’ Purpose would be found in the ‘production of moral discernment, a commitment to praxis, an ethic of resistance.’¹²¹ Such efforts support and sustain process as a source of learning by itself: the notion of learning-by-doing grows in favor of learning-for-being.

The ethics of research complement the politics of resurgence. Admitting that knowledge is socially, historically, and locally situated implies acknowledging the multi-layered dimensions of learning. The liberation of learning is synchronous with the liberation of time, freed from its colonially preconceived linearity. Knowledge is not only vertical, transferrable, but also negotiated, circular. It is also emergent. Participatory action research thus provides a third dimension to knowledge that cannot be planned for, but should be accounted for. Decolonial resurgence is the emergence of a surrounding environment composed of and made for learning.

Finally, alongside with German researchers Caroline Schurr and Dörte Segebart, we advocate for ‘structural transformations of both knowledge production and development cooperation

¹²⁰ Robertson, J. (2000). *Op. cit.* (p. 321.)

¹²¹ Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2008). *Op. cit.* (p. 18.)

[which includes] new funding schemes for research and development cooperation, a rethinking of evaluation criteria for both academic success and development progress, obligatory training in [...] [de]colonial thought, and reflexivity in academia and development practice'.¹²² As discussed above, the investment of co-researchers' imaginaries as the source of relief for their wounds should not be neglected in our quest for resurgence.

4.2.3 Resurgent agency: the power of participatory futures

Participatory action research invites for the reintroduction of what Norah Barongo-Muweke calls 'citizenship awareness' or 'consciousness' into learning processes. Drawing from Dirk Lange's scientific framework of citizenship awareness and political didactic structuring Barongo-Muweke takes upon this statement the 'need to integrate consciousness as analytical category in the international scientific debate.'¹²³ She therefore concurs to the integration of learners' conceptions and conditions as conditions of learning which should inform a decolonised educative practice.

By democratising long-term thinking, participatory futures provide an additional layer of depth to participatory action research. Empowerment cannot simply be 'power to', reduced to an increased access to knowledge production. As such, participatory futures should not only democratize futures tools from predictive data production to scenario building. The objective is not only methodological, but ontological. We understand that these futures tools abide by a specific episteme that should not be imposed upon anyone seeking resurgence. The use of the future we seek is empowering by attribute and by impulse. It does not predefine a right way of using the future. Futures are a playground, malleable, expandable, a perfect space for experimentation.

Aligned with the classification of 'power' operated by Hollander and Offerman and further explored by Batliwala, participatory action research covers the desire to be effectively capable to make decisions relevant to one's contexts (power from). It is also the opportunity to affirm oneself against all forms of oppression or reproduction, which first requires the detection of pervasive expressions of inequitable power relations.¹²⁴ Once again, the detection does not imply a preexisting essence of the self in opposition to the other. It however contrasts

¹²² Schurr C., & Segebart, D. (2012). *Op. cit.* (p. 152.)

¹²³ Barongo-Muweke, N. (2016). *Decolonizing Education: Towards Reconstructing a Theory of Citizenship*, Basel: Springer. (p. 274.)

¹²⁴ Hollander, E.P. & Offerman, L.R. (1990). Power and leadership in organizations: Relationships in transition. *American Psychologist*, 45(2), 179-189.

belonging to a complex and uncertain multiplayer environment with entrapment in the eyes and mouth of an enunciator that does not allow for other axiologies than its own.

As an overall, negotiating the abovementioned indigene-colonizer hyphen is revealed to be one of the necessary means to the quest for resurgence. It ensures the acquisition of ‘power with’, a capacity not based on the essentialisation of our identities or differences, a stock, but on our ability to experiment enough futures to understand the dynamics of heterogeneity, i.e. a flux.

In the meantime, negotiation also paves the way for discussions around the conditions of change themselves, change in our agency and creativity framed in an inherited epistemic system of norms produced by violence.¹²⁵ Participatory action research as an inclusive practice-enhancing process stresses upon the recognition of communities’ agency. Its design renders local knowledge and local social spheres and networks vital to both the existence and pertinence of the research process itself since no learning can bloom in the absence of learners.

