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Decolonisation of Knowledge: Exploring the Decolonisation of Development Cooperation Evaluation

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Master's in Development Studies

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Department of Political Economy

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Abstract

This thesis aims to clarify whether the colonial dynamics of knowledge production extend to development cooperation evaluation, namely development project and programme evaluations, by building upon the widely discussed relation of knowledge production to colonisation in the scientific literature, as well as the established connection of development studies and colonisation. Furthermore, the thesis will present examples of methodologies and techniques to assist the decolonisation process in the evaluation sphere, aiming an active understanding of what links colonisation to development cooperation evaluation and how it can be delinked.

Chapter 1 of this thesis delineates the theoretical framework, where the concepts of colonisation and decolonisation come to play in the knowledge production sphere. Subsequently, Chapter 2 will explore the colonisation present in the field of development cooperation, specifically in development cooperation evaluation. Chapter 3 will detail how decolonisation may be achieved in the development cooperation evaluation. The dissertation concludes that, despite the historically colonial undertones of the development cooperation field, it is imperative to implement decolonisation methodologies and strategies through development cooperation evaluation. The adoption of decolonial evaluation methodologies and strategies should challenge the existing power dynamics within the field, being essential to ensure a just and equitable evaluation process, that can improve the development cooperation altogether.

Keywords: decolonisation of knowledge, development cooperation, decolonial evaluation.

Resumo

Esta dissertação pretende clarificar se as dinâmicas coloniais da produção de conhecimento se estendem à avaliação da cooperação para o desenvolvimento, nomeadamente às avaliações de projetos e programas de desenvolvimento, partindo da discussão generalizada da relação entre produção de conhecimento e colonização na literatura científica, bem como da ligação estabelecida entre estudos de desenvolvimento e colonização. Além disso, a dissertação apresentará exemplos de metodologias e técnicas para auxiliar o processo de descolonização na esfera da avaliação, visando uma compreensão ativa do que liga a colonização à avaliação da cooperação para o desenvolvimento e como pode ser desvinculada.

O Capítulo 1 desta tese delineia o enquadramento teórico, onde os conceitos de colonização e descolonização entram em jogo na esfera da produção de conhecimento. Posteriormente, o Capítulo 2 explora a colonização presente no domínio da cooperação para o desenvolvimento, especificamente na avaliação da cooperação para o desenvolvimento. O Capítulo 3 detalhará como a descolonização pode ser alcançada na avaliação da cooperação para o desenvolvimento. A dissertação conclui que, apesar dos traços historicamente coloniais da área da cooperação para o desenvolvimento, é imperativo implementar metodologias e estratégias de descolonização através da avaliação da cooperação para o desenvolvimento. A adoção de metodologias e estratégias de avaliação descoloniais deve desafiar as dinâmicas de poder existentes no campo, sendo essencial para garantir um processo de avaliação justo e equitativo, que possa melhorar a cooperação para o desenvolvimento no seu todo.

Palavras-chave: descolonização do conhecimento, cooperação para o desenvolvimento, avaliação descolonial.

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Glossary of acronyms

CARE – Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics

CBPAR – Community-based Participatory Action Research

DAC – OECD Development Assistance Committee

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAR – Participatory Action Research

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

UN – United Nations

US – United States of America

Introduction

International development cooperation has its main goal to develop and contribute to economic growth in non-Western countries or areas. Thus, it aims at "solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all" (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1991). However, developmental imbalances persist, which suggest that a critical re-evaluation of the development cooperation field is necessary.

In this framework, development cooperation evaluation might be a useful tool to understand the results of development cooperation. Evaluation aims to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of development cooperation initiatives (OECD, 2019). As a primary mechanism for evaluating the success of development projects, evaluations play a pivotal role in shaping the strategies, policies, and interventions of international development cooperation. Nevertheless, to foster a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of development, it is imperative that we critically scrutinize the underlying paradigms and frameworks where evaluations operate, including their underlying colonial dynamics.

Hence, given the colonial attributes inherent within the area of development cooperation evaluation, it is imperative to decolonise within this practice. The concept of decolonisation has been gaining prominence across various academic disciplines and socio-political movements. It challenges the enduring legacy of colonialism and its impact on the global distribution of power, resources, and knowledge, re-evaluating established norms, narratives, and structures that perpetuate hierarchies and disparities. When applied to development cooperation evaluation, decolonisation fosters critical exploration and self-awareness. For evaluators, it functions as a re-examination of the knowledge frameworks, practices, and perspectives that have historically defined and informed the evaluation of development interventions. By scrutinizing the principles, methodologies, and underlying ideologies of development cooperation evaluation, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse of decolonisation in global development, and, specifically, provide new insights in decolonising evaluation.

Research Question and Objectives

This thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the decolonisation of development cooperation evaluation. The following research question has been defined: "How can an evaluator actively contribute to the decolonisation of development cooperation evaluation?". In response to this, the following objectives have been identified:

1. **Analysis of the impact of colonisation of knowledge:** I will explore the historical development of colonisation, examining the coloniality process, in which Western paradigms have shaped knowledge.
2. **Analysis of power dynamics**: I will investigate the power imbalances inherent in the neoliberal capitalist framework and how they have influenced the distribution of knowledge and the development cooperation field.
3. **Relevance of decolonisation/decoloniality**: I will explore the potential benefits of decolonisation for development cooperation evaluation.
4. **Elaboration of recommendations**: I will offer recommendations for decolonising development cooperation evaluation practices.

Methodological aspects

As stated, this dissertation discusses the colonial qualities of knowledge production and extends this premise to the evaluation process in development cooperation projects and programmes, with the intention of determining possible ways in which the process can contribute to decolonisation. For this purpose, after the definition of the research question based on my personal preferences and time constraints (Bryman, 2012; Davies and Hughes, 2014, p.17-22), I adopted a qualitative methodological approach, using unstructured non-numerical data (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 9).

I conducted a literature review, using a combination of a systematic search utilizing the Web of Science Core Collection (WoSCC) database, an unsystematic purposive search for articles in various web sources (e.g., Google Scholar, ResearchGate), and snowballing from other relevant articles. I conducted the systematic research in October 2022, with 6 separate (iterative) searches (considering I conducted searches for both the British variation of English and the United States variation of English): Colonis(z)ation Project Evaluation, Decolonis(z)ation Project Evaluation, Decolonis(z)ing Project Evaluation. The starting point for the dissertation topic was on the decolonisation of development project evaluation, thus justifying the choice for those keyword searches. That yielded 233 results, however given the great quantity of results regarding other scientific fields, and considering the overlaps, it resulted in 12 relevant results. This limited number of results generated confirmed my initial hypothesis that further research surrounding the topic of colonisation within the evaluation framework is necessary. Given the limited number of relevant results, I proceeded to extend my research to the colonisation of knowledge production more generally as a starting point, defining it as my first chapter, and started my search with authors such as Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, both scholars that provided definitions for coloniality and decoloniality. On this basis, I conducted an unsystematic search for keywords in academic literature I collected, regarding the key concepts I wanted to understand, such as *periphery*, *colonisation*, *coloniality*, *decolonisation*, *decoloniality* and *indigenous knowledge*. The articles retrieved in the systematic search were the basis for the snowball sampling from relevant articles and books on decolonisation of evaluation.

In sum, the dissertation hereby presented is the result of qualitative research and it adds to the growing body of publications on the colonisation/decolonisation process within knowledge production, and more specifically in development cooperation evaluation.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into three chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of the decolonisation of development cooperation evaluation. Chapter 1 sets up a theoretical framework through defining the key concepts of "global North and global South", "core and periphery", "intersectionality", "colonisation and coloniality", and "decolonisation and decoloniality". The definition of the concepts will allow to establish a clear and shared understanding of their meaning and ensure a foundational understanding of the research topic here discussed. Chapter 2 explores the coloniality in development cooperation and, specifically, in evaluation. It provides definitions for development cooperation and development cooperation evaluation and elaborates on their colonial roots and remaining coloniality. Chapter 3 will explain the relevance of decolonisation in evaluation and establish principles and methodologies evaluators might adopt to decolonise the field. The Conclusion will summarize the key findings and insights from the thesis and reiterate the importance of decolonisation in development cooperation evaluation.

