The future as a public good: decolonising the future through anticipatory participatory action research

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: purpose is to nurture reflections on the colonization of the future in the present with a particular focus on Africa. We aim at exploring how participatory research, and particularly anticipatory participatory action research can contribute to a decolonising process.privatisation patterns in our dominant uses of the future, we observe that human futures are colonised whenever the future is treated as anything other than a public good. The future becomes a club or a private good whenever someone gains control over its to impose their own understanding of the world on others. A community of futurists has mobilised participatory knowledge production and local action research as a way to decolonize the future and empower communities imaginations. We revisit the principles of participatory action research as a means to advancing decolonisation in the context of African futures.offer highlights associated with connecting anticipatory endeavours focusing on action research, the creation of collective intelligence and co-design, with the intention of encouraging the decolonisation process. These include design principles and anticipate a possible conundrum of counter-decolonization.is a conceptual paper, which does not provide empirical evidence. Yet, we hope it serves as a methodological enabler that will interrogate, and hopefully even prevent, systematic colonisation of the future when engaging in future-oriented research activities in Africa and elsewhere._PRACTICAL_IMPLICATIONS_(LIMIT_100_WORDS) :No data available.provide an integral approach to the colonisation of the future, as a renewed old question. We also connect this process with a reflection on the nature of how to aspire to pursue a decolonial anticipatory action research.

THE FUTURE AS A PUBLIC GOOD: DECOLONISING THE FUTURE THROUGH ANTICIPATORY PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Introduction

For over two centuries, colonisation has been experienced worldwide as the systemic imposition of particular, exclusive or definite ways of sensing, knowing, understanding and surmising that precludes or discredits all others, from the West onto the East and then the South. Influencing policymakers (from Thomas Sankara to Aminata Dramane Traoré), decolonial thinkers have embraced the economic and political implications of colonialism, and foreseen the consequences of systemic impoverishment and North–South interdependency. This holistic understanding of colonisation has opened up methodological alternatives and motivated societies (and their peoples) to shift away from, and refuse to conform to, a single image of what is true, believable and real (Akomolafe, 2015; Césaire, 1950).

The growing decolonial literature has often drawn attention to the destruction or foreclosure of alternatives to colonial forms. It has hinted at "stolen futures" in which individuals, groups, peoples and nations are denied other trajectories and what could have been in the absence of coloniality (Feukeu forthcoming). It has focused largely on the role of colonisation in past narratives and narratives of the past and yet, colonisation may linger because of its hold on narratives of the future. This phenomenon, also qualified as a 'matrix', is known as coloniality (Quijano 2000, Lugones 2008). Futures literature has yet to pay closer attention to coloniality's impact on our capacity to anticipate and our anticipatory assumptions, and our capacity to use the future and our imaginations, which are the images of the future that we can hold.

Imaginations are key components of human life, a human life coloniality is structured to commodify like water or human bodies (slavery). The fact that something that does not exist - the future - would be exploited as a resource to be stolen therefore appears to be quite logical. The future is imaginary; that is, what exists of the future in the present is the perceptions we have of the future: our imaginations. Therefore one of the challenges in decolonising our imaginations is that our built systems — education systems, political systems, physical and social environments, cultures, worldviews etc. — are based on, or were heavily influenced by, the systems and values inherited from colonial periods that we have mistakenly attributed solely to the past. Their conditions and forces not only shaped part of our unevenly shared past but also persist in our perception, imagination, and representation of the present and the future.

Futures Studies examine why and how we use our imagination (WFSF, 2019). Imagination deals with the power of the mind to see and to form and hold images, concepts, descriptions and representations that do not exist or have not been physically experienced (yet). This ability to see and perceive with our minds phenomena that do not yet exist is essential to creating new forms, reforming old paradigms, and thinking about and (re)inventing our futures. However, various factors, such as our cultures, mores, values, physical and social environments, technologies, worldviews, education, political systems shape our imaginations, and those of others with whom we have interacted.

The question is how to extricate our imaginations from the confines of these established norms and structures? How to think about or rethink our own futures in a manner that is neither determined nor restricted by the inherited structures and that does not perpetuate their existence, thereby opening them up to emergence? Is it possible or even desirable?

