Decolonising Research: Tackling obstacles and working through challenges

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This working paper incorporates insights from the University of York's Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre (IGDC) Decolonising Development Research Podcast series with existing literature to examine the opportunities and challenges of decolonising research. Reflecting the focus of the IGDC, this discussion is presented in terms of development studies but is of value and importance for researchers from any field and at any stage of their careers. While an extensive body of work has already debated the nature and necessity of decolonising research, this paper advances this discussion by focusing on the potential challenges decolonisation can present, grouping these obstacles under the themes of research partnerships, methods, and impact. Drawing on podcast contributors' first-hand experiences, as well as other case studies, this paper presents a toolkit of considerations researchers can work through to overcome or manage these challenges. Questions addressed include: how can Global North - Global South partnerships be made more equitable? How can non-European cultures be incorporated into research epistemology, theory, and practice? And how can we ensure research serves the interests of Global South societies? This paper provides a valuable resource for those seeking to decolonise their practice and motivates further discussion on the practicalities and challenges of decolonisation.

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1. Introduction

This working paper brings together existing scholarship with insights from researchers at the University of York, the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), and others who participated in the IGDC's Decolonising Global Development Podcast series. Together, they provide researchers with a toolkit of ways they can think through potential obstacles to decolonising research. These obstacles and opportunities are tackled according to three themes: research partnerships, research methods, and research impact. It will be shown how each of these themes throw up different potential challenges and how decolonising each theme is equally important to the overall decolonisation of research.

As well as being a resource for researchers, this paper also hopes to stimulate wider discussion of systemic changes that need to be implemented to facilitate the decolonisation of research. A clear theme throughout the Decolonising Research Podcast, brought up by practitioners from across disciplines and backgrounds, was that institutionalised perceptions on things like authorship, ethics, and academic rigour can be a significant barrier to decolonisation. This paper advances this discussion by drawing attention to the systemic changes necessary for the meaningful and sustainable decolonisation of research.

The theoretical dimension of decolonising research has received extensive theoretical discussion for many decades. In *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), Linda Tuhiwai Smith called *research* "one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary"[1] because it has long been associated with empire-building and colonialism. During imperialism, European metropoles like London, Paris, and Amsterdam sent anthropologists along with linguists, geographers, historians and social scientists to study the cultures and practices of colonised peoples. Their conclusions provided pseudo-scientific and ideological justifications for colonial rule, often in the name of civility, efficiency, and modernity. Indigenous customs and traditions were held to be backward and wasteful, while traditional beliefs were seen as transgressive and in some cases were criminalised.[2] In a process Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni has labelled "epistemicide", non-European knowledges were eradicated and replaced by a normative European rationality.[3]

Smith's 1999 critique contributed to a long-standing and ongoing challenge to European research practices and paradigms. Colonised people resisted European efforts to exploit or suppress their knowledge, preserving it through covert oral traditions and sometimes by synthesising imposed European knowledge with their own. In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars like Frantz Fanon and Edward Said brought new criticism to the colonisation of research, showing how established academic practice and discourse could be instruments of colonial

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[1] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (London: Zed Books, 2021), 1.
[2] John L. Comaroff, "Symposium Introduction: Colonialism, Culture, and the Law: A Foreword", *Law & Social Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2001): 306.
[3] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The dynamics of epistemological decolonisation in the 21st century: Towards epistemic freedom", *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 40, no. 1, (2018): 16; see for example: Elisabeth Wesseling and Mavis Reimer, "Introduction: Child Separation Projects as a Strategy of Colonisation", *International Research in Children's Literature* 13, no. 2, (2020): 231-241; Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, "Introduction: Indigenous Knowledge Recovery Is Indigenous Empowerment", *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 3/4, (2004): 359-372; Laurelyn Whitt, *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009).

and post-colonial control.[4] More recently, the 2015 Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement drew renewed attention to the link between colonialism and higher education, calling for reforms to curricula as well as governing and accountability structures, and demanding universities make reparations for their role in and benefits from slavery and colonialism.[5]

Despite extensive discussion, research practices continue to maintain colonial dynamics of control and exploitation between the Global North and the Global South, long after formal imperial structures have faded. This paper will not expand on the case in favour of decolonising research. Instead, it turns to the practicalities and challenges of decolonising three key themes of research: partnerships, or the ways in which researchers from the Global North collaborate with researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and communities in the Global South; methods, or the ways in which researchers collect and analyse information; and impact, or the benefits research can bring beyond knowledge-creation. Within each of these themes, some key considerations are identified which researchers can think through as they plan projects and develop them with their research partners, summarised in Table 1.

The Decolonising Development Research Podcast project

This working paper has been developed as part of the Decolonising Development Research Podcast project. The project was led by the Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre at the University of York, in collaboration with colleagues at the Federal University of Bahia in Brazil, and with support from the University of York's Enhancing Research Culture Fund. The project examines the practicalities of decolonising research, with emphasis on working through the obstacles researchers are likely to face. The podcasts feature roundtable discussions as well as one-on-one interviews with researchers who have first-hand experience of decolonising research in the Global South. Contributors come from disciplines as diverse as geography, public health, and film making, and draw on experience in places as far apart as Bolivia, Kenya, and Sri Lanka. The result is a podcast series that explains why and how researchers from any discipline and at any stage of their career can work towards decolonising their work, forewarned of the obstacles and motivated by the opportunities. This paper complements the podcast by drawing on panellists contributions and embedding them along with existing literature in a discussion about the potential pitfalls of decolonial research and how these can be overcome.

[4] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 2003); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (London: Penguin, 2001).
[5] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*, (London: Routledge, 2018), see in particular Chapter Nine "Rhodes Must Fall".

Table 1: A toolbox for researchers decolonising their work

Key considerations	**Questions to think about and discuss with partners & institutions**
Contrasting epistemologies	How can researchers forge partnerships with people with different epistemological and philosophical backgrounds?
The limits of partnership	Are there any differences of culture and attitude that might cause tension or cannot be overcome respectfully?
Dialogue and disagreement	Can teams foster dialogue and put in place mechanisms to resolve disagreements before and during projects?
Investing in partnerships	What other facets of decolonising partnerships - such as challenging logistics - might require added investment?
Identifying partners	What people and groups should be included in partnerships? Who speaks for "the community"? How can researchers ensure the relevant voices are heard?
Knowledge sovereignty	How can researchers ensure partners have access to and ownership of the information they share or help produce?
Rethinking the meaning of quality data	How can concepts around academic rigour and notions like reliability and generalisability be reframed to include non-European epistemology and decolonial methods?
Investing in time for research methods	Decolonial methods take time and can be unpredictable. How can researchers factor this into project plans and proposals? How can they build in project flexibility?
Decolonising ethics processes	How can ethics protocols be reformed to include decolonial methods and other epistemologies? How should we reframe Eurocentric concepts like "rights"?
Centering impact in research design	How can researchers make benefitting partners in the Global South the main priority of their research?
Building impact throughout a project	How can impact be made an ongoing part of the research process, rather than a separate, secondary project?
Limitations of research impact	What do researchers need to do to make sure expectations around impact are realistic and managed?
Considering wider dissemination	How can researchers share their information with the wider society, not just the partners and participants already involved through decolonial methods?
Tackling institutional resistance	How do institutional systems and practices need to change to facilitate decolonising impact?

2. Decolonising research partnerships

Broadly speaking, a research partnership exists when researchers collaborate with other people or groups to facilitate or advance a project, usually by pooling skills and expertise. Partners can include: researchers from other institutions or centres; in-field practitioners and experts; policy-makers; or members of the society where the research is taking place. Such partnerships may be established for the duration of a project or for specific project tasks, most frequently information-gathering. In conventional practice, partnerships between the Global North and the Global South can perpetuate colonial dynamics in multiple complicated ways.

For example, because they have easier access to funding, Global North researchers and their institutions tend to control all aspects of a research project. As Divine Fuh told the podcast, "it's the money that defines." Global North researchers and institutions frequently determine what issues to investigate, frame the research questions, decide on the methodology and theory to use, undertake analysis of results, and direct outputs into research impact usually in their own academic or wider society. Meanwhile, Global South partners can end up being treated as project assistants, used as "'hunter-gatherers' of raw data as well as 'native informants'".[6] The consequences of this dynamic are profound: mainstream research sidelines Global South interests and prioritises those of Global North researchers, primarily by "filling a gap" in academic knowledge via peer-reviewed publication; and Global South researchers expend social, professional, and financial capital, as well as their time, while receiving disproportionately little benefit in terms of recognition, prestige, or income.[7] All of this replicates colonial dynamics of extraction and exploitation whereby the Global South is mined of resources (in this case knowledge) that can be "processed, packaged and marketed" to benefit the Global North.[8] At the same time, experience of these research dynamics can generate suspicion and resentment of Global north researchers among societies in the Global South. Podcast contributor Clarice Mota, from the Federal University of Bahia, has had first-hand experience of this, explaining that some of the Global South communities she has worked with during public health programmes showed suspicion towards outsider medical professionals and researchers, believing they were only there to extract information and bring no benefit. This can not only make researchers' work more difficult but can stifle public engagement in research projects and limit uptake of research findings, which can be particularly damaging in the contexts such as public health.