The process is an open circle ‘based on complexity and relationism, complementarity and reciprocity.’¹²⁶ This implies that community learning is a practice that never ends, on the one hand, and that the object-subject model disappears in favor of the subject-subject model, on the other: practitioners proceed to the action research of their own practices, while ‘the researcher’s actions become the practitioners’ research.’¹²⁷

This is rendered powerful and meaningful by the reference to an item that does not exist, e.g. futures. The laziness of orthodox reason is directly challenged in its inability to fathom objects that it does not comprehend as part of its whole. Polycentricity of actors, of sources and manifestations of knowledge creates non-hierarchical (heterarchical) communication and contributes to the blossoming and negotiation of shared meanings.

All of the above from polycentricity to heterarchy are significant attributes of a reexploration of the conditions of change for reclaimed, resurgent agency. They dissent from the predominantly abstract practices ‘understood as mirroring the prevalence of top-down approaches to knowledge construction and the scientific relevance of bottom-up approaches.’¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Kisukidi, N. Y. (2015). Décoloniser la philosophie ou De la philosophie comme objet anthropologique. *Présence africaine* 2(192), 83-98.

¹²⁶ Tlostanova, M. and Mignolo W. (2012). *Op. cit.*

¹²⁷ Robertson, J. (2000). *Op. cit.* (p. 324).

¹²⁸ Barongo-Muweke, N. (2016). *Op. cit.* (p. 271.)

Rather than working in abstract, theory is grounded to complement practice. Kemmis and McTaggart's notion of 'ideas-in-action' or Glaser and Strauss's 'grounded theory' reflects the evolution of the cyclical definition of learning through a reflective cycle of observation, reflection, planning and action.¹²⁹ The latter is referred to experiential learning and implies experimentation, learning-by-doing.

Why learning by-doing? First, because the learning experience is multisensorial, encouraging both perception and action, and more specifically, acute perception for enhanced action and experimental action for novel perception. The iterative reciprocity between the two makes the learning both wholesome and holistic. Second, because different research agendas are at play: there are as many agendas on the table as there are questions and voices. '[T]he aim of the inquiry and the research questions develop out of the convergence of two perspectives—that of science and of practice.'¹³⁰ Although Bergold unnecessarily separates the two, such a distinction flags a multi-purpose stimulation, situated between optimisation futures (the desire to improve what we know) and novelty futures (the openness to the never-can-be-known).

Since learning-by-doing hereby defined encourages process over product or process as product, on-the-ground capability-building requires a careful layout of design principles.

4.3. Design principles of endogenous capacity-building

To define endogenous capacity-building, it is important to draw a distinction between indigenous & endogenous knowledge. As identified in Section 1, we have noticed the relevance of border thinking as a 'specific epistemic response from the exteriority of Western modernity, a response from the outside created from the perspective of the inside'.¹³¹ Since the colonial matrix of power has subjugated the world from Latin America to Oceania passing by Europe and Africa, the process of delinking from it emerges from both outside and inside, acknowledging internal, endogenous solutions to issues that emerged from within the matrix itself.

Delinking does not imply a rejection of all forms of non-Indigenous knowledge. First, because the line between strict authenticity and exogeneity is blurred by history as records have been written by all parties. Second, because it would only lead us to compete with the West under the same epistemological rules previous post- and de-colonial thinkers have been denouncing.

¹²⁹ Robertson, J. (2000). *Op. cit.* (p. 310.)

¹³⁰ Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012) *Op. cit.* (p. 2.)

¹³¹ Tlostanova, M. and Mignolo W. (2012). *Op. cit.* (p. 7.)

Mignolo's 'delinking' means a shift in the geography of reason to 'subsume [all forms of knowledge regardless of its origins] within the vision, needs and life style of Indigenous nations'.¹³² We are therefore not diving into Indigenous knowledge per se, despite how important it is to identify who Indigenous people are, what their systems of value entail and how they connect with the rest of the world. What will be at the core of the knowledge to be produced is endogenous knowledge creation principles, regardless of its sources of influence.

In the meantime, we also embrace the West African concept of Sankofa, literally translated as 'It's not taboo to go back to the source and fetch what you forgot.'¹³³ Comfort comes from the multidimensional temporality, which is the overarching principle of endogenous capacity-building. The latter can only emerge from a re-appropriation of both time and space, hence the use of futures as a playground, i.e. as both time and space. Capacity-building can never truly be linear as the development of an unused or unknown skill mastered over time with effective teaching and regular practice. Capacity-building is thought as a never-ending pathway to wisdom as freedom.