Decolonising our collective and individual imaginations appears to be urgent in order to open up to alternatives, and to see beyond the dominant but limited narratives continuously held up to us as the only relevant images. However, the aim should not be to replace one form of colonisation with another.

This then raises the question: if decoloniality is about forming and emerging endogenous words and imaginaries that characterise power, 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, conventional governance models, and mainstream narratives?

This paper explores this area with the purpose of nurturing reflection on the processes of colonizing the future in the present, and some ideas regarding how research and particularly action-oriented research can contribute to a decolonising process. Starting with the argument that the future is a public good that has been turned into a club or a private good (section 1), this essay articulates the colonizing processes the future has undergone (Section 2). We then mobilize participatory knowledge production and local action research as a way to decolonize the future and empower the imagination (Section3 and 4).

Revealing the colonisation of the future

Using the future as a public good

There is no fact about the future. Indeed, by definition, a "fact" is something that is known or proved to be true. Humans can make no statement about the future that would be considered as a fact since its veracity/truth is unknown at the time it is made. All that can be said about the future is based on how we perceive it, how we imagine it. The future has at best the attributes of a kind of knowledge which is not based on facts, but on skills acquired through experience or education, a knowledge that is not about what the future *will* be but what the future *could* be. Over the last decade, advances in the discipline of anticipation (Miller *et al.* 2018), a discipline focusing on how humans use the future in the present (Rhisiart *et al.* 2015), have introduced new concepts such as 'anticipatory systems' and 'anticipatory assumptions' (Rossel 2010, Miller 2011). Going further on, they have provided insights about the existence of different anticipatory systems and assumptions and their implications in using the future (Miller 2018).

One of these implications is that every human is equipped with anticipatory systems and has a latent or developed capacity to use the future in the present. One can then mobilise these systems either implicitly or explicitly. As a result, it is legitimate to consider the future as a resource that can be used to the benefit of its users.

We argue here that this resource, the future, has in theory all the attributes of a public good as defined in economics as a good that is at the same time non-excludable and non-rival (Oakland 1987). The future is a non-excludable good since it is impossible to exclude anyone from consuming (that is, using) the future given that this ability is inherent to the anticipatory systems we all possess. It is also a non-rivalrous good because its consumption/use does not affect its availability for subsequent use.

However, the intrinsic quality of the future as a public good does not prevent it from being turned into an impure public good, defined as a public good that meets non-rivalry and non-excludability only to a certain extent. Actually, this transformation goes up to changing the essence of the future as a public good to a 'club good', its use being restricted to, and controlled/dominated by, a certain

group of people, be they individuals or institutions. It can go even further, changing it into a completely private good, which others have to pay to access it, meaning that those who cannot afford it cannot use it (Appadurai 2013).

In the past, there is evidence of the future being treated as club good, restricting others from using it. Such 'clubs' included social castes (pythonesses, shamans) and religious organisations (sects, confessional organisations). The transformation of the future into a private good is also ancient, with simple people paying specialised professionals who knew how to use the future (oracles, fortune-tellers, soothsayers, mediums). Alleged mastery of technological devices was a common means of exclusion (crystal ball, trance, tarot, bones reading) often fostering the constitution and operation of these 'clubs'.

Today this situation endures reinvesting new forms of institutions and technologies. The new clubs are made of institutions or individuals who mastercomplex technologies. Mathematical models, sophisticated qualitative tools and methods have substituted crystal balls and bones reading. The new clubs are made of international organisations, advanced countries' research centres and think tanks. New professional associations specialized in using the future have emerged. As a result, the future is also an economic business and its privatization perpetuated by specialists, experts selling their competences to those who believe that the future is a matter of professional authority.

This old and lasting transmutation of the future from a public to a club or a private good is what we call here colonising the future. It operates across as well as within countries and cultures, across social strata in a fashion that abides by colonial patterns denounced by Southern decolonial thinkers. A Southern lens is therefore seen pertinent to analyse the limitations of a discipline founded in the North: futures studies.

Colonising the future: a renewed 'old' question

As early as 1975, Future Studies were asking questions about the future being subject to colonisation (Dator, 2005). For some authors, futures studies were "*becoming the tool for the colonization of the last frontier — the non-Western future itself*" (Sardar 1993: 187). There is evidence that Western thinking has shaped the practice of using the future as an established stream of knowledge (Son 2015). The Westernisation of mind-sets and behaviours has resulted in the marginalisation of several parts of the human society, particularly non-Western cultures, women, and all categories of people whose future is determined by others (Gunnarsson-Östling, 2011). The future of African farmers, for example, is determined by international agricultural research and development actors (Bourgeois *et al.* 2017).