Chapter 1: Colonisation of Knowledge

Introduction

This chapter contains the theoretical framework including the discussion of the colonisation and decolonisation of knowledge, which will be applied later to the evaluation of development cooperation. At first, the model of Global North and Global South, as well as the model of periphery will be defined. Periphery works as a geographical basis for the rest of the discussion, working as an alternative to the Global North and South divide. I argue that the core and periphery model illustrate better the global and regional distribution of power, resources, and influence, leading to a deeper understanding of decolonisation of knowledge. Following that, the concepts of colonisation, coloniality, decolonisation and decoloniality will be discussed, producing an historical framework for the colonisation process, and defining the various differences between the concepts and how they will be considered in this dissertation. All of these concepts aim to explain the connection between colonialism and the scientific methodology and practices involved in producing knowledge and the development cooperation.

Global North and Global South

In the field of development studies, the divide between Global North and Global South is widely used, however, many argue that such terminology excludes some types of power and simplifies the colonial dynamics.

Focusing first on the definition and analysis of the Global North and South paradigm, Global South usually refers to the "receiving end of globalization" (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 184) and the suffering party of its consequences, rather than a geographical location, "characterised by a position of relative subjugation within a highly hierarchical international system" (Berger, 2021), meaning the less economically developed countries, often located in the Southern Hemisphere, including Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia. It should be understood as a meta geography of difference and contestation, given it is not a geographic location, but rather a space of diverse identities and experiences (Kleinschmidt, 2018). While the Global North generally refers to the more economically developed and politically influential countries, primarily in the Northern Hemisphere, including Europe, North America, and parts of Asia, or what can be considered the West.

Core and Periphery

The core-periphery model, popularized by Raúl Prebisch and the dependency theory school of thought, might allow us to look at the international socioeconomical relations and structures with a more nuanced lens than a binary divide, such as Global North and Global South. The core-periphery framework distinguishes between the core - mainly the big cities (both in the Global North and the Global South), the “clusters of economic activity” (Klimczuk and Klimczuk-Kochańska, 2019, p. 8); and the periphery – the outer regions, less economically developed. Rather than the study of development studies being only about the Global South countries, reducing entire continents to being underdeveloped and perpetuating the dichotomy, which can lead to simplification and antagonization of the South, the core and periphery allows us to see the peripheral areas reproduced due to globalization and neoliberal capitalism, that allows for greater regional inequalities. It allows us to see the underdevelopment in the North and the development in the South, and work towards greater equality.

Pike, Rodríguez-Pose and Tomaney (2014) defend a dialogue between Global North and Global South beginning with a critique of developmentalism, defining development regionally and locally, common issues and context sensitivity and place should exist. I consider that the proper discussion of development as regional and local invalidates the structure of having two large regions identified through the globe. Moreover, the need to decolonise, specifically knowledge, must be seen as a global movement, not limited to countries that have historically been at the receiving end of colonialism. Decolonisation of knowledge involves questioning and challenging the biases and Eurocentric viewpoints that may have been embedded in educational curricula, research, and institutions as a result of historical colonial practices.

As suggested by Gillespie and Mitlin (2023), “rejection of North–South binaries seeks to challenge hierarchies in knowledge production, therefore, this is not premised on minimizing or denying geographical inequalities and uneven development rooted in historical processes of colonial exploitation and dispossession” (p.439). Hence, throughout this thesis the term "periphery" will be used when addressing colonised communities, with the intent to broaden the scope and include marginalised populations in the Northern regions, such as indigenous communities, and marginalised populations in the South, where the aid development projects are more intense, while recognizing the impact of colonialism.

Intersectionality

The interdisciplinary concept of 'intersectionality' has gained importance, since black feminism has coined the term in 1991, given the dual discrimination they encountered (race and gender) (Gopaldas, 2013). Intersectionality at the macro-level refers to the “multiplicity and interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender” (Gopaldas, 2013, p. 91). Thus, people are shaped differentially by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., ‘race’/ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability, geographic location, ability, migration status, religion) (Hankivsky *et al.*, 2014). Through connected structures of power, the processes form interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy (Hankivsky *et al.*, 2014).

As will be further elaborated in Chapter 3, intersectionality will be considered a crucial framework to be involved in the decolonial evaluation process.

Furthermore, when referring to indigenous methods, knowledge and people, it includes not only aboriginal populations but also marginalised and minority groups situated in diverse contextual settings of people, since the scope of reference within this thesis extends beyond indigenous communities and encompasses a broader spectrum.

Colonisation and coloniality

To explore the topic of decolonisation, it is necessary to briefly introduce colonisation and its consequences, namely coloniality (Adefila *et al.*, 2022).

Coloniality is the fundamental instrument to understand the persistence of colonial forms of domination, even after the formal end of the colonisation process in most places, through colonial cultures and structures within the modern capitalist and patriarchal global system (Grosfoguel, 2007). Andreotti *et al.* (2015) add that coloniality is a product of the expansion of epistemic, material, and aesthetic resources for the modernity’s imperial project. Essentially, coloniality serves as a crucial framework for comprehending (i) the enduring influence of colonialism on contemporary societies, (ii) the imperial project of modernity, given its roots in the expansion of knowledge, resources, and aesthetics, and (iii) the continued perpetuation of systems of domination and inequality in the modern capitalist and patriarchal global system (Andreotti *et al.*, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2007).

However, some authors such as Maldonado-Torres (2007) and Mignolo (2003, p. 669) distinguish between different aspects of coloniality: (i) coloniality of power, meaning the interconnectedness of contemporary systems of exploitation and domination; (ii) coloniality of knowledge, pertaining to the influence of colonisation on knowledge production; (iii) coloniality of being, defined as “the lived experience of colonisation and its impact on language” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Given the transformative influence wielded by the knowledge production sector, I will focus on the (de)coloniality of knowledge, applying it to development projects evaluation.

Since the beginning of colonialism, knowledge has been a central component of the phenomenon. Even though Morreira *et al.* (2020) define the initial moment of coloniality in 1492 with the conquest of the Americas, Connell (2018) defines it in 1505, when the Portuguese nation entrusted Francisco de Almeida the responsibility of setting permanent bases and seizing control of the intercontinental spice trade. Therefore, the significance of associating an imperial figure to the settlement in a foreign land for resource control, settles 1505 as a defining beginning of coloniality as a process. From that point on, the peripheries became a means for the colonisers to exercise power and maintain control.

However, to understand the effect of colonialism on knowledge, it is essential to recognize that the initial conquest for spices quickly transformed into the domination of all types of resources (Connell, 2018). As Quijano (2007) states, along with the systemic repression of beliefs, ideas, images, symbols, or knowledge opposing colonial domination, the coloniser’s knowledge was imposed. Colonisation primarily affected the methods of “knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectivized expression, intellectual or visual” (Quijano, 2007, p. 169). Ensuring that, even after the initial repression ceased, there remained a cultural and social control over the colonies, reinforced by making European culture as mystic and unreachable and later as seductive (Quijano, 2007). Access to power was granted only through the European mode of knowledge, thereby perpetuating the control over the colonised (Quijano, 2007). Berger (2021) argues that there has been an “epistemic marginalisation”, meaning the Western world possesses authoritative and objective knowledge, while non-Western societies are not allowed representation in theoretical discussions, condemning them to remain culturally and socially controlled by the colonisers. Overall, the maintenance of cultural and social control over the colonies was a deliberate and systematic process that utilized various means such as making

European culture seem unattainable, granting access to power only through European knowledge, and creating an epistemic distance between the colonisers and the colonised.

During colonial times, Europeans claimed trying to civilize the "uncivilized" people and thus spreading the Western culture forcefully (Quijano, 2007, p. 176). The control over knowledge, however, was crucial in justifying the imposition of the European culture and values on the colonised (Crilly *et al.*, 2020). There were clear convictions by the colonisers that the European values, modes of knowledge and being were superior regarding the colonised. The non-European (or periphery) were understood as being inferior and in need of the "Enlightenment". The Enlightenment is considered to have perpetuated colonial thought, through the creation of racial epistemic hierarchies, justifying colonial actions (Connell, 2018; Crilly *et al.*, 2020; Mignolo, 2011a, pp. 87-133), which justified colonial aggression since other cultures were perceived as being unequal and thus "can be 'objects' of knowledge or/and of domination practices" (Quijano, 2007).