Following the lead of Tlostanova and Mignolo, our design principles draw inspiration from models such as Amawtay Wasi (the Intercultural university of the People and Nations of Ecuador), which aspires to develop reflective and intuitive practices of wise people under the leadership of Indigenous and non-Indigenous intellectuals and activists. Quoting Panikkar, the two explore the cognitive, educational, and hermeneutic foundation of Amawtay Kasi structured around an imparative philosophy, i.e. learning in a pluralistic environment.

Acknowledging the healing, wholesome virtue of learning, 'emphasis is on being rather than doing. [...] There is no sense of object and subject: all is one. Mind, body, emotions and spirit are not separate, and humans are not separate from the earth and everything on and in it.'¹³⁴ This implies a pedagogy of hope and freedom, seeking the whole, which is the definition of an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Individualities are not drowned in the collective. Borrowing from feminist theory, especially Mohanty and Kergoat, this methodology encourages an increased awareness of the

¹³² *Ibid.* (p. 15.)

¹³³ Bangura, A. K. (2011). *African-Centered Research Methodologies: From Ancient Times to the Present*, San Diego: Cognellap. (p. 175.)

¹³⁴ Nabigon, H., & Mawhiney, A. (1996). Aboriginal theory: A Cree medicine wheel guide for healing first nations. In F. J. Turner (Ed.), *Social work treatment: Interlocking theoretical approaches* (4th ed., pp. 18-38). New York: The Free Press. (p. 21.) In the medicine wheel model, 'the purpose of the movement of (and between) the circles is learning and healing towards balance of the three circles and six dimensions of the wheel.'¹³⁴ The Cree wheel resonates with the Kawsay fundamental principle of the 'inextricable link between the 'being', the 'existence' and the 'doing' (human agency) or the principle of relational-experiential rationality.' The inextricable link between the moral and the material forms a political principle: mutuality, or interdependence.

« difference between women » in feminist decolonial studies, further apart from ‘discursive colonialism’ implicated by the monolithic ‘us women’.¹³⁵ The whole encourages, nurtures and determines ‘difference between members of the same community’¹³⁶, difference born from the relational rather than from mapping or classification.

Now referred to in complexity theory, the notion of relationality is essential to conceive human agency at all levels. This ‘relational’ takes the form of reciprocity in participatory action research as the source of reflexivity: dialogue which allows both remembering and networking is part of any critical pedagogy. Dialogue never ends, learning is therefore about finished stories but the continuation of ideas presented on the floor. This dialogue embraces ‘social network approaches [that] have the potential to reach marginalised populations of society, given the centrality of networks to power distribution in African societies.’¹³⁷ In that sense, it is power reflective. It requires an understanding of power structures that are being challenged through border thinking, but also humility in our tendency to replicate them.¹³⁸

This is why the approach undertaken embraces Sendjaya’s definition of servant leadership. Leadership theorist Sendjaya proposes a framework of servant leadership consisting of six dimensions that correspond to these values: voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and transforming influence.¹³⁹ By authentic self, he captures ‘leadership behaviours which flow from one’s true self and manifest in his/her humility, integrity, and accountability.’¹⁴⁰ Reflexivity cycles through leaders and participants.

From this extensive literature, we identify a series of decolonial research principles: indigenous people-led initiation of the inquiry, interdisciplinarity, rigorous power reflexivity, a pedagogy of hope and freedom, the wholesomeness of life-long learning, and servant leadership.

To ensure the fairness and sustainability of research efforts, the research inquiry should be ‘ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonising, and participatory’.¹⁴¹ Only then

¹³⁵ Mohanty, C. (1988). *Op. cit.* (p. 150.)

¹³⁶ Fraser, N. (2005). Multiculturalisme, antiessentialisme et démocratie radicale. *Cahiers du genre*, 2(39). (p. 33.)

¹³⁷ Bob-Milliar, G.M. (2020). *Op. cit.* (p. 7.)

¹³⁸ Feukeu, K.E. (2020). ‘Futures or the Reproduction of Oppression.’ *Futures*. TBD.

