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Turning 'Evidence for Development’ on its Head

Wednesday 30th October 2019
13:45 – 15:00 GMT
Room LG80, Keppel Street, WC1E 7HT, London
A 50 minute lecture followed by a 25 minute Q&A session

If you are following online and have questions
please email cedil@lshtm.ac.uk
or tweet us on @CEDILProgramme
To inspire us
Conflicts of interest (aka who I am)

• I am an African and a European
• I am first a foremost a public servant
• I believe in evidence
• I have a strong sense of justice

• I rely on external funding
• I am on the CEDIL Board
• My team has received CEDIL funding
Goals in this lecture

• To reduce poverty and inequality through increased use of evidence in decision-making
• To challenge us
• To explore what this means for us
• To present some research that we’ve been doing to turn this on its head

Picture: https://imgs.xkcd.com/comics/upside_down_map.png

This upside-down map will change your perspective on the world!
To challenge us

Picture: https://sciencestruck.com/savanna-biome-facts/
I am part of a lost generation
And I refuse to believe that
I can change the world
I realise this may be a shock but
“Happiness comes from within”
Is a lie, and
“Money will make me happy”
So in 30 years I will tell my children
They are not the most important thing in my life
My employer will know that
I have my priorities straight because
Work
Is more important than
Family
I tell you this
Once upon a time
Families stayed together

But this will not be true in my era
This is a quick fix society
Experts tell me
30 years from now I will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of my divorce
I do not concede that
I will live in a country of my own making
In the future
Environmental destruction will be the norm
No longer can it be said that
My peers and I care about this earth
It will be evident that
My generation is apathetic and lethargic
It is foolish to presume that
There is hope

And all of this will come true unless we choose to reverse it.
How do we see the evidence world?

What are the building blocks that shape our perspective?

What if we change our lens?
How do we see the evidence world?

What are the building blocks that shape our perspective?

What if we change our lens?

Development

Colonialism

Patriarchy
These building blocks have largely been debunked

19th Century onwards: Waves of Feminist movements
Campaigns around gender and science
Women leaders in evidence specialisms and evidence institutions
Even have women winning Nobel prizes for their contributions to our shared mission
These building blocks have largely been debunked... and yet they persist?

“Invisibility and evidence: Time’s up for evidence that doesn’t consider gendered drivers of inequality”

3ie Satellite Session at Evidence 2018
These building blocks have largely been debunked
These building blocks have largely been debunked... and yet they persist

Development

Colonialism

Patriarchy

There is great potential in these large pots of money to lead to fruitful multi-country collaborations. However, more work needs to be done to understand that ‘risk assessment’ must include an understanding of the consequences of the uneven power dynamics which are created and reinforced by the global North/South power dynamic that systematically keeps African scholars in a position of submission.
These building blocks have largely been debunked
It infiltrates so much of how we view the evidence world

Who was the first person to circumnavigate the earth?

Who was Christopher Columbus?
Decoloniality – more than thinking differently

“By decoloniality it is meant... the dismantling of relations to power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geo-political hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world.”

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2006:117)

Decoloniality – more than thinking differently

“The de-colonial turn involves interventions at the level of power, knowledge, and being through varied actions of decolonisation ...”

Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007:262)
Decoloniality – more than thinking differently

I paraphrase him:

I attempt to transcend my privilege “through my commitment, tying my fate to this continent, this country, our revolution”.

Mbembe (2005)
Decoloniality – more than thinking differently

Decoloniality has two sides:

“A critique of ... the endless production of theories that are based on European traditions (that) are produced nearly always by Europeans or Euro-American men”

“The second is an attempt at imagining what the alternative to this model could look like.”

Mbembe (2005)
Decoloniality – Decentering and centering

“For Ngugi wa Thiong’o
decolonisation is a project not about replacing, rejecting or closing out, but about “defining clearly what the centre is.”

decentering and centering

Mbembe reflecting on Ngugi wa Thiong’o

To explore what this means for us
What all this means for us
How do we see the evidence world?

What are the building blocks that shape our perspective?

What if we change our lens?
There is an alternative way of being that we are drawing on... UBUNTU
How do we see the evidence world?

What are the building blocks that shape our perspective?

What if we change our lens?

Ubuntu
We need an Ubuntu Revolution
To present what we’ve been doing to turn this on its head
How are we responding to these challenges
What are we doing to change the lens?

1. Mapping the ecosystem
   - EIDM organizations
   - EIDM social networks

2. Understanding capacity in Africa:
   - Systematic Reviews
   - Impact Evaluations

3. Fostering collaborations
   - Networking
   - Spotlighting / celebrating
1. Mapping the African evidence ecosystem

**EIDM organisations**

- 150 EIDM organisations in Africa

**EIDM networks**

- 40 ecosystem maps from across Africa
The African evidence ecosystem

- Networks and relationships are a key
- Capacity support is often provided by external partners
- Institutionalisation is only advanced where systems are demand-led
- More still to learn

- Cross-sectoral
- Govts play a significant role
- Donors play a role
2. Capacity in Africa

Systematic reviews, other evidence syntheses, and evidence maps

Impact evaluations
Capacity in Africa – what we’ve learnt

• Far exceeds previous understanding
• Centers of excellence emerging
• Funding important but not the most important thing
• Mentoring and opportunities to collaborate are key
• Profile / a voice make a difference

• Don’t underestimate capacity
• Capacity sharing is much more appropriate than capacity building
• Partner with us as equals – don’t patronize us
• Get to know us – don’t use us
3. Fostering collaborations

@Africa_Evidence
#AfricaLovesEvidence
#AfricaEvidenceWeek
If you want to know about innovative methods
If you want to know about innovative methods
If you want to know about innovative methods...

http://www.aihps.ebsu.edu.ng
If you want to know about innovative methods

Welcome to PACKS Africa...

where we promote knowledge for Pan-African Development

@PACKS_Africa
If you want to know about innovative methods

@ebase_africa
If you want to know about innovative methods
If you want to know about innovative methods
African innovations are necessary, routine and inspirational (but tend to be underestimated / ignored)

Innovation comes from crises, from stress points

And these innovations thrive in an ecosystem underpinned by Ubuntu
What all this continues to mean for all of us
Let’s build an evidence ecosystem that tackles poverty and inequality together, and on a level footing.

We are the master of our fate
We are the captain of our soul
Thank you

Ruth Stewart
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@ACE_UJ

Questions? Email ruths@uj.ac.za

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