As Mignolo in López-Calvo (2016) argues, this belief laid the ground for what is "Western modernity". Having emerged precisely with Enlightenment, it is the foundation for the macro-level structures present in Western society, like the nation-state, capitalism, individualism, and private property. Those structures could be, however, perceived differently or could be non-existent in areas where Western values – such as classical legacy, Western Christianity, European languages, separation of spiritual and temporal authority, rule of law, social pluralism, representative bodies and individualism (Huntington, 1996) - are not predominant. For example, in some indigenous cultures, land is not private as is can be linked to spirituality or can be a home for people living in that territory, without a precise owner but the community (Mignolo, 2011a, pp. 135-217). The colonisers used the argument that indigenous people lacked the knowledge and ability to govern themselves and understand the concept of private property, to justify their expulsion from their lands.

To further distinguish themselves, the colonisers created racial categories to social classify the peoples they encountered based on physical appearance (Quijano and Ennis, 2000, p. 534). Associated to the racial categories was the division of labour, where non-white populations were relegated to high-intensity and lower-status jobs, creating a social structure of hierarchically organized racialized people associated with specific remuneration and exploitation (Quijano and Ennis, 2000, p. 536). The racial categories created attached race to labour in a seemingly natural way (Quijano and Ennis, 2000, p. 537), thereby, allowing the colonisers to further justify the dominance and exploitation of the indigenous populations. The racial hierarchy was simultaneously extended to knowledge hierarchy, privileging the knowledge present in the coloniser in detriment of the knowledge(s) of the periphery. Connell (2018) denominates the modern knowledge system based on Western objectivity and universality as an "imperial science". Grosfoguel (2007) argues that colonialism has created an epistemic hierarchy that positions Western knowledge as superior and non-Western knowledge as inferior, resulting in the suppression of non-Western knowledge systems and ways of knowing. As discussed by Grosfoguel (2007), the process of delegitimization of Indigenous knowledges, i.e., cultural, ecological, and historical knowledge rooted in their connection to their land, is a result of the "colonial matrix of power", a system of domination that operates at the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality. The colonial matrix of power, which created the hierarchy of knowledge, was aided by the Enlightenment, which created a belief in the universality of reason and the superiority of science and technology.

Science influenced by a colonial history stills effects knowledge systems today, and this has been extensively studied regarding higher education (Adefila *et al.*, 2022; Crilly *et al.*, 2020; Maistry, 2019; Shahjahan *et al.*, 2022). As Bell (2002) points out viewing postcolonialism as a distinctive time period can mask the remaining coloniality. The legacy of colonialism has left a dependence on Western knowledge system for everyone who wants to "succeed". For example, in higher education the reading lists of the courses can perpetuate colonial dynamics without representing their own students (Crilly *et al.*, 2020), and university ranking systems can be a neo-liberal instrument of control (Maistry, 2019). Also, regarding knowledge production, Connell (2018) states that citations are primarily made to authors from the Global North even by Global South authors.

However, it is noteworthy that Cusicanqui (2012) argues that many of the concepts here presented were not originally by Mignolo and Quijano. Cusicanqui argues that they have strategically established a niche influence within a larger context, skilfully incorporating the insights and ideas emerging from the subaltern studies movement in India and the diverse critical examinations of colonisation and decolonisation in Latin America. The picture painted portraits the ability of these authors, specifically Mignolo, to choose certain concepts from people not involved in the dominating Western academy, and stripping them of their political context, introducing them to the wider Western academy, and popularizing them as their own. The criticism of these authors is particularly interesting given the subject matter, since they have perhaps appropriated certain ideas from less powerful individuals than themselves, despite recognizing the problems with power imbalance. I would argue that the best way to face this is to admittedly assume one's identity, such as Cusicanqui has done and the power dynamic present in their lives in order to question the power dynamics present in the international sphere.

Decolonisation and decoloniality

After elaborating on the impacts of colonialism on the peripheral knowledge systems, it is necessary to discuss the process of decoloniality/decolonisation. Firstly, discussing the definition, the importance, and the various ways it can present itself.

Quijano developed the notion that coloniality was the lingering effect of colonisation, and thus, he used as an instrumental concept 'decoloniality'. According to Mignolo (2011a, p. 52) this is the "long term processes involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological divesting of colonial power". Decolonisation and decoloniality, thus, represented the difference between the dismantling of colonial systems, structures, and institutions, and achieving independence and self-governance for colonised peoples, and the broader cultural, economic, and epistemic dimensions of colonialism, respectively. However, in contemporary literature it seems the term decolonisation is often used synonymously to decoloniality. I opt to use the terms interchangeably, according to the authors I am citing.

Therefore, decolonisation can be understood as reverting colonisation; however, a more instrumental definition is that decolonisation contains diverse efforts to resist the distinct but intertwined processes of colonisation and racialization, through transformation of historical and ongoing effects of such processes (Adefila *et al.*, 2022). Thus, creating and keeping alive modes of being that are antithetical to such processes. However, this would require a concerted effort not only for maintaining peripheral knowledge systems alive but also to actively correct the distortions caused by coloniality as part of the process (Connell, 2018). Decoloniality is an active process that resists the ongoing force of coloniality; it represents a counterforce that seeks to survive and maintain its own project in the face of persistent colonial domination.

Colonisation of knowledge has an active process of epistemic violence. Epistemic violence is defined as the "failure of an audience to communicatively reciprocate, either intentionally or unintentionally, in linguistic exchanges owing to pernicious ignorance" (Dotson, 2011, p. 242), silencing marginalised peoples and causing harm when people in power refuse to listen to or respect the knowledge and experiences of marginalised peoples, without making an effort to understand or find common ground. The suppression of forms of speaking has its roots in colonialism, where the colonisers considered knowledge and cultures of the colonised peoples as inferior, primitive, or even non-existent. Decolonisation is also necessary to challenge the enduring epistemic violence.

There has been extensive discussion about the decolonisation of knowledge and how it can be effectively implemented. Firstly, there is a focus on the methodology used in research, but Connell (2018) argues that decolonisation should expand beyond the methodological, involving questioning the contents of the obtained knowledge and how that was obtained and giving opportunities to non-Western knowledge systems. Regarding the university, Crilly *et al.* (2020) claim that to liberate the university and curriculum it is necessary to give agency to students to at least discuss the role of the mainly white male and Western sources in the course. Ultimately, decolonisation is not homogenous and its study of decolonisation, in higher education specifically, encounters different terminologies, approaches, such as the plurality of terminologies, adopted to local situations and specific needs, and movements such as #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall in South Africa, where the concern for the fair chance to access higher education resulted in social justice movements (Adefila *et al.*, 2022).

A performance approach to the process of decolonisation has been ongoing, specifically by education institutions, not with a goal to disrupt the neoliberal agenda and system (Maistry, 2019). This can be a sort of "performative decolonisation", with the actions performed in a superficial and symbolic way rather than deeper examination of power structures, histories, and ongoing practices that perpetuate colonialism (Maistry, 2019).

The decolonial project is a complex one that involves various areas of society, including education, politics, law, and culture. This movement emerged from the realization that the effects of colonialism continue to impact countries and communities long after the official end of colonisation. It that involves challenging and transforming dominant knowledge systems, recognizing, and valuing diverse ways of knowing and being, and addressing ongoing power imbalances and injustices (Andreotti *et al.*, 2015). For Andreotti *et al.* it should: (i) restore Indigenous knowledge systems, (ii) challenge dominant Eurocentric perspectives, (iii) recognize the ongoing legacies of colonialism.

Thus, the goal should be to challenge systems of power in place without overshadowing Indigenous voices and let the discourse fall into the hands of neo-liberal interests (Morreira *et al.*, 2020).

Conclusion

In the initial section of Chapter 1, I have defined "global North" and "global South" as well as the notion of the "core and periphery." These definitions serve to establish the geographical framework that will be applied in the subsequent chapters, drawing upon the core and periphery model. Moreover, I have provided a definition for the concept of "intersectionality," which will be employed in Chapter 3, in conjunction with the efforts related to decolonisation. Subsequently, I have explained the multifaceted meanings encapsulated within the terms "colonisation and coloniality," as well as "decolonisation and decoloniality." Decolonising knowledge is imperative, since it has a significant impact on the social, economic, and political development of non-Western societies. Through a non-binary division of the world and an intersectional vision, the next chapter delves deeper into the manifestation of coloniality within the development cooperation field, specifically in development cooperation evaluation, to understand how evaluators might decolonise their work.