In 1999, the vision of West Africa in the year 2020 was produced by Western researchers at the request of OECD and Club du Sahel made of a majority of Western countries. Most recent publications on the future of agriculture and agrifood systems, health, and technology and innovation systems in Africa, for example, are produced by non-African organisations. Global works on the future on a diversity of topics are made by Western minds with a stunning absence of Africans.

The narrow understanding of futures as a Western area of expertise to be taught to Southern actors is contemporary to the lack of Southern or minority actors in the field. Dating back to the early 1990s after a series of economic oil and cocoa crises in West Africa, the UNDP has trained civil servants from over five West African countries to plan 5-, 10- and 20-year scenario schemes (Sall 2003). The existence of ministries of planning, foresight and development in countries such as Ivory Coast or Togo, or the current '2040 Ivory Coast' and even the African Union's '2063 Agenda' are remnants of

the era. The future is seen as a tool to be mastered, tamed to fit humans' needs. Although we rarely question whose interests lie behind the 'humans' needs' they serve.

We revisit in this paper this "old" but enduring question with a renewed angle, considering the future as a resource.

Dimensioning the colonisation process

It is proposed that the colonisation of the future connects three primary dimensions: an intellectual and institutional one, an instrumental and procedural one, and a political and societal one (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The three dimensions of the colonisation of the future

Source: Authors (2020)

The intellectual and institutional dimension

The intellectual and institutional dimension of the colonisation of the future consists of having the colonized anticipatory systems dominated by 'those who know better'; in other words, an elite (a club) or a profession (business) captures the use of the future. Sardar, at his time, identified this elite as "*white, mainly American, male scholars*" who "*control the discipline and decide who is and who is not important in, and what is and what is not important for the field*" (1993: 179, 183). This elite colonises the tomorrow by imposing its present perception or imaginary of the future as a target to achieve, or as something to be prepared for according to the categories in line with the specific planning anticipatory system (Miller 2015; Poli 2015).

The future becomes a club good through established practices in futures studies, which follow established science standards that are shaped by Western ontologies and epistemologies. The future as a public good tends to become a club good when norms and barriers of entry are established, such as having to be recognised by a community of peers, or possessing a degree in futures studies/foresight or similar branding. The result is the creation of a group of people who abide by, and reproduce, the same dominant standards. For example, most associations of professional futurists have their own entry rules, with a common rule being the godfathering by association members or publishing in recognised journals. When professionals or organisations charge for the use of the future, as a service, the future becomes a private good — the development of private expertise is demonstrated by the proliferation of organisations and experts who make a living from using the future. The formalisation of anticipation as a discipline could also contribute to some extent to this institutional and intellectual colonisation process, if one does not pay sufficient attention to its fundamental role in developing futures literacy as a capability that is accessible to everyone (Miller 2018) or an empowerment process (Bourgeois 2017).

The instrumental and procedural dimension

Advances in technologies as well as academic and pragmatic progresses in practices have enlarged the range of tools and methods available to make use of the future. Forecasting models, multi-agent models, serious games, role playing, future wheels, Delphi, critical uncertainty matrix, co-elaborative scenario building, 3-Horizon graphs are but some of these technological means practitioners have developed to enrich the ways we can use the future. This could have been expected to increase the capacity of lay people to engage in using the future for themselves and collectively. This has not

happened as the sophistication of the methods and their associated specialized language turn them into barriers to entry. Diverse tools associated with different anticipatory systems have even created "schools of thought" and lengthy debates among the club of futurists itself, making the entry of "outsiders" even more difficult. The tool (technology) is a barrier that creates either a club because of the ritualistic entry to the discipline and the initial mastery of the tool, or a business because of the cost of learning the tool, which becomes marketable mainly in the form of exclusive expertise.