Decolonising research partnerships involves recognising the power imbalance between Global North and Global South researchers and working to redress dynamics of extraction and exploitation. Project "co-creation" goes some way towards this goal. Co-creation is where Global South partners are given a meaningful influence over project decisions. This can begin with identifying the objective of the project itself, with Global South partners explaining what matters to them and what questions they want answered. This means

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[6] Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The dynamics of epistemological decolonisation in the 21st century: Towards epistemic freedom", *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 40, no.1 (2020): 20.
[7] Elizabeth Tilly and Marc Kalina, "“My Flight Arrives at 5 am, Can You Pick Me Up?”: The Gatekeeping Burden of the African Academic", *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 33, no.4 (2021): 538-548.
[8] Lauren Tynan, "Thesis as kin: living relationality with research", *AlterNative* 16, no.3 (2020): 164.

research is put into the service of Global South societies, rather than remaining a tool of Global North enrichment. As discussed below, there are many ways instigating researchers can find out what questions people in the Global South want answered, including: consultation with public representatives like traditional leaders or elected authorities; open meetings with members of the public to hear their views and concerns; or through specially-convened advisory groups.[9] Co-creation should not, however, be approached lightly. It demands a significant investment of time and resources, and demands Global North researchers be ready to cede power and control over the direction of the project.

Contrasting epistemologies

An important consideration in decolonising partnerships is the issue of contrasting epistemologies between research partners. In colonial partnerships, philosophical difference is silenced and European Enlightenment-based empiricism is treated exclusively as the only "wellspring of universal learning".[10] Decolonising partnerships involves moving away from this Eurocentric normative approach by trying to recognise and respect non-European ways of knowing and experiencing the world. On the podcast, Divine Fuh argued that true decolonisation of research has to be grounded in epistemic change, rejecting the universality and exclusivity of European epistemology. Without this change, decolonisation will only be superficial. In making this argument he drew on the Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations which places epistemic change at the centre of a six-part explanation of the "uneven playing field" in research concerning Africa.[11]

Researchers can also think about how non-European worldviews can be incorporated into research projects. These possibilities can be discussed creatively with project partners to consider possible options. Such open-mindedness can be challenging for researchers who have been trained in Western modes of thought. They have to try and understand forms of knowledge that are not only very different but also may appear to contradict their own understandings of what knowledge is and how it can be created or communicated. One solution to this challenge is to recognise that decolonial scholars do not need to adopt or understand different philosophies and epistemologies in order to work with people who do. Indeed, trying to adopt other epistemologies may lead to appropriation of other cultures and philosophies. Instead, researchers can consider ways other epistemologies can be respected during the research process and how they can be incorporated meaningfully alongside their own understandings.

Dorine van Norren's discussion of Ubuntu and Sumak Kawsay, as well as the Bhutanese policies of Gross National Happiness, proposes ways these philosophies can inform and transform development studies concepts like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not least by treating economics more definitively as a social science and using social

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[9] See for example the Community Advisory Groups used in the ECLIPSE Project: Kay Polidano et al, "Community Engagement in Cutaneous Leishmaniasis Research in Brazil, Ethiopia, and Sri Lanka: A Decolonial Approach for Global Health", *Frontiers in Public Health* 10, (2022): 1-16, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.823844.

[10] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa*, (London: Routledge, 2012).

[11] "The Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations", drafted by the Association of African Universities, African Research Universities Alliance, African Academy of Sciences, and others, accessed July 23, 2024, via https://parc.bristol.ac.uk/africa-charter/, 5.

scientific methods to inform economic understanding, policy, and indicators.[12] However, Birgit Boogard and van Norren caution researchers wishing to draw on non-European philosophies to avoid appropriation, whereby concepts like Sumak Kawsay are used to glamorise or legitimise actions indistinguishable from existing socio-economic dynamics.[13] Catherine Walsh gives the cautionary example of the Ecuadorian government which, though enshrining Sumak Kawsay or "Buen Vivir" in its constitution, has nonetheless implemented state-run projects of mining and water management that contradict the philosophy's fundamental tenets, showing how non-European philosophy can become "another discursive tool and co-opted term, functional to the State".[14]

Just as European epistemology is not universal, neither are culturally-constituted concepts, including development; gender; family; sexuality; private property and ownership; the nation-state; and democracy and representation. Often, concepts like these constitute key variables in much research originating in the Global North, but they may be meaningless in other societies. In the case of gender, Oyeronke Oyewumi has argued that any work with non-European societies has to begin with Global North researchers abandoning presumptions about gender and starting with a fresh conceptual slate. This followed her work with the Oyo-Yoruba society in West Africa for whom "seniority" is the defining category of societal organisation and gender is not recognised as anything other than a foreign idea imposed by colonialism.[15] Lauren Tynan, from the Pairebeenne Trawlwoolway community in Australia, has similarly reappraised concepts like community and country/Country, with suggestions for reconceptualising "fieldwork".[16] And Nadine Zwiener-Collins et al. have criticised international studies like the World Value Survey which fail to recognise the culturally-constituted nature of political concepts like democracy.[17]

To work more effectively with different cultures, researchers can consider "defamiliarizing meanings and senses" and try to "accept unexpected knowledge".[18] This involves unlearning in order to learn, which can be time-consuming as well as intellectually and emotionally challenging.[19] But this kind of reconsideration can help researchers to meaningfully comprehend (if not accept) and incorporate (if not adopt) philosophies and concepts other

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[12] Dorine E. van Norren, "The Sustainable Development Goals viewed through Gross National Happiness, Ubuntu, and Buen Vivir", *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 20, (2020), 434.
[13] Birgit Boogaard and Dorine van Norren, "'Development' perspectives from the Global South", in *The Politics of Knowledge in Inclusive Development and Innovation*, eds. David Ludwig, Birgit Boogaard, Phil Macnaghten, Cees Leeuwis, (London: Routledge, 2021), 111.
[14] Catherine Walsh, "Development as Buen Vivir: Institutional arrangements and (de)colonial entanglements", *Development* 53, no.1 (2010): 20.
[15] Oyeronkee Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[16] Lauren Tynan, "Data Collection Versus Knowledge Theft: Relational Accountability and the Research Ethics of Indigenous Knowledges", in *Challenging Global Development*, eds. Henning Melber, Uma Kothari, Laura Camfield, Kees Biekart, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 144-145.
[17] Nadine Zwiener-Collins et al, "Decolonising quantitative research methods pedagogy: Teaching contemporary politics to challenge hierarchies from data", *Learning and Teaching in Politics and International Studies* 43, no. 1 (2023): 130.
[18] Cleia Silva, et al, "Decolonial Studies, Non-Extractive Methods, and Participatory Action Research in Accounting", *Journal of Contemporary Administration* 26, no.4 (2022): 7
[19] Madina V. Tlostanova and Walter D. Mignolo, *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*, (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press: 2912).

than their own in a way that not only boosts inclusive research but also generates more insightful and relevant findings. Researchers might also consider not just incorporating but actually foregrounding non-European concepts as the main theoretical template for their research. An example of a project doing this which could be a model for other researchers is the "Reversing the Gaze", a multi-institution project using concepts developed in (but not necessarily by) the Global South to investigate the Global North. For instance, one of their research streams investigated societal reactions to migration in Switzerland through the lens of "retribalisation", a concept developed in Africa during colonialism.[20]

The limits of partnership?

As well as different epistemologies and concepts, cultural differences of belief and attitude can generate more day-to-day challenges for decolonising research partnerships. In particular, strong disagreements about morally-imbued attitudes can lead to researcher reactivity, bias, breakdown in cross-cultural partnerships, and can undermine projects. Podcast contributor Leny Trad, from the Institute of Collective Health at the Federal University of Bahia, spoke about this in relation to her work with ECLIPSE. ECLIPSE is a five year healthcare programme working with interdisciplinary researchers and using participatory methods to investigate the parasitic infection leishmaniasis, with the aim of improving patients' treatment experiences and reducing stigma in Brazil, Ethiopia, and Sri Lanka.[21] Trad said that during the project she had to work in societies with a large Pentecostal community, whose views on some matters she found to be conservative and homophobic. But she also said it was not suitable for her, in the context of a funded public health project, to "impose" her views on her partners and that she had to "tread slowly on that ground." This led to some moral tensions but Trad felt that the project was able to overcome these differences through dialogue and building trusting relationships across cultures.

Some cultural differences may also pose ethics issues which researchers need to consider, especially researchers from disciplines like medicine which may have a professional duty of care towards research participants. For instance, Clarise Mota, also from Bahia, told the podcast that the same ECLIPSE project found traditional healers in Ethiopia trying to treat leishmaniasis by burning the skin lesions caused by the disease.[22] This not only retarded the healing process but caused additional pain for the patient and worsened scarring, leading to long-term psychological trauma and stigma. Researchers should consider if any issues like this will arise in their projects and think about how resultant conflicts can be managed. Such issues will not necessarily be predictable, so it may be useful to dedicate time to planning conflict-mediation processes in advance, with flexibility for unforeseen issues. Carefully discussing cultural differences with project partners and working with them on ethics processes (addressed below) is one way researchers can try and reduce the likelihood of cultural conflicts destabilising projects.

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[20] "Reversing The Gaze: Towards Post-Comparative Area Studies", *ReversingtheGaze*, accessed July 1, 2024, https://reversingthegaze.net/.
[21] "About", *ECLIPSE-Community.com,* accessed June 11, 2024, https://www.eclipse-community.com/menu/about/.
[22] "About", *ECLIPSE-Community.com,* accessed June 11, 2024, https://www.eclipse-community.com/menu/about/.