Chapter 2: The Coloniality in Development Cooperation Evaluation

Introduction

Given what was established regarding colonisation of knowledge, one can expect that the logic of undervaluing indigenous knowledge will be applied in all forms of knowledge production, including development cooperation evaluation. Thus, the objective of this chapter is to focus on the discussion of evaluation regarding some divisive aspects that characterise it, namely coloniality. Given the positive and negative impact that development cooperation pertains, and evaluation being the final stage of development cooperation (the final stage of the development project or programme[1] cycle), it should not be disregarded. In order to find out how to decolonise the practice, this chapter will then identify the definition of development cooperation and the coloniality present in it, as well as identifying the evaluation of development cooperation and its coloniality. I argue that development cooperation mainly works under a coloniality framework which extends to the evaluation processes. I will develop the discussion regarding that connection, setting up the final chapter of the dissertation, which relates to ways of how to decolonise this stage of development cooperation.

Development Cooperation

Development cooperation or development assistance can be understood as a process "to serve the purpose of assisting countries in their efforts to make social and economic progress" (Klingebiel, 2014). The assistance is made through financial, technical, and material support, with funding from international entities and implemented by mainly international organisations or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and local partners such as civil society organisations. The idea of assistance or cooperation for the benefit of other countries is always expressed in the definition of development cooperation. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organization for development, defines development cooperation or development assistance the following way:

> Official development assistance (ODA) is defined as government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. (…) Aid may be provided bilaterally, from donor to recipient, or channelled through a multilateral

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[1] Programmes are a combination of different projects, but for the purposes of this research I will use the terms project and programme interchangeably.

> development agency such as the United Nations or the World Bank. Aid includes grants, "soft" loans and the provision of technical assistance. (OECD, no date)

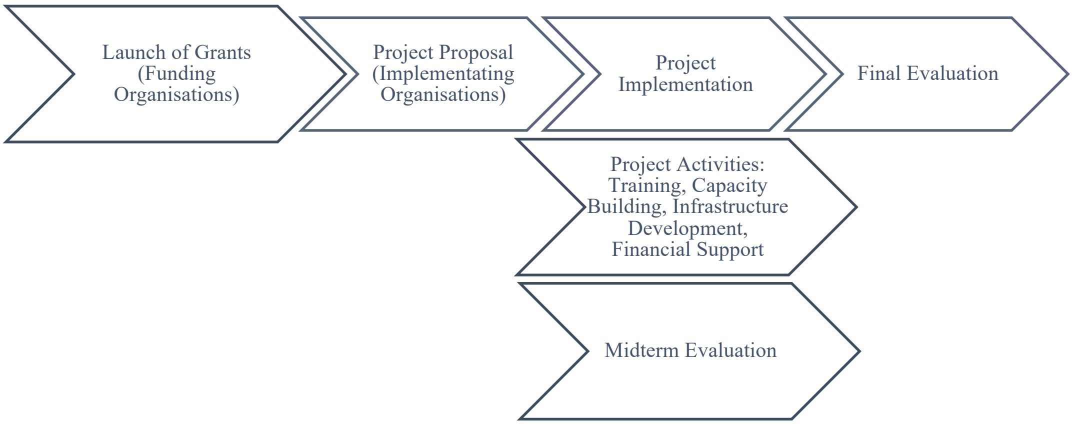
The European Union, as the largest donor of development aid (European Commission, no date b.) also has, in its founding Treaty, defined the principles of development:

> The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. (European Union, 2012, p.28)

As a result, for development cooperation it can be concluded that includes assistance for economic growth and social progress to developing countries. With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it became clear that development cooperation expanded further than economic growth and poverty reduction, expanding the definition towards education, social protection, gender equality, fair labour practices, sustainability in cities and communities and many more (U.N. General Assembly, 2015). The 2030 Agenda provided a base of objectives to prioritize for funding and implementing agencies, as well as NGOs and provided a holistic approach to development. However, the comprehensive approach might be counterproductive given some objectives should have more priority than others (Carant, 2017).

In the practical sense, the process of implementation of a development project can be different, however the main threads that connect the development actors tend to be the following. Depending on the areas of the grants available, the funding of a project is made through a transfer of financial resources as well as human resources, which are allocated to the specific project. The project starts being implemented by organisations, institutions, or agencies that collaborate with funding agencies to implement the projects on the ground. One of the main activities implemented tends to be capacity building and training of local institutions and beneficiaries. The projects tend to have a local civil society organisation that supports with the implementation and whose goal is to keep and foster new knowledge to support the issue being tackled through the project.

Figure 1. Development Project Stages


Launch of Grants (Funding Organisations)
Project Proposal (Implementating Organisations)
Project Implementation
Final Evaluation
Project Activities: Training, Capacity Building, Infrastructure Development, Financial Support
Midterm Evaluation

Source: By author

In summary, development cooperation can be understood as a collaborative effort involving external funding and implementing partners to provide resources, expertise, and support to specific countries or areas. While the intentions are positive, the effectiveness and dynamics of development cooperation can be complex, and there is an ongoing discussion about the impact and potential drawbacks of such projects, such as perpetuating colonisation.

Coloniality in development projects

Development projects can impose Western colonial knowledge frameworks on local communities, increasing the power and role of international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to the detriment of local organizations (Oliveira, Proença and Cavaco, 2022).

Despite the colonial past, the connection between colonialism and development has been ignored and hidden, in an attempt to separate the negative associations from colonialism to the inherently "good" development (Kothari, 2006). McMichael (1996) declares that development projects have emerged due to the way the world faced the decolonisation process, reducing development to the economic aspect of social change, aiming for nothing more than economic growth.

The concept of "development" was introduced by US President Truman during his speech at fledgling United Nations in 1949 (Grotenhuis, 2016):

> Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions

> approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. ('The Fourth Point in President Truman's Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949', 1950)

When Truman defined countries as being underdeveloped, he counter posed the Western more industrialized countries with non-Western countries. There was a belief that the Western world was more advanced, more developed, and thus, better, while the economically disadvantaged countries need to "develop" to be equally progressive (Grotenhuis, 2016). The impact of the contrast between both worlds was not only on an economic level, but also on other socioeconomic issues, leading to a transfer of knowledge, technology, and financial support from the Western countries to non-Western countries (Grotenhuis, 2016), leading thus to development projects.

The same logic of binary thinking can be applied to the division of Global North and Global South. Although, it comes from the history of colonialism and recognizes the distinction between the former colonisers and the former colonised people(s), it also provides a static and binary definition of the entire world, as structural dichotomies and binary oppositions have long been the driving force behind development thought (Six, 2009). As noted in Chapter 1, the concepts of Global North and South are not unambiguous. The main argument for existence of Global South and Global North is to understand the economic and political consequences of the colonisation process, however, when it starts to be appropriated by the colonisers for their economic benefit, through the promotion of neoliberal aid, it can develop nefarious results. The concept can be used to set as opposites of each other, allowing the South to be instrumentalized (Muhr, 2023) and to the polarization of thinking that everything is developed or right in the Global North, and everything is underdeveloped and wrong in the Global South. I dispute this view and I reinforce that the adoption of a binary thinking can lead to the lack of nuance and reinforcement of North and South hierarchy.

Thus, the development theories since its conception have been founded on the westernized understanding of development and it has popularized models of development that might not work for non-Western scenarios (Khumalo, 2022). Development, as promoted through a universalist "one size fits all" lens, might not represent the specific cultural contexts, where the development projects are being implemented.

In development projects, power imbalances persist, with many instances illustrating a continuity of influence. A recurring pattern emerges where former colonial powers, now functioning as funding agencies and international development agencies, frequently maintain a position of authority and control over development projects (deciding the areas of the grants, who is receiving them, designing the projects). Concurrently, the recipient countries often find themselves in the role of beneficiaries, echoing their historical status as former colonies. The continued involvement of previous colonisers as funders of development projects, without a type of democratic control (Oliveira, Proença and Cavaco, 2022), perpetuates a form of neocolonialism in which they exercise a significant degree of influence, both in terms of decision-making and the definition of project objectives (Six, 2009). Consequently, the beneficiary countries, which were once subjected to colonial rule, often have limited agency in shaping the development projects intended to benefit their populations. The power imbalance is visible, as the donor nations, continue to exert power through aid and development, while the recipient countries are placed in a subordinate position, dependent on external aid (Barroso, Castel-Branco and Monjane, 2022).