The political and societal dimension

The ultimate dimension of this colonisation process, the political and societal dimension, is fed by the former ones. It refers to how, after imposing a certain way of thinking about the future, and imposing their tools and methods, 'those who know better' share their truth about the future with 'those who do not know'. This gives full meaning to the expression 'colonising the future'. When people are convinced that using the future is something that requires particular skills, knowledge and instruments, they are deprived of their capability to use the future by themselves and are imposed futures occupied by others. These futures occupied by others are 'used futures' (Inayatullah 2008) which prevent the imagination of alternative futures.

This process works through the use of two specific anticipatory systems, preparation and planning, which have an intrinsic power beyond that of the institutions imposing it. This power stems from the idea that the future has to be used as a target. In one case (preparation), the power of colonisation comes from the belief that the future can be known (probabilistic future) and therefore one can be prepared for it as long as one abides by the recommendations of those who know the future. In the other case, the power comes from an indisputable societal choice (preferred future) made by those who know how to use the future and frame this choice in accordance with their own perceptions and imaginaries. In both cases, colonising the future separates the 'doers' and the 'beneficiaries', whereas this dichotomy should not exist because the future is a public good.

The way these three dimensions connect and interact constitute an overall structure of knowledge that decoloniality intends "to delink or detach in order to engage in an epistemic reconstitution […] [o]f ways of thinking, languages, ways of life and being in the world" (Mignolo 2017).

Revisiting Buntu's key questions for re-envisioning, we come up with our own questions, such as: What does decolonising an anticipatory system, worldview or episteme mean? And why does the created knowledge and anticipatory system become decolonised? Adopting Buntu's reasoning (2019), a decolonial episteme could lie somewhere in between a combination of all the following features:

- Produced outside of the established centres of dominant and supposedly colonial or imposed epistemes;
- Produced by peoples of/from formerly colonised societies (irrespective of where they are located);
- Representing or fitting within the indigenous (and decolonial) ways of thinking and imagining the futures of these 'other' — formerly colonised — societies; and
- Produced using their 'original' epistemes and worldviews, even if not produced by them.

Decolonising as a concept, aspiration, and praxis has evolved from a cultural perspective to an epistemological matter, which allows room to interrogate our thoughts and knowledge-production systems (Odora Hoppers, 2000). 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 traditions, narratives and worldviews inherited from dominant past structures and supported by present hegemonies. The

colonial matrix is intrusive and pervasive, and does not provide a shared frame for belonging — put simply, it creates and solidifies otherness. The revelation and critique of this artificial alterity makes African thinkers and practitioners examine their decolonised, resurgent, self-reflective anticipatory systems and processes.

Challenging the prevalence of this overall structure of knowledge means: (i) to characterise its features, (ii) to identify who and what is affected by it (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Features of the current use of the future and the colonised

Such a process makes it possible then to (iii) decide the extent of the need and possibility to produce an alternative overall structure of knowledge (epistemic reconstitution). The next section is a discussion of this reconstruction, mobilizing the methodology of participatory action research as a way to escape from the current colonizing process.

Decolonising the future through participatory action research?

Participatory action research as a decolonising process

Participatory action research (PAR) is an inclusive, practice-enhancing process that has its roots in the 20th century works of Kurt Lewin from the North, and Paulo Freire from Latin America. As a framework for knowledge creation, it recognises the agency of communities, and is tailored to meet its participants or co-researchers' expectations. Their involvement means that the activity is contextualised to nurture reflection on co-researchers' practices and on facilitating researchers' theories. In its design, local knowledge, social spheres and networks are crucial for the research process, as no learning can bloom in the absence of learners. The process is an open circle "based on complexity and relationism, complementarity and reciprocity" (Tlostanova & Mignolo 2012: 14), which implies that community learning is a never-ending practice and that the object–subject model disappears in favour of the subject–subject model: practitioners proceed to the action research of their own practices, while "the researcher's actions become the practitioners' research" (Robertson 2000: 324).

PAR thus reintroduces "citizenship awareness" or "consciousness" in learning processes. It challenges the laziness of orthodox reason, which is unable to fathom objects that it does not comprehend as part of its whole. The polycentricity of actors, sources and manifestations of knowledge creates non-hierarchical communication and contributes to the blossoming and negotiation of shared meanings. They are attributes of re-exploring the conditions of change for reclaimed, resurgent agency and 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" (Barongo-Muweke 2016: 271).