Dialogue can be invaluable in navigating cultural disagreement. But dialogue is not one-sided and it may be unrealistic for Global North researchers to mutely accept or tolerate all aspects of another culture. Multiple researchers and organisations have suggested ways of working through cultural differences. Julie Mundy and Ros Tennyson from the Partnership Brokers Association advise that partners dedicate time early in a collaboration to work out if there are any "deal-breakers" or red-lines that could later undermine the relationship.[23] In their Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships, Bruno Stöckli et al, of the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries, identify mutually agreeing an agenda for research as the first of eleven principles for research partnerships. They advise that while some disagreement is inevitable, its damage can be reduced through early mediation and agreement.[24] Elsewhere, Johanna Vogel et al suggest organising "value debates", facilitated by "transition intermediaries" or "systems interpreters", which provide a space for all partners to express cultural differences and concerns in a non-judgemental environment.[25] Such discussions should not rely too heavily on intermediaries as this risks them being pulled between their identity as "insiders" within the society and "outsiders" as part of the research team, potentially leading to backlash from their peers.[26] Christina Volkdal, following on from her work with the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus, goes further and argues it is essential to create a shared framework of principles and find a consensus on a specific set of values that can form a mutually-agreed basis for a research project.[27] These examples offer suggestions researchers can try and work through or work alongside cultural differences. Different researchers may find different solutions more useful than others or more relevant for one project than another. In some cases, a combination of methods may be most effective while none may appear suitable. Discussing these practices with peers and project parts may yield new, bespoke solutions to these important questions.

Some researchers may find it useful to codify mutual understandings on key principles into written agreements. These can provide a consistent reference point throughout a project and can be the basis for mediation if conflicts emerge later. This may not be suitable for all partnerships however. Leny Trad is sceptical about the value of things like memoranda of understanding, saying "an agreement is just an agreement". In keeping with the one-size-does-not-fit-all approach that underscores much of decolonial research, it is apparent that tensions between different cultures is something that all researchers may need to manage on their own terms and in the very specific contexts of their projects.

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[23] Julie Mundy & Ros Tennyson, *Brokering Better Partnerships Handbook*, (Partnership Brokers Association, 2019), 6.
[24] Bruno Stöckli, Urs Wiesmann, and Jon-Andri Lys, *A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships*, (Bern: Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries, 2018), 4.
[25] Johanna Vogel, Francisco Porras, Michael P. Schlaile, Veronica Hector, Christina Plesner Volkdal, Zhiqi Xu, "The Normative Dimension of Transdisciplinary Cooperation", New Rhythms of Development blog series, December 12, 2023, accessed June 11, 2024, https://www.developmentresearch.eu/?p=1721.
[26] Crista E. Johnson, Sagal A. Ali, and Michèle P-L Shipp, "Building Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships with a Somali Refugee Community", *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 37, no. 6 (supplement 6), (2009): 232.
[27] Johanna Vogel, Francisco Porras, Michael P. Schlaile, Veronica Hector, Christina Plesner Volkdal, Zhiqi Xu, "The Normative Dimension of Transdisciplinary Cooperation", New Rhythms of Development blog series, December 12, 2023, accessed June 11, 2024, https://www.developmentresearch.eu/?p=1721.

Investing in partnerships

Researchers decolonising partnerships should also consider additional logistical costs arising from decolonial working practices. Building trust and mutual understanding with people in different societies takes time, often requiring more than one meeting over a period. This is particularly relevant when there is already a degree of distrust shown towards outsider-researchers. In their interview-based research in Vanuatu, Daniel Vorbach and Jonathan Ensor credit some of their success to the fact that a broader research project had brought them to the country four times over the preceding years, enabling them to build familiarity and trust with the public.[28] Elsewhere, Nadeau et al. held "pilot small group meetings" to build familiarity and trust with local people and identify potential challenges, eventually building up to working with 14 different communities.[29] But multiple and/or extended trips like these increase the time and financial cost of research, relative to established practices. This is accentuated when travelling to the rural and underdeveloped regions where decolonised and development-related research is most likely to take place. Relatedly, work in development and related fields like peace-building and public health may take researchers to dangerous places with significant health and safety risks, ranging from political instability to disease epidemics. For example, during their participatory healthcare research in Kenya, A. D. Maalim felt forced to use armed security guards when travelling between research sites because of "bandits" in the Mbalambala region.[30] Logistical challenges, some of which cannot be anticipated, increase the costs of a project which in turn raises problems when researchers need to secure funding. Moreover, in cases where risk is high, institutional risk-assessments and insurance policies may inhibit scholars from travelling where they need to and may limit the partnerships and methods they can use.

One potential partial solution to logistical challenges is for local partners to mediate researcher-public relationships in the researcher's absence. But intermediaries can be a poor substitute for person-to-person contact, especially when trust-building is a key objective. Relying on intermediaries also risks sliding back towards the exploitation of Global South partners which decolonisation works to avoid. Partners will have to spend time, possibly money, and social capital in their mediation work, often with little guaranteed in return.[31] In some cases, telecommunications can help supplement in-person contact. But again, the places where development research is most needed may have poor or unreliable telecommunications access. This became a major challenge for Lucie Nadeau et al. during their work with indigenous groups in Nunavik, Canada.[32] Where possible, researchers should prepare to use a mixed-methods approach, with in-person meetings, video-conferencing,

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[28] Daniel Vorback and Jonathan Ensor, "Autonomous Change Processes in Traditional Institutions: Lessons from Innovations in Village Governance in Vanuatu", *International Journal of the Commons* 16, no. 1, (2022): 173-188. https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.1170.
[29] Nadeau et al, "The challenges of decolonising participatory research", 9.
[30] A. D. Maalim, "Participatory rural appraisal techniques in disenfranchised communities: a Kenyan case study", *International Nursing Review* 53, no. 3 (2006): 187-188.
[31] Elizabeth Tilly and Marc Kalina, "“My Flight Arrives at 5 am, Can You Pick Me Up?”: The Gatekeeping Burden of the African Academic", *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 33, no.4 (2021): 538-548.
[32] Lucie Nadeau et al, "The challenges of decolonising participatory research in indigenous contexts: the Atautsikut community of practice experience in Nunavik", *Journal of Circumpolar Health* 81, no.1 (2022): 1-14.

instant messaging, and telephone communication all used to sustain partnerships. A multimedia approach has the double benefit of spreading the risk of one or more methods becoming unviable whilst also providing partners with more than one way of engaging with the research project.

Identifying partners

Identifying "the community" is an important consideration when researchers put together research partnerships and recruit participants. It may be relatively easy for Global North researchers to try and partner exclusively with fellow researchers and academics from the Global South. But this restricts the research team to educated professionals, which is not in the spirit of decolonising partnerships. Instead, researchers are encouraged to build partnerships with non-researchers from local society. But who can be said to represent or speak for whole societies, municipalities, or groups? One option is to turn to local elders and society leaders as a first point of contact for building researcher-public partnerships. For example, reflecting on her work in China, Zhiqi Xu has said local elites can bridge cultural differences between external researchers and the public, speeding up project integration.[33] Taking this further, Maria Crouch et al. propose an "Elder-centered research methodology".[34] Deferring to local elites certainly appears to play into notions of cultural respect so prevalent in decolonisation rhetoric. But seeing local elites as the default partner of preference for researchers is an example of elite capture, whereby elites dominate a society and have disproportionate power and representation.[35] Elite capture can perpetuate prejudicial power hierarchies within societies, doing little to further the notions of equality and fairness that motivate decolonial research. Here then is another tension which researchers need to engage: should decolonial scholars respect local hierarchies and power systems, even if they see them as unjust; or does decolonising research mean supporting equality (as the researcher sees it) and challenging unjust (as the researcher sees it) power systems wherever one finds them?

Rene Loewenson et al, from the Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET), warn that researchers building public partnerships must protect a project from, on the one hand, being taken over by local elites, and on the other hand, falling back into researcher-control.[36] One way to guard against these two extremes is to put together specially-designed groups which can input public concerns and interests to the project. These groups can be tailored to be broadly representative of the wider society or to represent specific interest groups, depending on the project. A prime example is the Community Action Groups (CAGs) used in the ECLIPSE project. Here, each municipality or

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[33] Johanna Vogel, Francisco Porras, Michael P. Schlaile, Veronica Hector, Christina Plesner Volkdal, Zhiqi Xu, "The Normative Dimension of Transdisciplinary Cooperation", New Rhythms of Development blog series, December 12, 2023, accessed June 11, 2024, https://www.developmentresearch.eu/?p=1721.

[34] Maria C Crouch (Deg Hit'an, Coahuiltecan), Steffi M Kim, Zayla Asquith-Heinz, Elyse Decker, Nyche T Andrew (Yup'ik, Inupiaq), Jordon P Lewis (Aleut), and Rosellen M Rosich, "Indigenous Elder-centered methodology: research that decolonizes and indigenizes", *AlterNative* 19, no.2 (2023): 447-456.

[35] See for example: David Post, "CDD and Elite Capture: Reframing the Conversation", (The World Bank) *Social Development How To Series* 3, (2008): 1-5.

[36] Rene Loewenson, Asa Laurell, Christer Hogstedt, Lucia D'Ambruoso, and Zubin Shroff, *Participatory Action Research in Health Systems: A methods reader*, (Harare: Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET), 2014), 73.

village had a CAG with a varied membership, including people living with leishmaniasis (the subject of the project), their family members, local healthcare professionals, traditional healers, religious leaders, and other interested parties.[37] Researchers used CAGs to generate public input and make joint decisions over the project. They did so whilst simultaneously avoiding elite capture, not relying on existing social hierarchies, and preventing the initiating researchers from taking all project decisions. CAGs are not unique to ECLIPSE but have been used by multiple researchers, perhaps under different labels, as ways of "safeguarding the interests of local populations, through the establishment of a solid foundation that supports a relationship based on trust and engagement".[38] Another example given to the podcast by Toni Rouhana was the use of Advisory Boards in the Civil War Paths Project, which in this Rouhana's experience focused on peace-building in the Middle East. The membership of these Boards was mainly leading scholars and NGO representatives with expertise in Middle East conflict resolution. While these Boards were not representative of the local society in the way ECLIPSE's CAGs were, Rouhana did say they were valuable in highlighting potential issues the researchers should pay attention to and provided insights from people with direct experience of and familiarity with the local context.