¹³⁹ Eva, N., & Sendjaya, S. (2013). Creating future leaders: An examination of youth leadership development in Australia. *Education + Training*, 55(6). (p. 592-594.)

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. (p. 593.)

¹⁴¹ Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2008). *Op. cit.* (p. 3.)

can necessity resulting from the existence of a marginalised community (Boulaga's 'being together' or *être ensemble*) be transformed into fate (Boulaga's 'acting together' or *agir en commun*).¹⁴²

5 On the Research Approach

The democratisation of knowledge production and sources, and the shattering of the coloniality of power in knowledge production through research and development programmes would include embracing of collaborative approaches such as the collective intelligence knowledge creation and co-design methods (5.1). Also of importance is the participatory, inclusive learning by doing process that the action research method provides especially when its orientation is anticipatory (5.2). However, these approaches to decolonising knowledge production also present a paradox that we must understand and properly manage to fully harness the benefits and prevent another form of coloniality (5.3).

5.1 *Collective intelligence knowledge creation and codesign*

5.1.1. Two perspectives on collective intelligence

Collective intelligence is a term that has two quite different meanings. One is that of Pierre Lévy's definition as 'a distributed form of intelligence, constantly enhanced, coordinated in real time, and resulting in the effective mobilisation of skills'.¹⁴³ In this sense, it is closely associated with technological development of networks, crowdsourcing, data mining. The Climate CoLab run by MIT aiming at channelling the collective intelligence of thousands of people is one example, as it established a contest platform for the emergence of proposals on climate change.¹⁴⁴ The Climate CoLab is a type of KnowLabs designed '*... to tap into the knowledge of a specific group of people at a specific time and place in order to sense and make sense of phenomena of all kinds*'.¹⁴⁵

Another example of mobilizing collective intelligence in futures thinking is the case of Delphis used for example as an instrument to engage citizens at large, that is, civil society, in

¹⁴² Mbonda, E.-M. (2019) « La décolonisation des savoirs est-elle possible en philosophie ? ». *Philosophiques* 46 (2). (p. 316); referring to Fabrice Eboussi Boulaga, *La crise du Muntu*, Paris, Présence africaine, 1977, (p. 145.)

¹⁴³ Lévy, P. (1997). *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*. Perseus Books, Cambridge, MA. (Published earlier in French as: Lévy, P. *L'intelligence collective*. Paris, La Découverte, 1994.)

¹⁴⁴ See: <http://www.climatecolab.org/contests/2017/exploring-synergistic-solutions-for-sustainable-development>.

¹⁴⁵ Miller, R. (2015). Learning, the Future, and Complexity. An Essay on the Emergence of Futures Literacy. *Eur. J. Educ.* 50, 513–523. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12157>

participatory policy-making processes ¹⁴⁶. McGonigal blended reality crowd-sourcing experiments are another example of such an approach associated to Futures thinking.¹⁴⁷ The implicit worldview associated with this first meaning of collective intelligence is that collective intelligence on whatever topic exists in a raw form and is a resource that can be exploited provided the appropriate means is used for that purpose.

The second meaning is about the capacity of a community to bring together a plurality of knowledge and perspectives in order to achieve a common goal. The design of this project and its implementation with regards to creation of collective intelligence is essentially related to this second aspect. An important element of futures literacy is the acceptance that our perceptions of the future are shaping how we see it and use it in the present and therefore limit our individual understanding of what can be seen and how that can be used. Knowing the future is also something on which there are no experts because no one knows the future. In this regard, the process is about creating knowledge from collective intelligence as a tool to unveil what lies at the margins, what is specific and what is not immediately seen.¹⁴⁸ The implicit worldview remains quite similar as above but the scale of extraction is limited to a more specific pre-defined group or community.

With regards to the overall objective, associating futures literacy and the capacity to decolonise, this connects with an integral futures perspective calling for an academic self-contextualisation of integral futures theory ‘... *in the long history of integral philosophies, east and west*’, and a geographical ¹⁴⁹self-contextualisation ‘... *within transnational, transcultural, planetary discourses that go beyond the Anglo-American integral discourse*’.¹⁵⁰ In one scenario on alternative futures of global governance from the perspective of the global South, Cruz indicates that creating collective intelligence as an inclusive process is a key to ‘... *enable the North and the South to create flexible, cohesive and synchronised structures, integrating and leveraging ‘others’ views and perspectives*’.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Hilbert, M., Miles, I., & Othmer, J. (2009). Foresight tools for participative policy-making in inter-governmental processes in developing countries: Lessons learned from the eLAC Policy Priorities Delphi. *Technol. Forecast. Soc. Change* 76, 880–896.