For example, as conveyed in a report published by ALTERNACTIVA (Barroso, Castel-Branco and Monjane, 2022), a Mozambican collective, the World Bank, as one major donor for development projects in the country, has funded to these projects while promoting their own interests in a global struggle to define the terms of development. There may be a perpetuation of underdevelopment by the World Bank through the acceleration of the process of financialization, during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which, the World Bank allowed for financial companies to handle the payments of cash transfers. This made the process resemble a financial transaction and focused on providing limited and short-term grants that failed to offer a more comprehensive approach for alleviating poverty. Besides that, the international funding for development cooperation is increasingly tending towards complex management, excluding most local organisations, and, thus, prioritising international aid agencies, which takes away the power from local communities to access funds for their daily needs. The sense of impunity of the funding organisations is present as they “claim the privilege of absolute immunity from any financial responsibility for their own actions, decisions, and omissions" (Barroso, Castel-Branco and Monjane, 2022), perpetuating a serious imbalance of power.

This ongoing power imbalance underscores the need for a critical examination of development practices, evaluation methodologies, and the broader discourse surrounding global development. It highlights the urgency of decolonising development processes to shift the locus of control, empower local communities, and redress historical injustices while charting a more equitable and inclusive path forward. The main actors in the development sphere are far from contributing to the decolonisation of international development, maintaining the systemic racism that underlies the unequal sharing of roles and resources in development and cooperation (Oliveira, Proença and Cavaco, 2022).

Evaluation

As previously stated, a crucial part of the development cooperation cycle is the evaluation stage, given that during various projects, programmes or initiatives, there could exist various types of monitoring and evaluations, such as midterm and final evaluations. The evaluation could be defined in various ways.

Evaluation is considered by many development actors (funding and implementing agencies) a systematic and objective process (OECD, 1991; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016) that should be impartial (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016), assess from the design, through its implementation and results (OECD, 1991, 2019), contributing to accountability and an in-depth understanding of project/programme (European Commission, no date a). Vallejo and Wehn (2016) underline the importance of evaluation as an accountability for the investments of the funding organisations.

Evaluation: Coloniality

However, as Chilisa *et al.* (2016) establish, the evaluation process is a donor-driven accountability-based process, which is not beneficial for the actors involved. According to Chilisa *et al.* (2016), monitoring and evaluation "has become the worst instrument of epistemological imperialism" for the evaluated. Evaluation is considered imperialist not only because it reduces the activity to a mere rendering of accounts, but also because of the harmful language evaluators might use (Calyx and Finlay, 2022), alignment with their own biases (Cavino, 2013; Renmans *et al.*, 2022), and non-acknowledgment of the impact of colonial history (Shea *et al.*, 2013). When power imbalances come to play, there are many Western evaluators evaluating projects in indigenous areas or peripheral areas, as the outsiders might benefit from a positive bias (Cavino, 2013). Previous research has demonstrated that many NGOs tend to assume that funding agencies prefer a Western-led external evaluation, demonstrating more quality and rigor (Kelly, 2019). This preference must be duly recognised and addressed by all parties involved as a way of demystifying the idea that national knowledge and, consequently, national evaluators are inferior. It may even be asked what the desirable result from an evaluation is. In a scenario where the evaluation is too positive, there may be less incentive for funding projects in that area, which would be negative for the local communities. However, if the evaluation is too negative, that would also be negative for the local communities.

The assumption that evaluation is colonially rooted is not brought upon in isolation, it aligns itself with the previously established argument in Chapter 1, that the main research paradigms are Eurocentric and colonial. According to Chilisa *et al.* (2016) these paradigms have been critiqued for constructing all human experience through a Western lens through the globalization of knowledge, providing inadequate assessments. Renmans *et al.* (2022) corroborates this assumption, stating there is an "hierarchy of knowledge" established, perpetuated by the history of power dynamics. Therefore, evaluation being an instrument of such research paradigms is considered Eurocentric, colonial and rooted in the exclusion of indigenous knowledge in detriment to positivist Western knowledge.

The language utilized in evaluation can be harmful, e.g., "target groups" and "easing access", which can perpetuate colonial discourse (Calyx and Finlay, 2022). Instead of "target group", however, there should be a focus on partnership and instead of easing access there should be a focus on recovery (Calyx and Finlay, 2022). This problematic regarding language might not be on purpose but merely a result from limited diversity in the evaluation sphere (Calyx and Finlay, 2022). Therefore, one can start by changing the language and be aware of the more questionable intents of expressions, while also advocating for inclusion of more diversity of evaluators.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have developed and revised (OECD, 2019) the most used evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The criteria aim to standardise the perspective to which evaluators see a project: "all interventions should be relevant to the context, coherent with other interventions, achieve their objectives, deliver results in an efficient way, and have positive impacts that last" (OECD, 2019). Nevertheless, the OECD is not immune to scrutiny. Its fundamental approach to development was rooted in the notion that the United States epitomized the zenith of societal development, and thus, all nations should emulate its trajectory, effectively homogenizing the development path for all countries (Hughson, 2022). The OECD's emphasis on formerly colonised nations further underscores the argument that it perpetuates a form of ongoing colonial influence (Hughson, 2022). Hence, the introduction of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria may raise concerns about their equitable application. This suggests the need for a degree of flexibility in tailoring the criteria to each specific scenario since OECD is in a position of power. As Chilisa and Mertens (2021) have stated, during the evaluation process, there is a lack of considering the perspective of the evaluator and recognizing the influence of cultural factors in defining evaluation questions and conducting the evaluation, which can be translated to the OECD criteria, given they do not address the power imbalance directly. Previous critiques pointed to the absence of gender-specific criteria (Ofir, 2017). This omission is a source of concern, as it overlooked the unique challenges, opportunities, and impacts that various genders and disempowered people might encounter within development projects. The critiques of universalism of development projects can also be applied to evaluation. There should not be a one size fits all approach, all the contexts are different, and the evaluator should not see an OECD criteria as stagnant and fixed criteria one must use with a top-down approach.

However, following the criteria's revision, there is now an emphasis on urging evaluators to “consider differential experiences, and reflect how power dynamics based on gender and other forms of discrimination (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, social status, ability) affect the intervention’s implementation and results” (OECD, 2021). This revision reflects a growing awareness within the development community of the need to adopt a more inclusive and equitable approach.

One critical component of any development project is the process of evaluation. It helps understand what has worked and what has not, ultimately guiding decision-making for future projects. However, the way evaluation is conducted can either reinforce or challenge the dynamics of power and influence, especially when marginalised populations are involved. In many instances, when evaluation processes are implemented with marginalised communities, they can inadvertently perpetuate colonial dynamics that are deeply rooted in the historical relationships between the former colonial powers and the colonised. This may manifest itself as a top-down approach where decisions and methodologies are imposed by external actors, often with limited or tokenistic participation from the local beneficiaries. The perpetuation of power imbalances may lead to the neglect of local knowledge, customs, and the unique needs of marginalised communities. As a result, the very people these development projects are intended to assist may find themselves sidelined, disempowered, and voiceless in the evaluation process. In the end, evaluating development projects with marginalised populations should not perpetuate historical power imbalances but rather break free from them. By prioritizing the active involvement of local communities and acknowledging their agency, evaluations can move beyond the colonial legacy and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive approach to development cooperation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have defined development cooperation and identified the coloniality present in the field, through the form of harmful language (e.g., developed, underdeveloped), binary thinking, power imbalances, damaging funding for development projects. As the evaluation of development cooperation initiatives is a monitoring tool for the field, I have focused, then, in its definition and the coloniality that is prevalent, seen through imposition of westernised criteria, use of harmful language, non-recognition of the evaluators' biases, non-acknowledgment of colonial history and structures and discriminatory behaviour.

The field of development cooperation involves a multitude of significant participants, including foreign entities like funding organisations and international organizations, as well as potential support from local civil society organizations. These actors collectively contribute to the complex landscape of development initiatives, each playing a distinct role in shaping the development agenda. I will discuss in Chapter 3 how evaluators can attempt to decolonise the evaluation process.