Aligned with the classification of 'power', PAR covers the desire to make informed decisions relevant to one's contexts ('power from'). It also presents the opportunity to affirm oneself against forms of oppression, which first requires detecting pervasive expressions of inequitable power relations (Hollander & Offerman 1990). Detecting is a first step towards self-recognition beyond the eyes of the other, a self-recognition whose finality is not (only) determined by the other but negotiated with one's community. As such, PAR is a project for social justice and social change and, therefore, committed to "reciprocity, reflexivity, and reflection" (Robertson 2000: 301).

As such a project, PAR may be pursued through many means such as the reality check approach (immersions into the households of the 'unheard'), photovoice (using photographic techniques to

identify, represent and enhance the community; Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Wang & Burris, 1997), theatre for development (Abdullahi & Salaudeen, 2017), 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 (Kapoor, 2005), participatory learning and action (PLA), participatory learning research, and of course participatory action research. When structured around a community, its methods are referred to as community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR principles emphasise empowerment and community (and individual) capacity-building, through balancing research and action, and ensuring shared reflection, critical dialogue, knowledge co-creation, and agency (Israel *et al.*, 1998, quoted in Catalani & Minkler, 2010: 425).

Dealing with exogeneity: from contact spaces to transformative spaces

Participatory approaches result from the perception of research contexts as "transformative spaces" (Schurr & Segebart, 2012: 150) or "contact spaces" (Askins & Pain, 2011: 803). Herein lies the source of tension within participatory research as practiced today: working and walking the fine line of the "indigene-colonizer hyphen"(Jones & Jenkins 2008: 471).

PAR fosters renewed relations between different worlds, or "situated solidarities" in the midst of intersectionality (Nagar & Geiger 2007: 269). Empowerment through creating knowledge emerges from the negotiation between the external researcher and the community addressed. Such research is inherently about external-internal relations, with a blurred identification of the initiating agent, as in the case of exogenous research funding sources but prospectively endogenous calls for projects. Even research aimed at promoting capacity-building reflects the power dynamics which are simultaneously partly the subject of intervention.

Indigenist researchers are encouraged to call out the agenda at play, and to recall the early decolonisation theory that "Afrocentricity is a perspective which allows Africans to be subjects of their own historical experiences rather than objects"(Asante quoted by Rigney, 1999: 110). This form of Afrocentricity is different from the colonisation-centred definition of decolonisation. It is conceived as both resurgence and resistance. Resistance is viewed as the "emancipatory imperative for indigenist research" (ibid: 116). However, reading between the lines of work produced by indigenous researchers, resistance comprises context-induced practices and behaviours which arise 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"(Denzin & Lincoln 2008: 12) and so is too restrictive to limit indigenous agency to its opposition to the dominant system; in brief, to reduce it to an epistemology of denunciation. In relation to the 'other' who could also act as a co-researcher, our thinking needs to go beyond primary resistance, as a reactive mechanism that defines our methods in opposition to Western models, and rather embrace resistance as fluid and adaptable resilience through reflexivity and reciprocity. PAR offers this co-design possibility.

The embrace of PAR should thus not be considered as merely a rejection of dominant forms of research axiology. European researchers in fields such as development geography have also had to address the global West/South divisions and to consider the distinctions between indigenous elite and non-elite groups, although without necessarily addressing Spivak's (1988) theory of subalterns (women, tribal people etc.). How do subalterns share ideas and paradigms with the rest of the world? Can the implantation or persistence of (neo-) colonising processes be prevented in our knowledge creation systems? Even when external researchers are not involved in the project, 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?

Anticipatory PAR?

PAR is rendered even more powerful and meaningful when referenced to an item that does not exist: futures. Participatory approaches to the future offer the possibility to democratise long-term thinking and thus provide additional depth to PAR. PAR also democratises futures tools, from predictive data production to scenario building, as empowerment cannot be 'power to' simply reduced to an increased access to knowledge production. The objective is both methodological and ontological, because these futures tools abide by a specific episteme which should not be imposed upon anyone seeking resurgence. The use of the future in a PAR frame has thus the capacity to empower as long as its users know first why they use it and then how to use it accordingly.

Participatory futures cover a broad range of citizen-centred approaches to exploring possible futures, acknowledging the plasticity of futures. Futurists at NESTA (the UK's National Innovation Agency for Social Good) identified objectives for participatory futuring, which include the "translat[ion] of collective images of the future into new collective actions and behavior in the present," that resonate with PAR (Ramos *et al.*, 2019: 15).