¹⁴⁷<https://www.iftf.org/future-now/article-detail/results-from-our-blended-reality-crowd-sourcing-experiment-or-more-than-300-ways-we-provoked-the/>.

¹⁴⁸ Miller, R. (2015). Op. cit.

¹⁴⁹ Integral futures refer here to the recognition that the future exists as perceptions. Therefore, reflecting on the future requires the recognition that i) different perspectives, types of knowledge and methods are equal, and ii) they are all needed to produce intermediate objects that are transdisciplinary and integrative.

¹⁵⁰ Gidley, J.M. (2010). Another view of integral futures: De/reconstructing the IF brand. *Futures* 42, 125–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2009.09.005>

¹⁵¹ Cruz, S.O. (2015). Alternative futures of global governance: scenarios and perspectives from the Global South. *Foresight* 17, 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.1108/FS-05-2014-0030>

The process of creating collective intelligence/knowledge as an integral futures project requires therefore the recognition that, because we all have anticipatory systems and we all are directly involved in the production of alternative futures by our actions in the present, everyone's perspective is equal in its potential contribution to a collective perspective. This means that if creating collective intelligence about the future is what a given community has established as its goal, all its members are on an equal footing in this process. The expected result will not be the sum of the contributions, but something that stems stems from the alchemical transmutation of that knowledge into something unexpected and different from the sum of it. In academic language, the results can be seen as the production of transdisciplinary objects, although this does not render the full dimension of the process as many contributors would not belong to disciplinary fields and scientific/academic domains. This process transcends the concept of conventional Western concepts of 'expert' and 'expertise' when all participants are experts and bring expertise to the process as well as different perspectives.

5.1.2. The co-design quandary

One challenge however in designing a project, which aims at creating collective knowledge or intelligence in relation to using the future is how co-design can take place in the emergence of such an initiative. To be internally consistent with the notion of integral futures, co-designing has to take place at all stages of the process. The unsolvable question or tension that arises is that of the integral nature of the initiative at its emergence point - that is, when the idea of such a project comes to the mind of a person or an organisation (but usually a person). There is no evidence of spontaneous emergence of this kind of endeavour as the direct result of an autonomous and spontaneous process of emergence of collective intelligence. Even with the first sense of collective intelligence as distributed knowledge with an intrinsic capacity to self-evolve and transform, the passage from that collective knowledge in the intellectual realm to the actionable realm requires at least someone to suggest the interest of doing it (that is, the topic, the intention and the way of doing it at least).

The Climate CoLab is an example of the co-design quandary, since even in this case there was an initial intention that was not determined through a co-design process. How then can a co-design project be genuinely co-designed? Better, what is the minimum level of non-co-design that is acceptable when a project includes co-design as its systematic mode of operation?

One possible, yet partial, answer is the iterative process of prototyping and designing the KnowLabs, as collective intelligence knowledge creation with the objective of designing its principle through experiments conducted with a diversity of people and topics, but all contributing to refining the concept. However, this still does not solve the question whether the idea of developing Knowlabs was co-designed and to what extent the decision made on the topics to which they are applied was the result of a co-design process.

Another partial but necessary approach is being explicit about the ethical qualities of the co-design and promoting a conscious reflexivity in the co-design process, as also indicated in the section on Futures Literacy as Capability. Presenting the process as one of continual learning, requiring critical attention to assumptions, values, influences, methods, interactions, choices, limitations, etc. throughout the process becomes an important way to help co-design organisers and participants to be more aware of their thoughts and feelings, and of their own roles and interests.¹⁵²

Another challenge is related to co-design directly connects to the question of creating collective intelligence with a decolonising perspective in a future-oriented project rooted in transdisciplinarity. While contributors from various fields and different perspectives are theoretically all experts on an equal footing, the challenge is about ensuring that in practice this will really happen. This challenge is in fact not limited to co-design as it includes also co-production of knowledge and co-implementation.¹⁵³