Specially-convened groups can also be flexible and adaptable to changing priorities or discoveries. During their work with indigenous groups in Nunavik, Nadeau et al. assembled advisory committees of local healthcare workers to give non-researcher input to the project. However, they soon discovered that Inuit under-representation in the health profession followed through into under-representation on these advisory committees. To make sure Inuit perspectives were included in the research, the team supplemented the advisory committee's feedback with input from Inuit with important experiential knowledge.[39] Neither the ECLIPSE nor the Nadeau et al. examples of non-researcher representation attempt to define "community" per se; instead they follow the Karen Love example of thinking of a community in the context of a research project as "all who will be affected by the research", thus avoiding subjective and problematic categorisations of locality, citizenship, class, caste, ethnicity, profession, and so on.[40] This kind of considered (understanding local social contexts) and adaptive (changing plans when necessary) approach demonstrates effective ways to engage partners on an equitable basis.

Some projects may want to combine vehicles for non-researcher representation with the research team itself, completely removing the distinction between researchers and non-researchers. Medinat Malefakis gave the podcast the example of a Global Survivors Fund project on interventions for survivors of Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV). The project was controlled by "steering committees" which included the researchers as well as local academics, specialists, representatives of NGOs and civil society, and CRSV survivors. No matter the size of the committee, which may change over the course of the project, 40

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[37] Kay Polidano et al, "Community Engagement in Cutaneous Leishmaniasis Research in Brazil, Ethiopia, and Sri Lanka: A Decolonial Approach for Global Health", *Frontiers in Public Health* 10, (2022): 3.
[38] Patricia A. Marshall and Charles Rotimi, "Ethical Challenges in Community-Based Research", *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 322, no.5 (2001): 243.
[39] Lucie Nadeau, Dominique Gaulin, Janique Johnson-Lafleur, Carolane Levesque, and Sarah Fraser, "The challenges of decolonising participatory research in indigenous contexts: the Atautsikut community of practice experience in Nunavik", Journal of Circumpolar Health 81, no. 1 (2022): 7.
[40] Karen Love, "Little Known but Powerful Approach to Applied Research: Community-Based Participatory Research", *Geriatric Nursing* 32, no. 1, (2011): 52.

percent of its seats were reserved for CRSV survivors, meaning the people concerned by the research effectively had a "controlling stake" in the project's design and implementation. Moreover, CRSV survivors were empowered to veto other people's membership of the steering committee, but other members could not determine survivors' membership. This strengthened their control over the project and meant they could not be overridden by other, potentially competing, interests. Malefakis's example demonstrates a case where non-researchers, including people who in this case have been stigmatised and often marginalised because of their experiences, were empowered to sit around the table and make decisions as equals with professionals and researchers, helping redress the imbalance power dynamics of conventional practice. This guaranteed representation and heightened authority ensured CRSV survivors felt that they were in a meaningful position of control over the research and the project, enhancing both real engagement and perception of control.

Knowledge sovereignty

A final consideration for researchers wishing to decolonise partnerships is co-ownership of research. In standard practice, the authors of a research paper own the intellectual rights to any information generated during the project, while publishers own the copyright of any publications resulting from a project. Co-ownership means breaking up this monopoly so that research partners can share ownership of project outcomes or at least maintain the intellectual property rights over any information they have contributed to a research project. Some movements even push towards absolute forms of non-researcher ownership. A leading concept in this movement is Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS).[41] IDS argues that "the proper locus of authority over the management of data about indigenous peoples, their territories and ways of life" is the indigenous society itself, not an outside researcher, institution, or state.[42] Here, data is interpreted as any form of knowledge, including information, culture, traditions, and beliefs. In conventional research, "discovering" or "collecting" information gives the researcher ownership of that information. But as Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson explains, "communicating or describing knowledge does not mean it belongs to the communicator" who receives it.[43] In other words, holders of knowledge do not give up ownership of their information simply by sharing it with a researcher. How individuals' and groups' ownership of information can be accommodated within Western practices around authorship and publication is a significant topic of discussion in decolonising research and something researchers should consider when working to decolonise partnerships.

One way researchers can think about increasing co-ownership is through co-authorship. Indigenous researcher Laren Tynan has highlighted that Western protocols concentrate ownership rights in authors. Including partners as co-authors is therefore a way researchers

[41] Maggie Walter and Stephanie Russo Carroll, "Indigenous Data Sovereignty, Governance and the Link to Indigenous Policy", in *Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Policy* ed. Maggie Walter, Tahu Kukutai, Stephanie Russo Carroll, and Desi Rodriguez-Lonebear, (London: Routledge, 2021), 3.
[42] Tahu Kukutai and John Taylo, "Data sovereignty for indigenous peoples: current practice and future needs", in *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Towards an agenda* ed. Tahu Kukutai and John Taylo, (Acton: ANU Press, 2016), 14.
[43] Shawn Wilson, "Using Indigenist Research to Shape Our Future", in *Decolonizing Social Work*, eds. Mel Gray, John Coates, Michael Yellow Bird, Tiani Hetherington, 311-322, (London: Routledge, 2016).

can share co-ownership whilst still operating with established institutional and legal norms.[44] However, Tynan also concedes that institutions place strict criteria on co-authorship of academic papers, which potentially limits how far co-authorship can be used to establish co-ownership. Moreover, some publishers' rules on authorship may exclude non-European ideas about ownership which decolonial scholars want to respect. For example, how can a whole village or society be designated a co-author of a paper? While this may seem to preclude some forms of co-authorship, there are examples where collective authorship has been done. For example, Bawaka Country in Australia, incorporating the region's "people, animals, plants, water and land" has co-authored multiple papers alongside human authors, in journals including *Progress in Human Geography*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, and *Tourist Studies*.[45] Researchers wanting to support decolonising partnerships could consider publishing in journals that have a clear decolonial policy and are committed to creative co-authorship.[46] An example is *AlterNative*, an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal launched in 2005 by New Zealand's Maori Centre of Research Excellence as a forum for Indigenous scholars and others to showcase Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies.

Some teams may want to codify these expectations about partners' roles and responsibilities in written agreements or memoranda of understanding. These have the advantage of providing a reference point in case of later disagreement or conflict.[47] On the other hand, they can appear overly formal and Western and may not suit the informal and flexible dynamics of some research partnerships. Teams may also want to establish formal or informal mechanisms for the ongoing self-evaluation of a partnership and project. Considerations like these can help ensure all partners feel part of a mutually-respectful team, where their role in the research process, their input, and their opinions are respected as equally valid and important. This in turn helps to redress the imbalanced power dynamic of conventional research which puts the researcher in control and relegates all other partners to secondary or auxiliary positions.

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[44] Lauren Tynan, "Data Collection Versus Knowledge Theft: Relational Accountability and the Research Ethics of Indigenous Knowledges", in *Challenging Global Development*, eds. Henning Melber, Uma Kothari, Laura Camfield, Kees Biekart, 139-164, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 155.
[45] Bawaka Country et al, "Co-becoming Bawaka: Towards a relational understanding of place/space", *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 4 (2015): Bibliographies.
[46] Kate Harriden, "Decolonising your writing", Integration and Implementation Insights, accessed May 14, 2024, https://i2insights.org/2023/05/02/decolonising-your-writing/.
[47] Mpoe Johannah Keikelame and Leslie Swartz, "Decolonising research methodologies: lessons from a qualitative research project, Cape Town, South Africa", *Global Health Action* 12, no. 1, (2019): 3.

3. Decolonising Research Methodology

Decolonising research means moving away from the idea that "objective" quantitative data and empirical evidence are the only foundations of legitimate research. Instead, researchers should consider how they can use heterodox and creative methods to: engage non-academic participants; gather and analyse information; and share knowledge in unconventional ways. They can also think through ways of valuing and working to increase non-academic participation in research practices, pushing towards the more inclusive end of a "spectrum of involvement".[48]

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an approach which has become increasingly common, particularly in social scientific research. CBPR foregrounds non-academic involvement in research, not just in data-gathering but also in shaping the research project and determining its intended impact. Approaches like Thai Baan take the devolution of project control further and make non-academic partners the drivers of research projects while academics facilitate and support.[49] This effectively constitutes a role reversal of conventional research partnerships in which the Global North researcher controls the project and Global South partners are used only as auxiliaries and service providers.

In addition to increasing non-researcher participation and control, decolonial scholars can consider using arts-based research methodology. This is where creative modes of expression like song, painting, and story-telling are incorporated into the research process as important and valid forms of knowledge creation and exchange. Arts-based methods can enable other worldviews to be expressed and can help incorporate things like emotions and experience into research in new ways. Because they do not rely on quasi-scientific methods or require training or literacy, artistic expression can also help maximise non-researcher engagement, offering new ways for people to be involved in research. For example, podcast contributor Emilie Flower is first and foremost a filmmaker, but she has worked with the Center for Applied Human Rights at the University of York on projects like Arts Rights Truth which investigates how creative media like film can generate new languages and practices to inform human rights movements. Elsewhere, fellow contributor Steve Cinderby, of the Stockholm Environment Institute at York, has used visual maps to understand people's use of public transport in Kampala, Uganda, in a project informing city-wide transport policy.