Chapter 3: The Decolonisation of Development Cooperation Evaluation

Introduction

In this chapter, I will address the central research question I set out to explore: "How can an evaluator actively contribute to the decolonisation of development cooperation evaluation?" As the previous chapters have established, decolonisation is not a static or one-time effort; it is a continual journey towards achieving greater equality in our global interactions. Within the intricate power dynamics that characterize the realm of evaluation, we must pose uncomfortable questions and contemplate the potential harm being perpetuated. The larger effort of decolonising development cooperation is an essential step in untangling the deeply ingrained and unfair power dynamics that persist in this field. However, it is equally pivotal to recognize that decolonising the evaluation process itself holds great significance within this broader effort (Khumalo, 2022). This chapter will delve into strategies and approaches that can actively contribute to this crucial aspect of decolonisation, aiming to foster a more equitable and inclusive landscape for development cooperation evaluations.

Importance of decolonisation for evaluation

Since I have discussed the colonisation present in the evaluation practice, it is important to establish that evaluation is not to be discarded altogether. What results from a monitoring and evaluation process is the regulation of the implementation of programs, where participants can proactively respond to challenges and capitalize on opportunities (Chilisa *et al.*, 2016). The process has a purpose and therefore we should aim for the reform and change towards decolonising this type of knowledge production.

Given its setup, the evaluators are responsible for deciding how they measure the results of development projects and report it back to the project (Chilisa *et al.*, 2016), allowing for a great leeway in the quality of reports, with some following the most westernized types of knowledge and using harmful frameworks for the communities involved in the project. According to Cavino (2013), however, evaluation can be used to free indigenous people from colonialism when it is centred on more democratic and egalitarian development and indigenous models and practitioners. This is in line with Greene (1997), who also notes that evaluators have an obligation to use evaluation to advocate for some change. Given that evaluation depicts the landscapes of politics and power and constitutes knowledge production, it is also very much a political statement (Cavino, 2013; Chilisa *et al.*, 2016). I am in alignment with this idea, given that evaluation can serve as a powerful tool for the betterment of local communities, particularly in the development field, which has often been characterized by historical unfairness and extractive practices. Evaluation, when approached with the right intentions and methodologies, can empower local communities, giving voice and agency to those who have historically been marginalised or disregarded in the process.

Accordingly, Marsden and Oakley (1990, p. 10) defend that, even though evaluation has often been seen mainly as a way to meet requirements rather than as a tool for learning (Kelly and Htwe, 2023), external evaluations should not be viewed only as critics that serve to make outside judgments but should be reframed in the way evaluations are looked at. Many organizations value the evaluation process and understand that they must better their record-keeping to seek external funding. However, the process should not lead to dependency and there should be a prioritization of learning in evaluation processes instead of an accountability process for the benefit of the funding agencies (Marsden and Oakley, 1990, p.10). To make evaluation more inclusive and respectful of different cultures and knowledge systems, it could be beneficial for local communities and organisation to collaborate in understanding the purpose of evaluation, how it can help the organisation grow, and how they can collectively carry out evaluations (Kelly and Htwe, 2023). The objective of evaluation is to ultimately "regulate the implementation of programs, what evaluators should see, and how they should measure and report what they see" (Chilisa *et al.*, 2016) and it should not be substituted for the economic interests of funding agencies or implementing partners. Evaluation is in "dialog with the prevailing contexts of colonisation and decolonisation vis-a-vis the location and moment in which it occurs" (Cavino, 2013), meaning evaluation is not conducted in a vacuum, the whole process has been influenced by the historical, social, and political context in which it takes place, meaning it carries with itself the colonial framework in which development studies were founded. We should support the decolonisation of evaluation and foster more equitable and inclusive practices, since it can directly support local communities, while changing the paradigm in which the funding and implementing international organisations see them.

Participative Research

In this section, I will compare participatory research and evaluation and decolonial evaluation. In the early 1960s, a discourse emerged regarding participatory research and participatory methodologies such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and community-based participatory action research (CBPAR), led by scholars such as Freire and Orlando Fals-Borda

(Jordan, 2008). This academic research underscored a fundamental reorientation of research priorities, specifically focusing on the proposition that “social science research could be used to relocate the everyday experiences and struggles of the poor, oppressed, and marginalised from the periphery to the center of social inquiry” (Jordan, 2008, p. 601). Notably, Paulo Freire introduced the concept of "conscientization”, that aspired to empower economically and culturally disadvantaged communities to serve as catalysts for social and political transformation, ultimately with the goal of fostering just, harmonious, and democratic societies.

In mid-1990s the participatory research methodologies gained prominence in mainstream research (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Underlying the paradigm shift towards participatory research was the intention to change the historical power imbalances around the formulation of the research question, the individuals responsible for its articulation, and the ultimate beneficiaries or users of the research findings (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). This aimed to become a transformative process, signalling a profound shift towards more equitable and inclusive research methodologies, through innovative adaptations of conventional research methods (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Hence, when participatory research gained prominence, analogous principles of active participation were extended to the area of participatory evaluation. Participatory evaluation is presented as “an extension of the stakeholder-based model with a focus on enhancing evaluation utilization through primary users' increased depth and range of participation in the applied research process” (Cousins and Earl, 1992), meaning that participatory evaluation places a strong emphasis on ensuring that those who benefit from the evaluation results are involved throughout the research process, identifying evaluation issues, designing the evaluation, in the collection and analysis of data, and the evaluation findings (Jackson and Kassam, 1998). Participation in evaluation involves engaging actors in the entire evaluation process. This can include project participants, staff members, funding agencies, community members, and others who are involved in the project's success. Participation is idealised as being as involved as possible, however, it can range from passive involvement, such as sharing information or providing feedback, to active involvement, such as conducting evaluations, data collection, and decision-making, due to the project's size, complexity, and the available resources. Consequently, a participatory process was also demanded from the evaluation process. This reflects a commitment to ensuring that those most affected by the projects being evaluated have a genuine voice in the process. In essence, participatory evaluation attempts to shift the traditional power dynamics and hierarchies, where external evaluators often hold significant control, to a more equitable and inclusive approach.

Moreover, participatory evaluations fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment within the community, as they actively engaged in shaping the future of projects that affect them directly, and their voices heard, their concerns taken seriously, and their perspectives valued by evaluators. Such process is essential for fostering positive change and achieving more equitable outcomes.

Nonetheless, as the aforementioned participatory research methodologies gained prominence, they also became subject to criticism and scrutiny. Harmful consequences for the participants of the methodologies were identified, such as creation of hostile environments with the creation of empowered communities that challenge established power structures, exploration of unpaid labour, alienation of participants from their communities, inadequately prepared or biased evaluators in participatory research, persistence of vertical programmes, influenced by funding priorities, and personal and professional interests that dictate the research areas (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995), lack of transparency (Gregory, 2000), and ultimately, a reinforcement of existing power structures or hierarchies (Williams, 2004). While the marginalised groups are given voice and invited to participate, they might not be given the opportunity to challenge or question the fundamental power dynamics and structures that have historically marginalised them, with the decision-making power still lying primarily with the organizations or governments implementing the project. Thus, even though participatory evaluation often incorporates aspects of what would later become decolonial thinking, especially in terms of valuing local knowledge and involving participants in decision-making, it may not always address the broader structural and systemic issues related to colonisation. Even so, the external evaluators should actively address the power inequities in their work, through participatory (action) research methods, while not giving in to tokenism (Renmans *et al.*, 2022). Decolonial evaluation, on the other hand, is more explicitly focused on challenging colonial legacies and structures, seeking to transform evaluation systems to be more equitable and just, by critically examining and challenging the colonial legacies, hierarchies, and paradigms within the evaluation process.

Since decolonising evaluation is a multifaceted process aimed at challenging and reshaping the traditional paradigms and power dynamics that have historically influenced evaluation practices, it involves the recognition of who the evaluation is for. Evaluation should be participatory of all local participants. Improvements should be made by actively seeking to involve everyone, especially marginalised people(s) and communities, throughout the evaluation process, from planning to sharing the results. Instead of just teaching others, we should collaborate with the community, making learning a two-way street, and giving local knowledge a higher priority (Kelly and Htwe, 2023).