5.2 Action research

5.2.1. In a nutshell: from definition to operation

In its broadest sense, action research can be characterised as a research activity that ‘... *seeks transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research, which are linked together by critical reflection*’.¹⁵⁴ This reflective dimension is something that so far distinguishes action research from transdisciplinarity research¹⁵⁵ justifying thus the need for a specific attention on this particular type of research in association

¹⁵² Steen, M. (2013). Co-Design as a Process of Joint Inquiry and Imagination. *Design Issues* 29(2), 16-28. https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00207

¹⁵³ Lawrence, R.J. (2015). Advances in transdisciplinarity: Epistemologies, methodologies and processes. *Futures* 65, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2014.11.007>

¹⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_research

¹⁵⁵ Lawrence, R.J. (2015). *Op. cit.*

with transdisciplinary research. Rogers et al.,¹⁵⁶ see a direct connection between action research and future thinking. Action research brings people together in order to ‘...define a desired future and undertake well-informed actions that will expand their knowledge, enhance their competencies, and overcome challenges for moving to that future’.

The term ‘action research’ is often associated with different qualifiers such as collaborative, participatory community-based, collective, that all reinforce the inclusive dimension of this particular type of research. ‘Participatory action research’ for example aims not only at associating scientists to solve a problem people are facing, but also at involving them in action, operating in a way that fulfils participants’ expectations, and guarantees validated results within a negotiated partnership that recognises the roles different actors play in the various steps of the research process.¹⁵⁷

Of particular interest with respect to futures studies is the work of Ramos and its analysis of the confluence between action research and futures studies.¹⁵⁸ He defines action research through five characteristics that such a process often displays. These all point towards action research as a tool for decolonising research.¹⁵⁹ Action research:

1. Generates practical being and action for human betterment.
2. Is inclusive of plural ways of knowing in the constitution of theory and practice.
3. Is iterative and heuristic, a continual process of evolving inquiry and action, by learning from reflections on successes and failures.
4. Is research by participants for participants, which addresses the fundamental question of ‘research for whose benefit?’
5. Operates with a democratic ethos, which aims to critique power relations, address grievances of marginalised groups and achieve local empowerment in the face of entrenched institutionalised power.

¹⁵⁶ Rogers, K.H., Luton, R., Biggs, H., Biggs, R.O., Blignaut, S., Choles, A.G., Palmer, C.G., & Tangwe, P. (2013). Fostering complexity thinking in action research for change in social- ecological systems. *Ecol. Soc.* 18. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05330-180231>

¹⁵⁷ Faure, G., Gasselin, P., Triomphe, B., Temple, L., & Hocdé, H. (2010). *Innover avec les acteurs du monde rural: la recherche-action en partenariat*, Innover avec les acteurs du monde rural: la recherche-action en partenariat. Versailles: Quae.

¹⁵⁸ Ramos, J.M. (2006). Dimensions in the confluence of futures studies and action research. *Futures* 38, 642–655. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2005.10.008>

¹⁵⁹ Ramos, J.M. (2006). *Op. cit.* (p. 644)

5.2.2. Anticipatory action research

At the time Ramos wrote his paper he had identified several futures studies that have at least implicit references to action research by known practitioners such as Bell, Bezold, Dator, or Schultz. A few years later, action research was identified as one type of participatory futures methods.¹⁶⁰ Since then, more anticipatory approaches by practitioners have claimed a direct connection with action research besides Ramos himself, such as Causal Layered Analysis as an intuitive action research approach¹⁶¹, the Futures Literacy KnowLabs¹⁶², and co-elaborative scenario-building.¹⁶³

Action research seeks to break the domination of monopolies that characterize an inner circle of initiates¹⁶⁴ and as such is a crucial component of a decolonisation process in using the future. At the community-level for example participatory anticipatory action research is a process entailing the deliberate devolution of the leading role to local organisations so that ‘... *local community organisations engage in and use future thinking as producers of foreknowledge to reflect, and potentially act, on their own futures*’.¹⁶⁵