Rethinking the meaning of quality data

Researchers decolonising their methodology may need to reflect on debates concerning "data quality". There is a perception among some that participatory and arts-based methods yield findings which are less reliable, accurate, and generalisable than conventional practices. This is rooted in the notion that only empiricism and European rationality can inform valuable knowledge. Even in the social sciences and the humanities, this attitude has led to the standardisation of methods which use quasi-scientific approaches. An example is

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[48] Dominique M David-Chavez and Michael C Gavin, "A global assessment of Indigenous community engagement in climate research", *Environmental Research Letters* 13, no. 12, (2018): 4.
[49] Alexandra Heis and Vaddhanaphuti Chayan, "Thai Baan Methodology and Transdisciplinarity as Collaborative Research Practices: Common Ground and Divergent Directions", *Advances in Southeast Asian Studies* 13, no. 2, (2020): 211-228.

the way surveys or interviews - which can reveal rich qualitative and subjective insights - are often used to generate numerical or statistical datasets through closed questions and content analysis. As Steve Cinderby pointed out, standardised methods like surveys and questionnaires can be restrictive, excluding the poorest or most disadvantaged groups like the illiterate, the elderly, and the disabled. It is better, Cinderby argued, to use effective decolonial methodologies to find out about the perspectives and emotions of a few people, than to survey five hundred people through conventional methods.

As Steve Cinderby suggests, decolonial methods, especially those that are arts-based, prioritise quality and depth of information over quantity of data. Decolonial methods recognise different beliefs about knowledge, experience and causality, and incorporate these into the research process through creative means. This is seen as a strength of decolonial research by some, while others suggest this leads to reduced academic "robustness", as findings are based on feelings and subjective perspectives rather than (or as well as) what European epistemology renders as facts.[50] Similarly, decolonial methods value the participation of non-researchers in the research process which brings in partners and contributors with highly variable levels of education and training. Again, this may be seen by some as undermining academic rigour because it dilutes the so-called expertise of the research team. But this critique misses the point of decolonial research which is predicated on the belief that researchers trained in Western epistemology and methods are not the people best qualified or entitled to speak about matters affecting other societies.

There are some ways researchers can address the critique of reduced academic rigour. A compromise may be to use participatory and arts-based methods in combination with more established research practices. A mixed-methods approach could help incorporate non-European epistemologies and insights whilst still rendering the kind of data standard research criteria expect. To increase the validity of their methods, researchers can work closely with partners and society representatives to make sure their methods are operationalised according to the local context. Doing so can help ensure that "different aspects of the research (e.g., population sampling, construction of scenarios, research logistics, questionnaire semantics) are tailored to the idiosyncrasy of the population being surveyed."[51] Standardising terminology is one example of ways researchers using decolonial methodologies can address perceptions of low research robustness. But podcast contributor Yeimi Lopez - who has worked on the ECLIPSE project - argued that part of decolonising research involves moving away from established research norms, including its preoccupation with generalisability. She said words and ideas like generalisability trap researchers into colonial ways of thinking and doing. Instead of prioritising quasi-scientific markers like generalisability, researchers should consider how much value they assign to things like inclusivity, fairness, and equality.

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[50] Emmanuel Tsekleves, et al, "Challenges and Opportunities in Conducting and Applying Design Research beyond Global North to the Global South", DRS Biennial Conference Series, "Synergy", 11-14 August, 2020, accessed June 6, 2024, https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2020/researchpapers/20/, 1347.

[51] Alvaro Durand-Morat, Eric J. Wailes, Rodolfo M. Nayga Jr., "Challenges of Conducting Contingent Valuation Studies in Developing Countries", *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 98, no.2 (2016): 606-607.

Shifting these priorities constitutes a recalibration of the factors that have motivated Global North research for decades. Such recalibration will be neither fast nor easy. A key issue to consider here is the role and perspective of funding institutions. Many funding institutions have deeply-established yardsticks by which funding applications are assessed, particularly: the generalisable relevance of a project; the clarity of research questions and objectives; the rigour of research methodology; and the expertise of researchers.[52] These principles, which have been fundamental to the way funders have operated for years, are largely incompatible with decolonial research.[53] Another related challenge is that co-creation makes it hard to predict project outcomes, because participatory methods can yield unexpected results and influence the design of a project as it unfolds. Some sense of project outcomes is another factor funders often consider when processing applications, so unpredictability can become an obstacle when trying to secure funding. As discussed below, some funding institutions are moving away from these conventional yardsticks but decolonising research funding remains a prerequisite of decolonising research.

Investing in time for research methods

An important consideration for researchers contemplating decolonial methodologies is that they can take more time than conventional practices. Moreover, they do so whilst yielding highly context-specific results, constituting a poor investment for research funders according to established priorities and protocols. Non-researcher engagement and equitable working relationships also mean the Global North researcher has less control over research timelines and may need to work to other people's schedules which can be both restricted and unpredictable. When effective, participatory and arts-based methods also require significant time for preparatory groundwork before the actual research can begin. Time needs to be given to: familiarising oneself with the local context; building relationships with partners; developing trust with the local society; seeking permission where necessary; putting together research teams and advisory groups if relevant; and finding agreement on project aims and methods. This is in addition to the more standard preparatory tasks like securing ethics approval and recruiting participants. All of this preparation can take even more time in rural and difficult to access societies where development research is often focused. Many researchers actively trying to decolonise their work have cited time constraints as a direct obstacle to their preferred practices. On the podcast, Brent Elder referenced his work with Kenneth Odoyo on disability-related inclusivity in Kenyan schools, lamenting that they did not have enough time to train Odoyo to use data analysis software or to involve local people in writing the resultant paper.[54] This significantly curtailed the degree of non-researcher participation in the analysis phase of the project and restricted Elder's desire for broad co-authorship.

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[52] Richard Maclure, "The Challenge of Participatory Research and its Implications for Funding Agencies", *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 10, no. 3 (1990): 12.
[53] Rene Loewenson, Asa Laurell, Christer Hogstedt, Lucia D'ambruoso, and Zubin Shroff, *Participatory Action Research in Health Systems: A methods reader*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET), 2014), 83.
[54] This was discussed in the Decolonising Development Research Podcast as well as in: Brent Elder and Kenneth Odoyo, "Multiple methodologies: using community-based participatory research and decolonizing methodologies in Kenya", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 31, no. 4 (2018): 305.

Meeting the challenge of increased time costs is not easy. Researchers may instinctively fall back onto conventional methods, saying time constraints put this decision beyond their control. And some could even get their Global South partners to manage and carry out much of the preparation and groundwork in their place, which is precisely the kind of exploitative dynamic decolonisation tries to redress. In practice, researchers may have to reduce the scope and/or scale of their project in order to use decolonial methodologies. The guiding adage here should be: better to do a small job well than a big one poorly.

There are some key principles decolonial researchers should bear in mind when it comes to issues of time. Firstly, the additional time involved in decolonial methodology needs to be honestly factored into project plans and proposals, building in flexibility where possible. Second, researchers can work with partners to develop a realistic and mutually-agreed timeline for the project. This does not need to be a formal agreement nor minutely detailed, but a general plan with key deadlines and dates for completion can help keep a project on schedule. Third, researchers could think about organising regular "check-ins" with project partners to make sure everyone is on track and happy with the project's progress. Fourth, researchers can devote some time with their partners to try and predict possible delays or problems that could derail a project's timeline. Depending on the project's context, these delays could range from having to mediate social disagreements to dealing with natural disasters. A final time-related consideration researchers should bear in mind is that people in disadvantaged contexts likely have little free time to dedicate to new projects, and practitioners in such contexts may already be very over-stretched. Researchers should take care to respect partners who have given their time to a project and to not take advantage of their generosity.

In recent years, some funding institutions (as well as publishers and universities) have adapted regulations and guidance to accommodate less-conventional research practices, but general readjustment has been slow.[55] The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) in the UK is among the biggest funding organisations that have explicitly stated "community engagement" and "equitable partnerships" as key priorities for funding awards.[56] The NIHR awarded a small grant to ECLIPSE so they could spend several months engaging participants and laying the groundwork for decolonial research practices, before submitting the full funding application.[57] This may be an example of how experienced funders can support decolonial research whilst minimising perceived risk. While this is a positive example, it raises the question of how smaller and short-term projects (ECLIPSE employs over sixty people and operates in four countries over five years) are supposed to access such favourable funding opportunities.

Decolonising ethics processes

[55] Rene Loewenson, Asa Laurell, Christer Hogstedt, Lucia D'ambruoso, and Zubin Shroff, *Participatory Action Research in Health Systems: A methods reader*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET), 2014), 27.
[56] See their website: "Global health research", *National Institute for Health and Care Research*, 2024, accessed June 11, 2024, https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/global-health.htm.
[57] Kay Polidano et al, "Community Engagement in Cutaneous Leishmaniasis Research in Brazil, Ethiopia, and Sri Lanka: A Decolonial Approach for Global Health", *Frontiers in Public Health* 10, (2022): 12.

Ethical guidelines have been developed over time in relation to established research practices and widely imposed by research institutions. But they often fail to recognise the nuance, complexity, and flexibility of participatory and arts-based methods, especially as used in Global South contexts. Ethics review boards that do not accommodate decolonial methodologies in their assessment criteria stifle creative research.[58] A common critique of standard ethics guidelines is that they are concerned with the rights of individual participants, reflecting Eurocentric notions about individuality and personal rights.[59] Many of non-European philosophies do not conceive of legal individuality as the basis of rights. Instead, some societies articulate rights in terms of communal rights (including rights of ancestors) or the rights of nature (including the land and animals). The philosophy of Sumak Kawsay, for example, sees the rights of "Mother Nature" as the wellspring from which all other rights are drawn, but this has no recognition in mainstream ethics protocols. The focus on the legal individual as the basis for rights discourse is one of several ways established ethics guidelines are ill-equipped to deal with research in Global South societies. An example of this unsuitability has been amusingly pointed out by Brendon Barnes who has noted that "Someone once asked me how she should obtain ethics clearance to interview the non-living".[60] Moreover, podcast contributor Brent Elder said ethics guidelines can even be damaging. He said when he worked as a consultant, he pressured his employer to change ethics protocols which he called "a giant dumpster fire that I can see from my house".