A way Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann (2020) claim to improve the process of decolonising research methodologies is to promote greater independence for societal participants in the integration of knowledge and collaborative research processes. Renmans and collaborators claim that evaluations should address the power inequalities (Renmans *et al.*, 2022) and they should contribute to the emancipation or empowerment of local communities. They suggest this can be achieved through participatory action research methods, while steering away from tokenism or instrumentalization of local communities. There must be an attention to who is making the evaluation and with which language, as some of it might be harmful (Calyx and Finlay, 2022). The attention to the recipient of the evaluation should identify them, understand them and talk with them.

I assert that local knowledge should be privileged, since only then can its unique nuances, preferences, and practices can be incorporated in the evaluation process, and be valued in the same manner as dominant knowledge systems. The collaborative effort for the recognition of local knowledge systems and traditions is overwhelmingly a change of pace for the knowledge production, which can bring positive change to the impact of the evaluation. However, we need to be careful not to use this as a way for the Western world to take what belongs to Indigenous or local people and appropriate it their own, (Kelly and Htwe, 2023), while acknowledging the power imbalances inherent in the evaluator's position, we should avoid altering our practices solely by adopting indigenous models and subsequently taking credit as evaluators for the outcomes. A way to achieve a path towards decolonisation, is to communicate openly with local staff and communities to understand their objectives and how to measure their progress toward those goals (Kelly and Htwe, 2023). The involvement of local communities should be transversal to the entire evaluation process: analysis, data collection and interpretation, making recommendations, and dissemination. For the evaluators to talk with the local communities and allow them further and deeper participation, then they must be able to communicate with each other, meaning that there must be assured a trustful and egalitarian conversation (dialogue). Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann highlight the importance of communication, given the “willingness to collaborate increases with trust” (Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann, 2020). However, the trust deposited on the evaluator should never be with second intentions of “easing the access” to local communities (Calyx and Finlay, 2022). When evaluators establish open lines of communication with the communities they are working with, it lays the foundation for trust to develop. The open communication helps to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps that may exist in the evaluation process and enables evaluators to adapt their approach to align with the cultural norms and preferences of the community.

If possible, the evaluators should be familiar with the languages, cultures, and specific issues of the communities they work with to ensure that the evaluation reflects the realities and perspectives of those affected by the programs, shaping a collaboration with the impacted community is seen as essential for achieving a comprehensive understanding (Mertens and Musyoka, 2007). However, in a practical sense, if an external evaluator is hired and does field work, they usually do not speak the local language(s). Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann (2020) caution that translators can reduce enthusiasm when communication becomes time-consuming, when translators want to maintain hierarchical relations through technical language, or when translations alter the intended message. However, it might be better to use a translator, while defining with them the goal of the interactions, than to exclude local people from speaking altogether. One could argue for the hiring of only national evaluators, however even then, a national evaluator might not speak the local languages where the project was being implemented, e.g., a Mozambican evaluator might speak some local languages, but it is estimated that there are more than 40 (Eberhard, Simons and Fennig, 2023). Therefore, one should be focused on changing the dynamic of the translation process than to rely on the perspective of never using translation services.

Decolonising Principles and Criteria

One of the main ways to start the decolonising process is to search for guiding principles that would help evaluators conducting their research, that is, principles that guide evaluation for the benefit of everyone involved, including the project implementation, the funding agencies, but most importantly the participants of such projects. Such principles could be the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) (Carroll *et al.*, 2020). The CARE Principles is an indigenous-led framework, developed alongside indigenous peoples, scholars, non-profit organizations, and governments for the more inclusive participation of indigenous people in science. The CARE Principles determine that any data should contribute to the benefit indigenous people, with them should be empowered to control the data, allowing them to determine how they are portrayed in the data, should automatically impose a sense of responsibility towards indigenous self-determination and collective benefit and the main concern of the data collection process should be the rights and wellbeing of the indigenous people (Carroll *et al.*, 2022). By implementing data collection principles that focus on indigenous perspectives, one is actively working to mitigate the inherent power advantage over the project being evaluated, seeking to reduce the impact of that power differential.

The self-awareness process is crucial and a very important first step in the decolonisation of the evaluation. I assert that the form of self-awareness exemplified by Kelly and Htwe (2023) in their deliberation on whether their evaluation was decolonising holds significant importance for the entire process. That type of self-criticism allows evaluators to wonder their role in the evaluation process and the best way to understand the power dynamics at play, challenge Eurocentric or Western-centric views of knowledge validation and reflect on the impact of their actions on the projects being evaluated. The self-criticism and reflection may lead to adaptations to the evaluation process, making it more community-centred and empowering, and, thus, decolonising the practice.

As stated above, intersectionality has become a crucial concept since introduced in the early 1990s (Gopaldas, 2013). I argue that the extent applicability of intersectionality applies to evaluation. The evaluator should analyse how different forms of discrimination interact and reinforce each other in the development cooperation. An intersectional evaluation approach should help to identify these oppression/privilege layers and to analyse the factors that drive them. In an evaluation, intersectionality is an important consideration for relevance, effectiveness and impact as not everyone experiences the same forms of discriminations at equal levels. It is very important to include the voices and experiences of marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities and women, in the evaluation process (Mertens and Musyoka, 2007).

Decolonising evaluation involves leveraging local values and knowledge to establish criteria for defining the quality of evaluation and credible evidence (Kelly and Htwe, 2023). As previously discussed, there has been notable advancement in the evaluation criteria employed in the evaluation process. The OECD, despite its historical colonial associations, has made substantial progress in redefining these criteria. However, it remains a subject of contention whether these improvements are enough. Even with the best of intentions and well-developed criteria, there is a valid argument to be made that a standardized Western-centric evaluation approach may not always be the most appropriate choice, given its specific context.

However, Calyx and Finlay (2022) consider that there must be some level of standardisation of criteria and to advocate for a broader perspective, emphasizing the question of whether a project promotes collaboration in the context of recovery. Introducing such a question invites evaluators to contemplate the nature of recovery and what it truly entails, thereby allowing for a more nuanced and context-specific evaluation.

It would also be possible to use a strategic concept that revolves around the "R's." The “R’s” are evaluation criteria centred on ethics, which focus the evaluation process on its usefulness and the meaning behind the evaluator's work. The “R’s” are "reflexivity, relationality, responsibility, recognition, representation, reciprocity, and rights" as advocated by Chouinard and Cousins in 2007. But, as presented by Calyx and Finlay, in 2022, the notion of “recovery”, should be considered as an additional, eighth "R" to provide a solid foundation for collaborative research and practice. The concept of "recovery" serves as a more inclusive framework, especially when contrasted with traditional Western ideologies like "assimilation" in the context of Indigenous and marginalised communities, which led to the suppression or erasure of unique cultural identities, practices, and rights. "Recovery" acknowledges the importance of preserving and revitalizing Indigenous and marginalised cultures and ways of life. It emphasizes the restoration of cultural traditions, knowledge, and self-determination, while recognizing the significance of healing historical traumas and re-establishing cultural connections. That would allow it to challenge and dismantle the legacies of colonialism. The incorporation of the "R's" can prove highly beneficial since it fosters evaluator self-awareness concerning their position within the evaluation process. Additionally, it integrates the evaluator's questioning process as an intrinsic component of the evaluation itself.

There has been evolving the recognition of the importance of culture and cultural context in project evaluation. Given the way knowledge construction is culturally bound, there is a need for evaluation practices to move beyond acknowledging cultural differences toward a deeper understanding of power dynamics and privileges, as culture can be viewed as a component of a broader system of domination (Chouinard and Cousins, 2007). There should be a more substantial discussion about power and politics in cross-cultural evaluation, particularly in communities with a history of exploitation (Chouinard and Cousins, 2007).

Decolonial Methodologies

Many authors claim that non-dominant methodologies should be adopted. According to Chilisa Chilisa *et al.* (2016), the evaluation should value indigenous evaluation processes and methodologies and be contextualized, culturally appropriate, and focused on African people. Cavino (2013) has argued that the evaluation research should prioritize the indigenous communities and work within their frameworks. The emphasis is on the ethical and acceptable methods that the evaluation should use, and these methodologies have gathered momentum (Calyx and Finlay, 2022). By adopting “bottom-up” evaluation techniques, these approaches enable evaluation processes and findings to encourage self-determination, ownership, agency, and empowerment (Fetterman, 2015). They align with and support decolonisation efforts, enhancing the potential for program recipients to achieve meaningful results by involving them as the planners, implementers, and evaluators of their own programs (Wandersman and Snell-Johns, 2005).