Ramos assimilates action research as ‘... *a process of inquiry that incorporates a heuristic movement through experimental action, concrete experience, empirical observation, personal and dialogic reflection, and can thus be considered a movement toward holism*’.¹⁶⁶ Action research responds to the call to add a transdisciplinary dimension to the participatory dimension in the practice of anticipation.¹⁶⁷ Under this perspective, action research becomes also a fundamental methodology for the creation of collective intelligence within a given community sharing a common project. This happens because action research has an intrinsic local dimension which leads it to be used as an approach for designing anticipatory approaches for development policy and planning processes at a local level.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁰ Gidley, J.M., Fien, J., Smith, J.-A., Thomsen, D.C., & Smith, T.F. (2009). Participatory futures methods: towards adaptability and resilience in climate-vulnerable communities. *Environ. Policy Gov.* 19, 427–440. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.524>

¹⁶¹ Inayatullah, S., & Milojević, I. (Eds.) (2015). *CLA 2.0 Transformative Research in Theory and Practice*. Taipei: Tamkang University Press.

¹⁶² Miller, R. (2015). *Op. cit.*

¹⁶³ Bourgeois, R., Penunia, E., Bisht, S., & Boruk, D. (2017). *Op. cit.*

¹⁶⁴ Ramos, J.M. (2010). Movements toward holism in futures inquiry. *Futures* 42, 115–124. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2009.09.004>

¹⁶⁵ Bourgeois, R., Penunia, E., Bisht, S., & Boruk, D. (2017). *Op. cit.*

¹⁶⁶ Ramos, J.M. (2010). *Op. cit.*

¹⁶⁷ Gudowsky, N., & Peissl, W. (2016). Human centred science and technology—transdisciplinary foresight and co-creation as tools for active needs-based innovation governance. *Eur. J. Futur. Res.* 4(8). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40309-016-0090-4>

¹⁶⁸ Karuri-Sebina, G., & Rosenzweig, L. (2012). A case study on localising foresight in South Africa: using foresight in the context of local government participatory planning. *Foresight* 14, 26–40.

This process however faces the challenge for the participants to acknowledge their own perceptions and frames of references, to accept that others are as valid as theirs are, and to accept a transformation process that will modify all perceptions and frames of reference, waving them into a new complex perception.¹⁶⁹ When such challenges are overcome, action research can be seen as a means through which a capacity is acquired and turned into agency in an empowerment process. Through this process, it bridges the recurrent gap between anticipation and action which has been a recurrent question addressed to foresight activities, and particularly approaches focusing on alternative futures, under the form of ‘so what?’

5.3 Colonisation of the future, action research and collective intelligence: the conundrum

The figure below attempts to represent the challenges associated with connecting anticipatory endeavours focusing on action research, creation of collective intelligence and co-design with the intention to induce a decolonisation process as represented earlier in its three components.