The practicalities of attaining communal consent have been debated for decades. One suggestion is that researchers could seek the consent of the society concerned through some sort of representative body, such as a traditional leader, a communally-recognised political authority, or a local governing body. This is a compromise because it still relies on a number of potentially Eurocentric presumptions, such as the legitimacy of leadership structures, the delegation of power by society members upwards to political leaders, and the very principle of representation itself. Another solution is to use specially-convened bodies like CAGs as proxies for the wider society. The smaller size of CAGs relative to the whole society means researchers can take the time to fully explain project details to the CAG and get fully-informed consent from each member, whereas getting fully-informed consent from every person in the relevant area would be impossible on account of time. That said, researchers may still need to "educate" CAG members to some degree to ensure their consent is sufficiently informed.[61] This opens up issues about imposing Eurocentric norms and standards on non-European societies. Whether or not CAGs are officially used as proxies for attaining communal consent, they can certainly input into project ethics protocols

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[58] Brendon Barnes, "Decolonising Research Methodologies: Opportunity and Caution", *South African Journal of Psychology* 48, no.3 (2018): 384.
[59] "Community-based Participatory Research: Ethical Challenges", Durham Community Research Team Centre for Social Justice and Community Action, Durham University, (2012), accessed June 11, 2024, https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/departments-/sociology/Research-Briefing-9---CBPR-Ethical-Challenges.pdf, 5.
[60] Brendon Barnes, "Decolonising Research Methodologies: Opportunity and Caution", *South African Journal of Psychology* 48, no.3 (2018): 384.
[61] Sandra Crouse Quinn, "Ethics in Public Health Research", *American Journal of Public Health* 94 (2004), 920-921.

by advising researchers on potential internal risks only visible within a society, such as the need to allow chaperones for female interviewees or the nuances of local etiquette.[62]

It is apparent that institutional decolonisation requires urgent attention because researchers have been calling for ethics guidelines to accommodate communal consent since at least the 1990s, with little improvement.[63] The momentum currently behind decolonisation movements should provide an opportunity to finally make the substantive changes necessary for ethics guidelines to be made suitable for decolonial research. Emilie Flower told the podcast passionately that researchers are well-placed to pressure either institutions for change, because they have a degree of intellectual freedom not seen in other professions. Fellow contributor Brent Elder was less enthusiastic about the degree of academic freedom, but he certainly called for academic researchers to "push from the inside out" to affect ethics reform.

Lauren Tynan is among those who point out that standard ethics guidelines, while seemingly strict and rigorous to Global North researchers, have nonetheless failed to prevent the colonial exploitation of indigenous knowledges, including in recent years.[64] Corrinne Sullivan similarly argues that standard ethics are too weak, claiming ethics applications have become "an exercise in compliance and risk management rather than ethical engagement."[65] Where this is the case, researchers using decolonial practices can choose to go above and beyond their institution's basic requirements. They may decide to create their own guidelines incorporating concepts like indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights and public access to research outputs. These "above and beyond" guidelines can be developed in collaboration with partners, making the researcher's accountability to their partners (rather than their institution) the guiding principle.

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[62] Vicki Marsh, et al, "Beginning community engagement at a busy biomedical research programme: Experiences from the KEMRI CGMRC-Wellcome Trust Research Programme, Kilifi, Kenya", *Social Science & Medicine* 67, (2008): 722.

[63] See for example: Larry Gostin, "Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Human Subject Research: Population-Based Research and Ethics", *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 19, no. 3 & 4 (1991): 191-201.

[64] Lauren Tynan, "Data Collection Versus Knowledge Theft: Relational Accountability and the Research Ethics of Indigenous Knowledges." In *Challenging Global Development*, edited by Henning Melber, Uma Kothari, Laura Camfield, Kees Biekart, 139-164. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

[65] Corrinne Tayce Sullivan, "Who holds the key? Negotiating gatekeepers, community politics, and the “right” to research in Indigenous spaces", *Geographical Research* 58, (2020): 352-353.

4. Decolonising Research Impact

The final theme addressed by this paper is impact. Impact refers to the wider benefits research brings, other than knowledge creation. When trying to decolonise impact there are two aspects researchers should bear in mind: location and centrality of impact. Location of impact refers to where the benefits of research are most keenly targeted. Conventional practice concentrates research benefits in the Global North. This recreates colonial dynamics of extraction whereby the Global South is plundered for resources used to enrich the Global North. Decolonising means thinking about how research impact can be redirected to bring primary benefit to the Global South, whilst also benefiting the North. A guiding principle for decolonising impact is provided by Hawaiian researcher Renee Louis, who has proposed that "If research does not benefit the community by extending the quality of life for those in the community, it should not be done."[66]

Centrality of impact refers to a more conceptual reappraisal of impact's place within a research project. In conventional practice, impact is seen as an appendix to a project, a task or phase to be completed after the work is finished and the research is published. In some instances, impact is seen as something entirely separate from a project, with the researcher "handing over" findings to a policy-maker, organisation, or other group who then "generates" impact. Decolonising research rejects this distinction between project and impact and considers impact a central component of the ongoing research process.

Centering impact in research design

There are many ways researchers can work towards centering impact in their research projects. Researchers can begin by thinking about potential projects in ways that forefront impact from the outset. In conventional practice, researchers contemplating research are often guided by two questions: what gaps are there in the literature that I can fill? And (to a much lesser extent) what wider benefit will this research bring to my community? This kind of thinking perpetuates established and colonial-style dynamics whereby research is designed to serve the academy and the researcher's community. Instead, Derickson and Routledge have suggested researchers "triangulate" potential research in terms of: What current theoretical debates exist? What do non-academic partners want to know? And what public and institutional projects can be served by the research?[67] Thinking in these terms elevates impact to a key research priority and makes it a focus of the entire project.

Another way of centering impact is to boost non-researcher engagement in a project from the outset. This is because successful impact relies on answering questions the research cannot address on their own, such as: What do non-researchers want to know? How can the utility of research be maximised? Are there other potential partners who can help advance the people's goals and how can the researcher facilitate their engagement? And what tools or resources other than research do people want or need?

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[66] Renee Louis, "Can You Hear us Now? Voices from the Margin: Using Indigenous Methodologies in Geographic Research", *Geographical Research* 45, no. 2, (2007): 131.
[67] Kate Driscoll Derickson and Paul Routledge, "Resourcing Scholar-Activism: Collaboration, Transformation, and the Production of Knowledge", *The Professional Geographer* 67, no. 1, (2015): 2.

One way of answering these questions and centering impact is to make non-researcher participation central to project design, particularly when it comes to framing research questions. This can be done in several ways, depending on the time, resources, and flexibility available to the instigating researcher. For small projects with limited resources, it may be most practicable to work with partners in the relevant society, such as fellow researchers or in-field practitioners, to tailor research questions to local contexts. This can help ensure research speaks to local/regional issues without requiring extensive preparatory groundwork. Larger projects could assemble mechanisms for public input like Community Advisory Groups, working with them to formulate research questions and identify ways of maximising local impact. In the project on Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) discussed on the podcast be Medinat Malefakis, the project-proper only began *after* CRSV survivors had been consulted on what reparation (for violence) means to them and what they wanted to see form the research. In this case the research team did not initiate the project process with any presumptions about what they would investigate (beyond a focus on survivors of CRSV) or what outcomes they would hope to generate, instead letting the people affected by the research determine those objectives and outcomes. This is a good example of a project centering impact in a way that is relevant to and wanted by the people concerned.

Another way of centering impact is to work alongside existing movements or grassroots organisations. This approach does not pretend to impartially gauge communal interests through representative bodies like CAGs but explicitly tries to advance specific interest groups. The principle here is still that the research(er) is put at the service of the society, not the academy. This is particularly poignant when one considers that many of the economic, social, and political injustices campaigners tackle have their roots in colonialism and coloniality. Derickson and Routledge have written in detail about this kind of research under the label "scholar-activism", reconceptualising research as a resource for community-based activism rather than a tool for expanding academic knowledge.[68] An example of scholar activism is Paul Routledge's work on food sovereignty in Bangladesh, investigating the role of the Bangladesh Krishok Federation, with which he worked closely as a facilitator of an international peasant movement called People's Global Action Asia.[69]

Building impact throughout a project

Decolonising impact begins but does not end with co-designing research questions. Impact should be seen as part of the ongoing research process, not a post-project "phase" or task. One effective way of working to ensure this is by using participatory research methods. These methods involve non-researchers in the ongoing creation of research, meaning they have access to new knowledge or findings in real-time. Their close involvement also means participants not only understand research findings but also know how they have been discovered. This familiarity can increase trust in the research process and may enhance the

[68] Kate Driscoll Derickson and Paul Routledge, "Resourcing Scholar-Activism: Collaboration, Transformation, and the Production of Knowledge", *The Professional Geographer* 67, no. 1, (2015): 1-7.
[69] Paul Routledge, "Translocal Climate Justice Solidarities", in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, eds. John S. Dryzek, Richard B. Norgaard, David Schlosberg, 384–398, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