The confluence between action research and futures studies also offers powerful possibilities. Ramos (2006: 3) identifies five characteristics of action research that posit action research as a tool for decolonising research:

1) It generates "practical being and action for human betterment".
2) It is "inclusive of plural ways of knowing in the constitution of theory and practice".
3) It is "iterative and heuristic, a continual process of evolving inquiry and action, by learning from reflections on successes and failures".
4) It is "research by participants for participants, which addresses the fundamental question of "research for whose benefit"?
5) It 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".

Ramos (2006) further identified several futures studies with 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 (Gidley *et al.* 2009). Since then, more anticipatory approaches have claimed a direct connection with action research, such as causal layered analysis as an intuitive action research approach, the Futures Literacy Laboratories (FLLs), and co-elaborative scenario-building (Inayatullah & Milojević 2015; Miller 2015; Bourgeois *et al.* 2017).
Action research is a crucial component of decolonising using the future as it seeks to break the domination of monopolies that characterise an inner circle of initiates (Ramos 2010). For example, at the community-level, anticipatory action research entails deliberately devolving the leading role to local organisations, so that "local community organizations engage in, and use future thinking as producers of foreknowledge to reflect, and potentially act, on their own futures" (Bourgeois *et al.* 2017: 4).

Action research is "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" (Ramos, 2010: 119). It responds to the call to add a transdisciplinary dimension to the participatory dimension in the practice of anticipation (Gudowsky & Peissl 2016). Thus, action research also becomes a fundamental methodology for creating collective intelligence within a given community that shares a common project. This

happens because of action research's intrinsic local dimension, making it suitable for designing anticipatory approaches for development policy and planning at a local level (Karuri-Sebina & Rosenzweig 2012).

However, participants in action research still have to overcome various challenges, as they have to (Rogers *et al.*, 2013):

- acknowledge their own perceptions and frames of references;
- accept that those of others are as valid as theirs; and
- accept a transformation process that will modify all perceptions and frames of reference, bringing them into a new complex perception.

When such challenges are overcome, anticipatory participatory action research can be seen as a means through which capacity is acquired and turned into agency. Through this empowerment process, the recurrent gap between anticipation and action is bridged.

A road to decolonising the future

Emanating from the above discussion, this paper endeavours to offer in this section a way forward towards decolonising the future in light of the Capacity to Decolonise (C2D) project. This is not a roadmap, but a potential direction consistent with the spirit of a decolonising approach to the future that is grounded in humility, uncertainty and plurality. The road is expressed as "design principles" which should again not be understood as prescriptive but rather as informative and definitively exploratory.

Design principles

The liberating power of anticipatory participatory action research lies in the systemic challenging of any attempt to colonise the ideas and process. Epistemological assumptions affect any participatory research, which implies that forms of recolonisation continue to appear. What is needed is "structural transformations of both knowledge production and development cooperation [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" (Schurr & Segebart, 2012: 152).

Participatory futuring is a negotiated process of cooperative design (co-design) that must involve all actors. Maximum reciprocity induces trust and allows room for shared meaning and reflexivity, leading to collective reflection (Robertson, 2000). Therefore, empowerment stems from the humility of all parties as a form of ethics and commitment, a responsibility that is reflected in every step of the process, from initiating the inquiry to measuring the success indicators. In designing the anticipatory participatory action research experience, co-researchers are invited to acknowledge not only their doing (research), but also their being (identity) and the way they are perceived. This is because the researcher's identity influences "the type of information they are able to collect during fieldwork" even in South-South research - for example, a Nigerian mother conducting research work on and with women in post-conflict Liberia (Bob-Milliar, 2020: 6). The involvement of several identities significantly changes individual identities and reduces the gap between individuals by revealing and rendering their differences common. It also creates a space where meanings can be negotiated through, but not limited to, *logos*, which de Sousa Santos (2014) describes as the principles of intercultural interpretation.