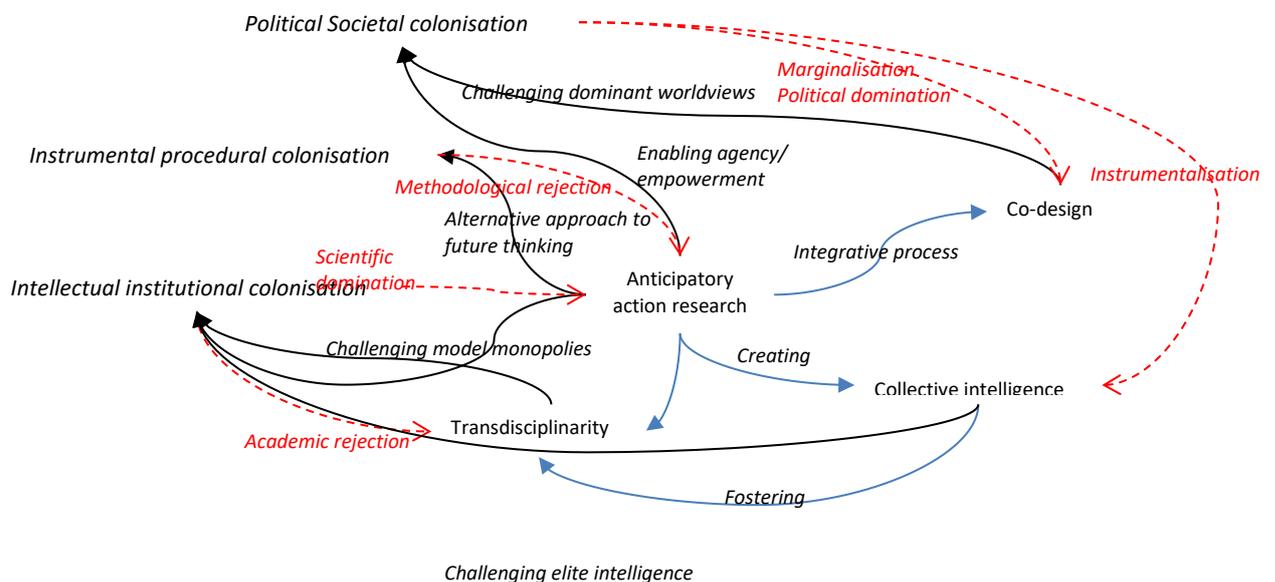


Figure 4. Source: Robin Bourgeois (original, 2020)

¹⁶⁹ Rogers, K.H. & al. (2013). *Op. cit.*

Blue arrows indicate positive interaction within the anticipatory action research-co-design-collective intelligence - transdisciplinarity complex, while black arrows indicate how the elements of this complex have potential to counter the colonisation of the future in its three dimensions. Red arrows display potential reactive actions of the colonisation process on the development of this complex, on top of the current settings of the colonisation process, which operates against the development of this complex as indicated earlier.

6 Summary – Conclusion to the Chapter

The goal of the present paper was ‘to consolidate and extend (...) manifestos for liberation in order to better identify and specify a mode of emancipation that is effective within first world neocolonising global conditions during the twenty-first century.’¹⁷⁰

Starting with a rapid overview of decolonial literature pioneered by the global South and Foucauldian/Fanonian thinkers who sought to renew research epistemologies worldwide, the authors of the present paper have wished to reflect the multidimensionality both in time and space of the urge to decolonise futures for human societies. Colonisation emerges as a multidimensional process, affirming its rules over the many, imposing its tools and vocabulary, creating a realm of the ‘haves’ separating from the ‘have nots’, leaving the latter with no room to create, design and enact their own research inquiry. This situation is analogous to the rapture of human futures, the abduction of our imaginations, by dominant systems of power from racially-structured capitalism to dominant systems of power underpinned by present-day controversial development theories.

Border thinking, identified by decolonial theorists and embraced by people from the margin, has liberated scientific epistemologies by re-situating humans at the centre of knowledge: why we search and for whom defines what we search and what we may find. In short, decolonial thinking has enabled discussions around power. Discourses around inequalities in power distribution were however very much rooted in representations of the past, especially in post-colonial literature. This is why alternative ontologies have been pursued by decolonial thinkers, embracing the invisible and the unknown that encompasses most of our daily lives. In that respect, futures appear as a self-evident example of uncertainty as understood in complexity theory.

¹⁷⁰ Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press. (p. 2.)

Futures are, indeed, loci of power, spaces of inequalities and temporality of hope. Adopting a conscious understanding of why and how humans anticipate is part of the redistribution of hope sought by humans on their pathway to freedom.¹⁷¹ If resurgence defined as the openness to the emergence of one's identity requires a more holistic understanding of transformation, any project aware of the trap of the colonisation of our futures by our narrow conception of the present should adopt a form of rigorous reflexivity as best pursued through participatory methodologies.¹⁷² This implies a capability-based approach to the use of futures, both to anticipate for the future and to anticipate for emergence. Futures Literacy is a capability that responds to this methodological and substantive necessity.

The combination of futures literacy and anticipatory participatory action research leads to the articulation of a series of design principles: indigenous people-led initiation of the inquiry, interdisciplinarity, rigorous power reflexivity, Freiran pedagogy of hope and freedom, the wholesomeness of life-long learning, and servant leadership. All of which the '[Capacity to Decolonise](#)' project will seek to adopt both in its design and implementation: towards the repossession of the 'archives of our present'.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Feukeu, K.E. (2020). *Op. cit.*

¹⁷² Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (2001). *Participation: the New Tyranny*. London, Zed Books. (p. 15.): both authors even affirm that 'rigorous reflexivity . [...] requires a level of open-mindedness that accepts that participatory development may inevitably be tyrannical and a preparedness to abandon it if this is the case.'

¹⁷³ Kisukidi, N. Y. (2000). *Op. cit.* (p. XII.)

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