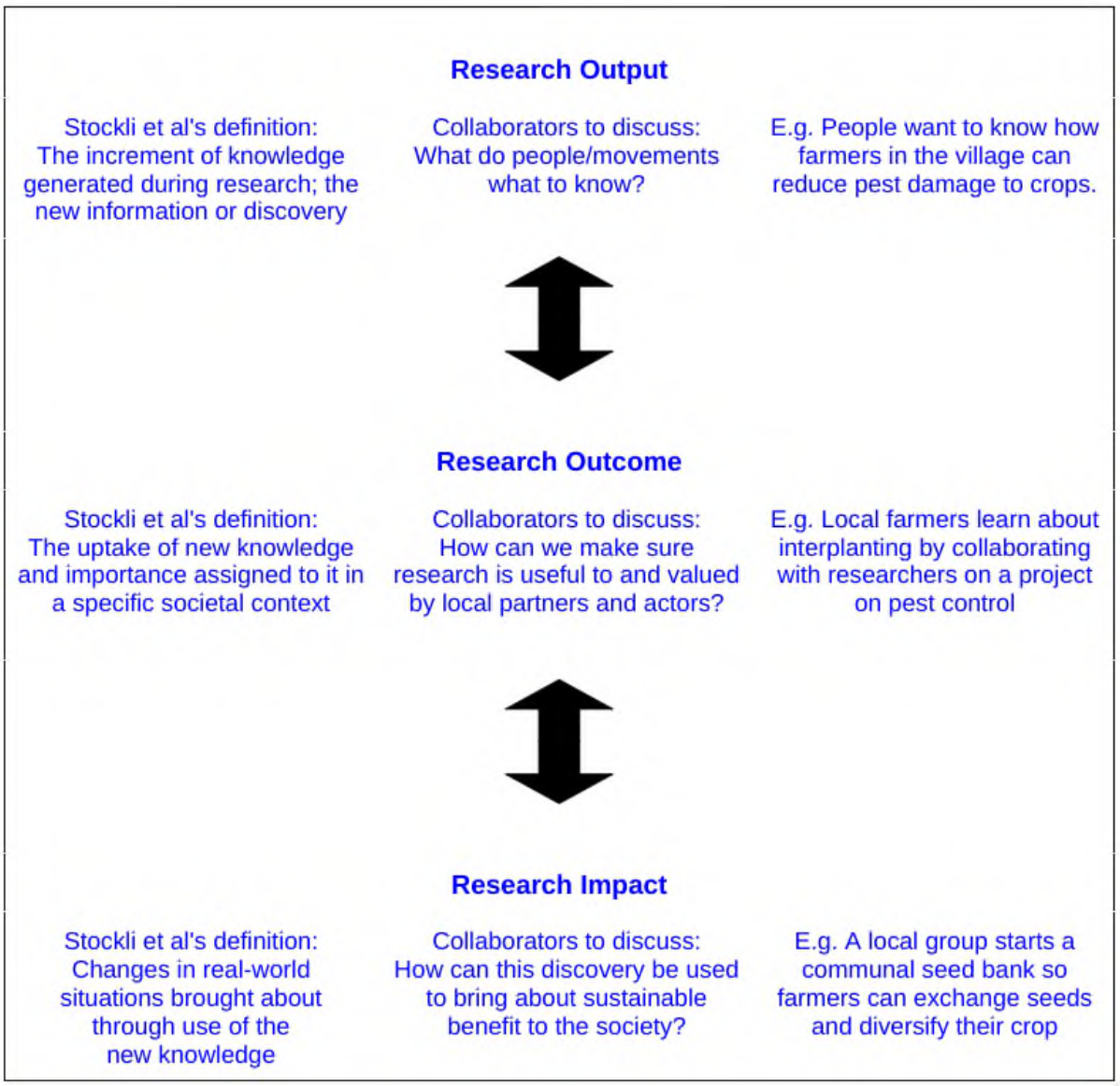
likelihood of research being used by the people for whom it is intended. The way non-researchers are intimately involved in the creation of research throughout a project is in direct contrast to the "handing over research findings" approach that characterises impact in established practices, whereby a researcher concludes their work, writes up a paper, and only then shares their conclusions with interested parties.

Access to research in real time can be particularly important in some Global South contexts where the need for knowledge is urgent. This may be the case when scholar-activist type researchers are collaborating with social movements tackling immediate problems of injustice. In such situations, activists cannot wait for lengthy projects to be finished and written up. Instead, they need to be able to access new information and to deploy it in their activism immediately, using it to shape their activities and inform negotiations with other parties. Where researchers are not working with social movements but are addressing urgent issues like healthcare, immediate deployment of research findings can still bring rapid and ongoing benefit. This does raise some concerns researchers should bear in mind. For instance, how far should activists or practitioners rely on partial information or use findings that have yet to be fully analysed or verified? But active and ongoing use of research by partners is a significant way projects can have meaningful impact, with ongoing impact inbuilt into the research process from the start.

Researchers can work to ensure ongoing impact is maintained across a project through regular impact-focused discussions with partners, CAGs or other representative bodies, and non-researchers. Here, we propose a model (Figure 1) that can be used to guide these discussions in a way that makes sure impact is considered at all times and in relation to all project activities. The model is adapted from a three-part conceptualisation of impact introduced by Bruno Stockli et al in their Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships.[70] They present impact as a series of transformations, beginning with the knowledge a project generates (the "output"), turning that into an "outcome" with uptake among the wider society, and then translating that into real-world changes or "impact". Though useful, this linear approach to impact retains the conventional attitude that impact is separate from the research project and something that comes after research. The model proposed in this paper takes these three concepts and works them into a framework which can guide partners' discussions on impact. Throughout a project, all research activities and findings can be examined through this model to assess where and how they can be or are being translated into impact. If there is no conceivable way that a project activity is delivering or able to deliver impact, it may be necessary for the research team to consider adapting their project focus or developing their methodology accordingly. For example, if a research method is producing new knowledge (an output) but that information is not understood or valued by the wider society (the outcome) then something in the methodology or mode of communication may need to change.

[70] Bruno Stöckli, Urs Wiesmann, and Jon-Andri Lys, *A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships*, (Bern: Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries, 2018), 29.

Figure 1: A model for centering impact in project discussions



Limitations of research impact

It is important for all research partners to recognise the limitations of research when it comes to the benefits individual projects can bring. Societies in developing states may have many urgent needs which they want researchers to address, but researchers need to be honest about what they and the projects they facilitate can deliver. For example, Clarice Mota told the podcast that some non-researcher groups involved in ECLIPSE expected the researchers to address things like infrastructure, including the state of rural roads, as well as public health. While the ECLIPSE team recognised healthcare is impacted by a host of factors, including infrastructure, they had to be honest about what their project could and could not do. Researchers can work towards setting expectations in several ways. Perhaps the most important thing to bear in mind is that expectations need to be established early on through mutual agreement. This can be done through preliminary discussions with research partners and, if relevant, advisory groups. During these discussions, initiating researchers

should be honest about their expertise, capacity, and resources, including the time and funds available. Being honest about achievable impact and setting realistic expectations is important in maintaining trust in a project and avoiding frustration or disappointment.

When setting expectations about impact, researchers may want to establish some "red lines" about what they and the projects they initiate can and cannot do. This is particularly important if the initiating researcher is giving over substantial decision-making authority to non-researchers. Red lines on things like timeframes, project focus, resourcing, and so on can set parameters within which partners can shape a project to serve their needs and interests without straining the researcher's capacity to deliver. The idea of setting red lines might feel contradictory to the spirit of decolonial research, it may be a necessary step in avoiding disappointment later down the line and can help focus a project toward realistic and deliverable impact from the outset.

Furthermore, when setting impact expectations, research partners should also be honest about what different groups or interests can expect from research impact. As previously discussed, "communities" are not homogeneous units but are composed of many groups with different interests and priorities, some of which may be competing. In developing societies, many of these needs are likely to be urgent and rooted in important issues like poverty, ill health, and political instability. These various interests are likely to compete for researchers' attention and individual projects are seldom able to serve all interests within a society. Research teams should be upfront about this and acknowledge that delivering meaningful impact may mean prioritising the interest of one group over others. For researcher-activists, who align their projects with social movements, this focussing behind one interest group is more explicit and deliberate.

While being upfront about the limitations of deliverable impact, there are still some things researchers can do to try and support people whose interests are beyond the scope of their project. For example, researchers can put community partners in contact with other researchers who are able to work on their priorities. Alternatively, researchers can use their contacts and platform to connect community partners with stakeholders or experts at the regional, national, and international level who can offer valuable expertise and resources. These are things researchers can do during a project to contribute to impact beyond the scope of their own immediate research.

Considering wider dissemination and access

When thinking about impact, researchers may also want to consider disseminating their findings not just among project participants but to wider society as well. Through participatory methods, partners and participants will already understand and be prepared to use research findings. But what about members of the wider society and those who have not actively been involved in research? There are several ways researchers can share findings with these groups so that their research can have even greater impact and utility beyond the official project objectives.

The simplest way of disseminating findings more broadly is to share project reports as widely as possible. This should be done in a language and style that can be understood by people

who have not been involved in the research and may require translation into a local and jargon-free language. Translation should not be relied on as the only means of wider dissemination because some members of the public may not be able to read, may not understand complex texts, or may not have the time to sit and read a lengthy report. To make their outputs more accessible researchers can consider other media, some of which may have been produced as part of the research process itself, especially if arts-based methods were used. Other resources can be specially-made. In either case, community partners and advisory groups can determine which formats will be most effective. Where possible, researchers can consider using a variety of formats to maximum dissemination. Examples of alternate modes of dissemination could include itinerant public displays, community meetings discussing the research, and visual mediums like films that document the project's progress. Hanne Cottyn told the podcast about her work with a University of York-led project on sustainable land-use practices in the paramos of Colombia. As part of this project, Cottyn worked with local musicians to make a professional recording of their music that communicated their concerns about land use, management, and sustainable practices. This enabled local communities to share their concerns and their knowledge not just across Colombia but throughout the world. Elsewhere, another good example of effective dissemination arising out of participatory research is the 2022 comic book *Afterwards – Graphic Narratives of Disaster Risk and Recovery from India* which combines text and images in storytelling to explain disaster recovery processes in India.[71]

The initiating researcher's role in this dissemination process can be negotiated. On the one hand, the researcher should avoid relying too heavily on research partners to be the project's spokespeople because Global South partners may already be overstretched and should not be exploited or treated as project assistants and intermediaries. On the other hand, taking a leading role in disseminating research findings beyond the project's participants is a way partners can affirm their ownership of research. It can also provide partners with opportunities to develop skills of communication and presentation, which may be seen as a side benefit of a project. Who takes what role in wider dissemination of research can be an ongoing negotiation and can be adapted to shifting circumstances.