First, there is a strong recommendation that both researchers and field assistants/translators maintain fieldwork journals to document their experiences, perceptions, and reflections related to issues of participation, power, privilege, and relationships as part of the decolonisation process (Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann, 2020). That allows for the previously established self-awareness, that is the first step in decolonising the research.

Second, motivation-inducing methodology is highlighted as a type of decolonial methodology, as it can contribute towards decolonising research methodologies and shifting more power towards the societal participants that these projects are meant to serve (Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann, 2020), since the quality of collaboration between academic and societal participants is demonstrated by the enthusiasm of the latter to participate (Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann, 2020), and in its place the enthusiasm supports the co-creation of practical outputs that can be implemented by societal participants. According to Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann (2020) the methodologies that induce more motivation involve more active roles, responsibilities, and decision-making power for beneficiaries, thus, contributing to their sense of autonomy. This can be done by giving the project participants more chance of action and hearing their voice in the research process, their enthusiasm increases and enhances their sense of autonomy, their sense of appropriation (Restrepo, Lelea and Kaufmann, 2020). Haynes *et al.* (2019), also highlight the importance of intrinsic motivation in research for development, particularly in contexts spanning from the core to the periphery. Fostering participants' intrinsic motivation can contribute to the decolonisation of research methodologies and shift more power towards societal participants, shifting the power dynamic.

Third, a particular type of methodology that has a cultural awareness and utilizes local knowledge is a Proverb-Based Evaluation Approach (Chilisa *et al.*, 2016). With this approach, proverbs are used as integral parts of the evaluative process. Utilising proverbs with the local project participants allow for a context reminder of the cultural context, an evaluator is inserted in, guide an evaluator towards the reasons on behavioural change, and allow a participation of local project participants, increasing their ownership.

Fourth, Cavino (2013) includes various indigenous concepts that an evaluator should be aware of when evaluating indigenous contexts. Kawa Whakaruruhau is defined as a more encompassing, ‘‘sheltering’’ process that puts the safety and prosperity of the indigenous community in the hands of the evaluator (Cavino, 2013), making it a collaborative, community-centred endeavour. The term Whakaruruhau specifically relates to the indigenous Māori norms and values and requires that any analysis of projects involving Māori must be deeply contextualized within the historical, social, economic, and political factors that have shaped these communities (Cavino, 2013). Cavino (2013) further exemplifies the three models that can be used for evaluation: Te Kotahitanga; Whakawhanaungatanga and He Taniko. When Te Kotahitanga is used as a model for evaluation, it demands more from the evaluator than what is typically expected in mainstream settings. The evaluators are required to engage in substantial preparatory work and gain prolonged, ongoing experience within the setting they are evaluating. This goes beyond a one-time assessment and involves building trust and relationships over time. They must also listen to participant groups they are working with but also actively participate and promote self-determining processes for those communities that have historically struggled with autonomy and self-governance. However, for Cavino (2013), the evaluator should be so immersed that the local languages and traditions would be learned by the evaluator, given the evaluator would become part of the group. This can only be achieved if a big change happens in the evaluation sphere given the budget and timeframe that most evaluations face. Whakawhanaungatanga is also a time-consuming approach to evaluation, since it allows for evaluators, during the data collection phase, to establish connections, specifically through genealogical links, however it also “challenges predetermined funder and accountability frameworks that may be imposed by ‘‘outside’’ stakeholders.” (Cavino, 2013) and might be discouraging for non-indigenous evaluators. Lastly, Cavino (2013) explains He Taniko, a “distinctly female framework based in the world of weaving". This framework draws on the metaphor of weaving to symbolize the intricate process of bringing together multiple strands of ideas and information. It goes beyond this literal interpretation and extends into the figurative realm. The inquiry process within He Taniko is managed through organized peer groups, which engage in problem definition, consultation, decision-making, and implementation. This collaborative approach ensures that the research and evaluation are community-driven and reflective of the needs and aspirations of the people.

Finally, fifth, photovoice is also a recognizable methodology, that although more commonly used than the previously established, is participatory, as in it allows for the beneficiaries of the project to engage more in the evaluation process. Thus, in this process the "discussions and research directions are determined by the participants" (Shea *et al.*, 2013), by taking pictures of relevant significance with a prompt given by the evaluator. The introduction of pictures also allows for younger participants to be able to express themselves and be more active in the evaluation (Shea *et al.*, 2013), which many times is hard to do in an ethical manner. Photovoice allows for the visualisation of different perspectives, by asking the beneficiaries seemingly simple questions about the benefits of the project for the community or the aspects the project changed. It can also be applied in a broader sense, by asking more conceptual definitions, that might differ from culture to culture.

All the methodologies above explained have been introduced by evaluators questioning the power imbalances present in the development cooperation evaluation. They should be studied and considered as potential resources for any evaluator who wants to decolonise their knowledge production. Instead of focusing only on westernized types of knowledge production, evaluators should strive to normalize a broader range of perspectives within their practices (Calyx and Finlay, 2022). That would be beneficial for embracing diverse perspectives, thus, enriching the evaluation process, fostering inclusivity and equity in the evaluation field and producing a more relevant and meaningful report. As explained before, the process must be focused on marginalised people to better accomplish a decolonial evaluation.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the importance of decolonisation and methods to do have been elaborated on, aiming at showing the relevance of the decolonisation, as well as the possible principles, criteria and methodologies that could be involved. Furthermore, a brief comparison between participatory evaluation and decolonial evaluation took place, as to further the relevance of extending behind participatory methodologies, but politicising, understanding the colonial roots and openly discuss the development cooperation evaluation.

Conclusion

An evaluator should actively contribute to the decolonisation of development cooperation evaluation, through the adoption of politicized and culturally contextualized research. As stated in Chapter 3, the evaluator should attempt to reverse coloniality, through the understanding of (i) coloniality, (ii) the types of manifestation of coloniality, e.g., harmful research practices, (iii) the unequal power structure where their work is made, (iv) their role and responsibility. The evaluator should then proceed to an active deconstruction of their own colonial biases, adoption of fair research practices, and advocate for change in the field.

However, the process of decolonisation, while noble in its intentions, carries the risk of falling short of true emancipatory and redistributive outcomes. It may be hindered by narrow and superficial interpretations, potentially leading to performative practices. Achieving genuine decolonisation and its promised benefits may remain elusive, especially within the confines of the neoliberal structure (Renmans *et al.*, 2022) and the persistent coloniality. Through seeing the historical foundations of colonialism, acknowledging the impact colonialism still has on in the post-colonial era, specifically regarding evaluation and the consequences that presents to development cooperation, I highlighted that the colonial dynamics of knowledge production remain deeply embedded within the evaluation processes.

Although the situation might seem grim when considering the historical factors that come to play, there has been progress in decolonising evaluation. Firstly, the research on the decolonisation process has been increasing, and specifically on development studies. It has also been established some progress in terms of the OECD criteria, that most evaluators use, which include a mention to cultural awareness by part of the evaluators. Many methodologies were also shown to have great impact in specific projects and can hopefully be extended to many more evaluations. The effort of decolonising is worth to be made and it should be considered and perhaps in the future the funding, timeframe and understanding of the development cooperation evaluation practice altogether can be redefined as an integral part of the betterment of marginalised communities all over the world.

It is evident that the decolonisation of development cooperation evaluation is a multifaceted effort, one that calls for a dynamic, nuanced approach, requiring collective engagement, critical reflection, and a commitment to reshaping the knowledge, power dynamics, and methodologies that govern evaluation practices.

Any future research should focus on the decolonisation process in development cooperation, and specifically the structures that may hinder or facilitate the process in the field. As discussed above, the timeframe, budget and the role of the evaluator have been established in a neoliberal structure that often does not allow for a time consuming and inclusive evaluation, however, if the evaluators and the local communities pressure for the evaluation to be a more just and reasonable process, change may be achieved. The research could be done with prominent actors from development studies, funding and implementing agencies, juxtaposed with evaluators, local and marginalised people that can make recommendations in order to create a fair environment in development cooperation.

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