Co-researchers are thus invited to recontextualise their practice, as the "purpose of [decolonised] research is not the production of new knowledge per se" but the "production of moral discernment, a commitment to praxis, an ethic of resistance" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 18). Such efforts support and sustain process as a source of learning by itself: the notion of learning-by-doing grows in favour of learning-for-being. The reflexivity that is sought does not take the form of discovering an exogenous truth. Learning's transformative role is self-awareness — the knowers' understanding of the world in which they are immersed. Reflexivity as a mutual benefit can be assessed through critical inquiry. Gouldner asks the following questions: "How has this research transformed you? Has it penetrated deeply into your daily life and work?" (Robertson, 2000: 321).

Local actors being at the forefront of the inquiry is essential for creating indigenous-led transformative knowledge, as "self-determination intersects with the locus of power in the research setting" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 3). Anticipatory participatory action research is initiated by, and rooted in, a collaborative participatory performative inquiry. When conducting PAR, Smith (2000) recommends purposefully asking eight questions: What research do we want done? Whom is it for? Who will benefit? Who will own the research? What difference will it make? How will we know it is worthwhile? How do we want the research done? Who will carry it out?

This is why the *approach suggested embraces the framework of servant leadership*. It consists of six dimensions that correspond to the values behind these questions: voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and transforming influence (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013). In particular, authentic self captures "leadership behaviours which flow from one's true self and manifest in his/her humility, integrity, and accountability", while covenantal relations entails "mutual commitment by individuals characterized by shared values, open-ended commitment, mutual trust, and concern for the welfare of the other party". (ibid: 593)

In summary, the following decolonial research principles have be identified:

1) Locally-led initiation of the inquiry
2) Trans-disciplinarity
3) Co-design
4) Learning-for-being
5) Empowerment
6) Servant leadership.

A way forward for Africa?

We acknowledge that anticipatory participatory action research is not uniquely 'made for Africa' knowledge. It is, for some, the "enlightenment and awakening of common peoples" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, quoted in Bergold & Thomas, 2012: 8) and aims to reconstruct "their knowledge and ability in a process of understanding and empowerment" (Bergold & Thomas, 2012: 8). It is not about rejecting all forms of non-indigenous knowledge. Indeed, history has blurred the line between strict authenticity and exogeneity, as records have been written by all parties. Rejection would only lead to competing with the West under the same epistemological rules that were denounced by previous post- and de-colonial thinkers. It is about shifting the geography of reason to "subsume [all forms of knowledge regardless of its origins] within the vision, needs and lifestyle of indigenous nations" (Tlostanova & Mignolo 2012: 15). It is not about diving into indigenous knowledge per se, despite the importance of identifying the indigenous people, their systems of value and how they connect with the rest of the world. At the core of the knowledge to be produced will be endogenous knowledge-creation principles, regardless of its sources of influence.

That being said, African action researchers are better situated to question the desire to invite the margin into the centre without questioning its codes. More bluntly, African actors are invited to escape the catch-up philosophy that leads to simply "add Africa [to the larger globalised soup] and stir" (Abrahamsen, 2016: 127). Capability-based approaches to knowledge provide researchers with a "potent tool to deprovincialise their object of study" (Bob-Millar, 2020:8). The research outcomes and methodological tools and approaches used 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*.

In Conclusion

The rapture of futures privatised by institutional or private interests has structured the evolution of futures studies, even at such an early stage as the Oracle times. This colonisation process abides by principles from scientific exclusion to political domination and marginalisation of specific opinions or alternatives that resonate with decolonial critiques. Despite - or maybe because of - its imaginary nature, the future is a power space where the voices unheard are as telling about knowledge creation processes as those heard. Structural forms of exclusion are shaped by a colonial matrix which affects the mobilisation of our capacity to imagine.

This exposition culminates in a composite illustration (Figure 3) which attempts to represent how acknowledging these dimensions and principles could provide a basis for resisting the colonisation of the future by anticipating how the imposed system could be met by the purposeful implementation of some or all of these design principles.

These dynamic interactions correspond to the way we anticipate the processes of colonizing the future we have described in section 1 could adjust to the implementation of anticipatory participatory action research as part of a decolonial agenda that begins to preserve or restore the future into being the public good that it ought to be.

Figure 3. Recursive interactions between colonisation processes and anticipatory participatory action research

Source: Authors (2020)

The blue arrows indicate **positive interaction** within the anticipatory participatory action research–co-design-collective intelligence-transdisciplinarity complex (normal case).

The black arrows indicate how the elements of this complex have **the potential to reveal, challenge and thwart the colonisation of the future** in its three dimensions (italics case).