Wider dissemination can take both time and resources and researchers should consider how they can factor this into project plans and budgets. Translation alone will have a cost because translators should not be presumed to work for free and need to be compensated for their time and expertise. Translating terminology used by researchers and their partners may also take longer than expected if complex terms have no equivalent in local languages and need more nuanced translation. Converting research outputs into non-text and creative formats can be even more expensive. Researchers may need to consider setting budgets for dissemination early in the research project to avoid spiralling costs later on. It should not be assumed that research partners or wider society can or should meet the cost of dissemination because this is tantamount to paying for access to information - which is part of what decolonisation seeks to redress.

Ensuring the wider society has full and sustainable access to research outputs raises issues of ownership and copyright which researchers should also consider. Universities, funders,

[71] Vineetha Nalla and Nihal Ranjit (eds), *Afterwards – Graphic Narratives of Disaster Risk and Recovery from India*, (Indian Institute for Human Settlements, 2022).

and other institutions may seek to restrict the researcher's ability to share information freely, especially with members of the public who are not part of the research team. Questions that are currently being debated among decolonial researchers include: How can free dissemination be squared with copyright law? Can ideas about co-ownership be balanced with Western ideas about private ownership? And how can free access be encouraged within the "publish or perish" competitive context of academia?[72] Despite movements towards open access, peer-reviewed publication is still the priority for many researchers and institutions. The time and effort taken to disseminate findings beyond the academy is "typically not rewarded and, in some cases, can be penalized."[73] This is another significant systemic issue which obliges researchers to reflect on potential institutional resistance to decolonising impact.

Tackling institutional resistance

Researchers seeking to decolonise impact need to acknowledge that there are several aspects that do not align neatly with existing institutional protocols. One already mentioned is the principle of free public access to and ownership of information. Another challenge is predicting and measuring a project's impact, which can be difficult when decolonial methods are used and a project is tailored to the specific contexts of a certain society or group. Yeimi Lopez said these things can be hard to square with established impact protocols and criteria which are "is still related to numbers, to quantifiable results".

There are some ways researchers can try to work within existing institutional guidelines. On measuring impact, for instance, the way it is made part of the research process (rather than a post-project task) means researchers can begin reflection on impact from the early stages of a decolonial project. As Tsekleves et al advise, researchers should consider "recording data from the start of the project to demonstrate impact" and gather "stories" from participants about how unfolding projects already impacts their lived experiences.[74] This information can be continually collected and examined and used to evaluate the impact of projects, addressing the needs for many institutions to be able to point to research impact in the project they support. In a study using community engagement in biomedical research in Kenya, Vicki Marsh et al. used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate research impact. They discovered language ambiguities made it impossible to rely exclusively on structured questionnaires and that "some level of open discussion was always needed to ascertain meaning."[75] Alternatively, Toni Rouhana suggested detailed case studies of individuals' experience of benefiting from research could be used to demonstrate

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[72] Bruno Stöckli, Urs Wiesmann, and Jon-Andri Lys, *A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships*, (Bern: Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries, 2018), 21.
[73] Karen Love, "Little Known but Powerful Approach to Applied Research: Community-Based Participatory Research", *Geriatric Nursing* 32, no. 1, (2011): 54.
[74] Emmanuel Tsekleves, et al, "Challenges and Opportunities in Conducting and Applying Design Research beyond Global North to the Global South", DRS Biennial Conference Series, "Synergy", 11-14 August, 2020, accessed June 6, 2024, https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2020/researchpapers/20/, 1347, 1369.
[75] Vicki Marsh, et al, "Beginning community engagement at a busy biomedical research programme: Experiences from the KEMRI CGMRC-Wellcome Trust Research Programme, Kilifi, Kenya", Social Science & Medicine 67, (2008): 729.

impact, explaining exactly where and how the research has informed their lived experience. Researchers can try to use a combination of methods to measure impact in order to meet their institution's evaluation requirements.

Other researchers and groups have called for existing institutional protocols around impact to be completely reformed. In terms of assessing impact, multiple organisations have called for impact criteria to be overhauled so as to meaningfully reflect the benefits research brings to research partners rather than to the researcher's institution and community. For example, the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment has produced an Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment to which multiple UK institutions have signed up, including NIHR, the University of Edinburgh, and the Wellcome Trust. Among its "core commitments" are pledges to abolish reliance on "author-based metrics" and "metrics that do not properly capture quality and/or impact" of research".[76] Other organisations have produced similar challenges to the established notion of impact, including the Latin American Forum on Research Assessment which has produced a paper challenging institutionalised impact assessments, especially as used in the field of scientific research.[77]

In terms of information ownership, indigenous groups and some organisations have lobbied for rules on ownership and access to change for decades. In 1993, the First International Conference on the Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples (convened by Nine Tribes of Mataatua in the Bay of Plenty Region of Aotearoa New Zealand) saw delegates from 14 countries agree to new principles of indigenous intellectual property rights.[78] But the academy has been slow to catch up with this and comparable developments, testifying to the stickiness of this issue within academic research and publishing.[79] While recognising the imperatives of their careers, researchers ought to reflect on their role in bringing about institutional change.

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[76] "Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment", Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment, July 20, 2022, accessed July 16, 2024, https://coara.eu/agreement/the-agreement-full-text/, 4.
[77] Latin American Forum on Research Assessment, "Towards a Transformation of Scientific Research Assessment in Latin America and the Caribbean: Evaluating Scientific Research Assessment", Latin American Forum on Research Assessment, accessed July 16, 2024, https://www.clacso.org/en/evaluating-scientific-research-assessment/.
[78] "The Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples", First International Conference on the Cultural & Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Whakatane, Aotearoa/New Zealand, 12-18 June 1993, accessed May 20, 2024, available via https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/databases/creative_heritage/indigenous/link0002.html.
[79] See also Article 31 of the UN's more recent Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which includes an expanded definition of knowledge: "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", adopted by the UN General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007, accessed May 20, 2024, https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-people#:~:text=Indigenous%20peoples%20have%20the%20collective,the%20group%20to%20another%20group.

5. Closing remarks

In discussing how the challenges of decolonising research can be approached, this working paper has often cited dialogue and flexibility as key: dialogue between the researcher, their supporting institutions, and society partners; and flexibility to adapt the project (including its research questions, methods, and outputs) to suit local contexts and serve local interests. Capacity for dialogue and flexibility will be different for every research project, depending on: the scale of the project and size of the research team; the time, funding, and resources available; the strictness of supporting institutions; and the variable contexts in which the research is carried out. Due to these factors, this paper has avoided prescribing step-by-step best practice solutions or one-size-fits-all guidance. These already exist in abundance and have their uses for many researchers.[80] What this paper has done is highlight the main challenges researchers may encounter when decolonising their practice and propose ways these can be worked through.

Far from disincentivising decolonial research, this paper invigorates the drive towards decolonisation by forewarning researchers about the obstacles they will face and motivating them to prepare for and plan for those challenges as much as possible. By doing so, this paper contributes to the long-term sustainability of decolonising research, forestalling researcher apathy and frustration born of disappointment and difficulty. This paper does not pretend to have all the solutions to the obstacles it highlights, but instead hopes to stimulate more rigorous discussion about the realities and practicalities of doing decolonial research.

Toolkit of questions to consider when decolonising research.

- **Contrasting epistemologies**: how can researchers forge partnerships with people with different epistemological and philosophical backgrounds?
- **The limits of partnership**: are there some differences of attitude and outlook that cannot be mediated?
- **Dialogue and disagreement**: what methods of dialogue, discussion, and compromise can partners use to overcome differences?
- **Investing in partnerships**: how can researchers work through other challenges to forging partnerships, such as logistics?
- **Identifying partners**: who is qualified to be a research partner? Who speaks for "the community"?
- **Knowledge sovereignty**: how can researchers ensure partners have access to and ownership of the information they help to produce?

[80] See for example: Alex Gertschen, "Transdisciplinary research partnerships with business and civil society in the North-South context", *Swiss Academies Communications* 16, no. 7 (2021): 1-18; Bruno Stöckli, Urs Wiesmann, and Jon-Andri Lys, *A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships*, (Bern: Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries, 2018); Erica Nelson, *A Resource Guide for Community Engagement and Involvement in Global Health Research*, Institute for Development Studies, 2019, https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/14708/NIHR_Community_Engagement_Involvement_Resource_Guide_2019.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y.

- **Rethinking the meaning of quality data**: how can concepts around academic rigour and notions like reliability and generalisability be reframed to include decolonial methods?
- **Investing in time for research methods**: how can researchers accommodate and plan for the added costs of time and money involved in decolonial methods?
- **Decolonising ethics processes**: how do ethics protocols need to change to accommodate decolonial methods and different cultures? How can ethics be strengthened to ensure partners and participants' rights are protected?
- **Centering impact in research design**: how can researchers make sure research benefits the people it concerns?
- **Building impact throughout a project**: how can impact be made a key part of the research process, rather than a separate and additional research "phase"?
- **Limitations of research impact**: what do researchers need to do to make sure impact expectations are realistic and managed?
- **Considering wider dissemination**: how can researchers and their partners share their research with the wider society?
- **Tackling institutional resistance**: how do institutional systems and practices need to change to decolonise impact?

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