The 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.

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Figure 1: The three dimensions of the colonisation of the future

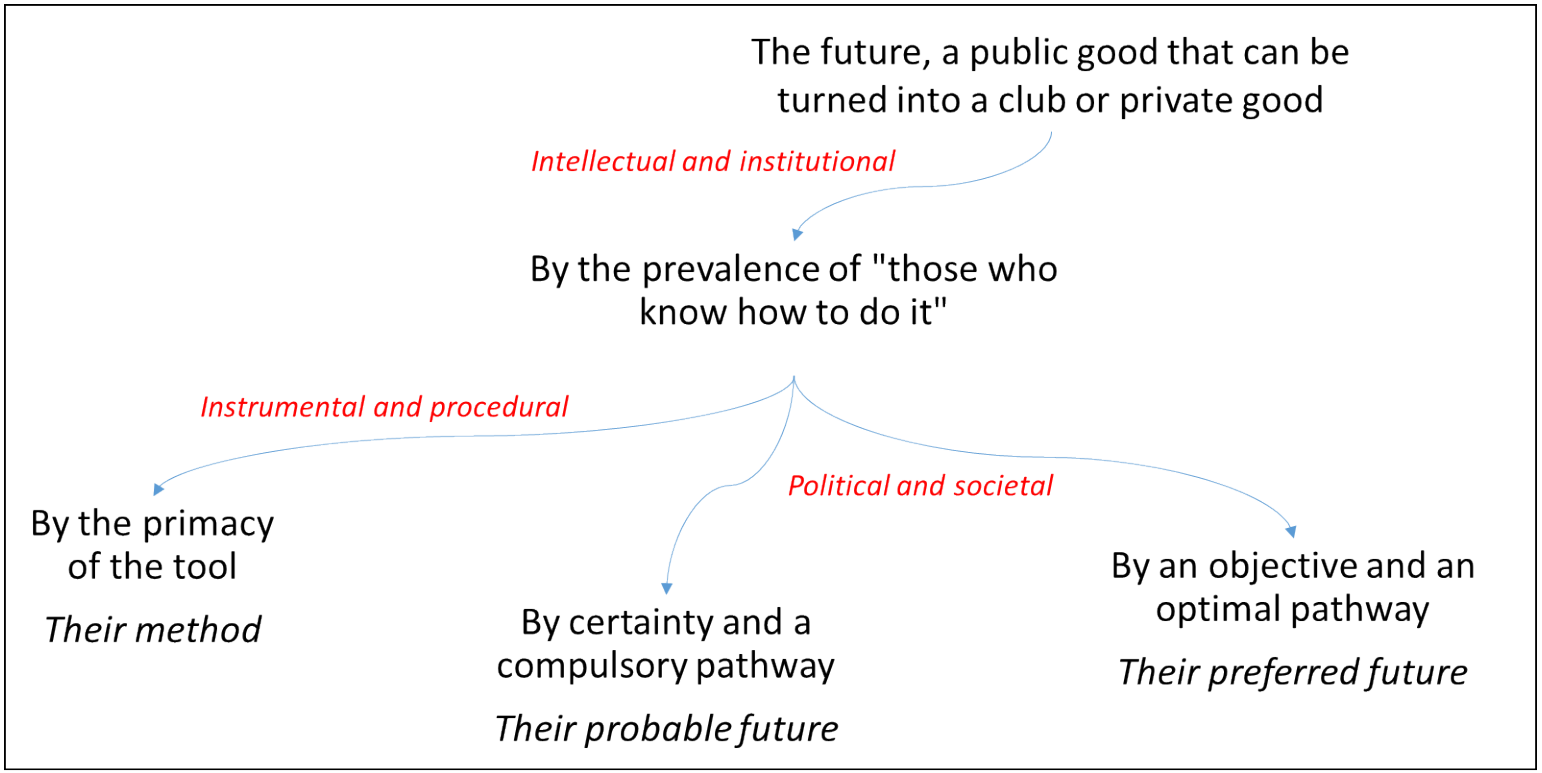

Figure 2: Features of the current use of the future and the colonised

Features of the mainstream Western use of the future	Who and what is colonised?
• 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 • 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)	• 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

Figure 3. Recursive interactions between colonisation processes and anticipatory participatory action research