Africa Knows!

It is time to decolonise minds

Magazine on the online conference
that was held from 2 December 2020
to 28 February 2021.

Africa Knows!
It is time to decolonise minds

Texts: Sol Basarán, Menno Bosma (Wereld in Woorden), Robin Breedeveld, Johanna Dekker, Marina Diboma, Ton Dietz, Sean Jacobs, M.A. Mohamed Salih

Full page photos: Rufus de Vries (p. 1), Max Jongenelen (p. 18-19)
Small photos: Nuffic (p. 23), Dominic Chavez/World Bank (p. 30)

Editing: Roeland Muskens (Wereld in Woorden) and Mark Speer

Design: Akimoto | Gijsbert Raadgever

Editorial staff: Fenneken Veldkamp, Marieke van Winden

www.africaknows.eu

Leiden, 31 March 2021

Enjoy, learn and change

Africa's knowledge environment is changing rapidly. The continent is becoming a more prominent producer of knowledge and innovations, and that importance will increase. Africa's population is growing fast, and more and more Africans are receiving a formal education. The number of students in Africa's higher education system is exploding, and many Africans are spending time abroad, with increasing numbers of students and scholars going beyond Europe and North America, particularly to Asia.

Africa's own tertiary knowledge system is changing rapidly as well. Public universities and museums are springing up all over the continent, even in remote districts, and the number of private universities, think tanks and research institutes is growing rapidly as well. The information given in 55 country knowledge profiles shows these rapid developments, while a web dossier, compiled by the Library of the African Studies Centre Leiden, provides interesting insights into the themes of African knowledge production, indigenous knowledge, education and innovation. Essential reading for interested scholars and policymakers.

The web dossier also highlights the second major message of the Africa Knows! conference: it's time to decolonise minds! Not only in Africa, but also in Europe and the rest of the world. Africans, including African scholars and students, are redefining their position in the global knowledge arena, and no longer accept the dominance of 'the West'. This demands thorough reflection and repositioning: from Europe, its African Studies centres and its knowledge institutions in general.

The Africa Knows! conference is one of the final events of a year devoted to 'Africa at 60', a co-production of the Leiden African Studies Assembly and the African Studies Centre Leiden, and many colleagues in Europe and Africa. It's also a thematic conference of AEGIS. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was held completely virtually and was spread over three months, with 50 panels between 2 December 2020 and 28 February 2021. The conference opened with a three-day virtual event on 2-4 December with keynotes, seven panels and some other (festive) activities, and was followed by panels until 28 February 2021. Hundreds of papers, round tables and invited blogs were the main 'harvest' of the conference. This magazine gradually grew as an online report of the highlights of the conference and its major findings. And after the conference we produced many online working papers plus this magazine, in a print version as well.

Ton Dietz, #AfricaKnows conference organiser: 'Let's use Africa's wisdom, which goes beyond knowledge'. @Nuffic @dehaagse @ASCLeiden

Please enjoy, learn and try to change. Not only is it time to change and decolonise minds; it's also time to change and decolonise knowledge, networking and collaboration practices!

Ton Dietz, *scientific organiser of the conference and co-chair of the Leiden African Studies Assembly*

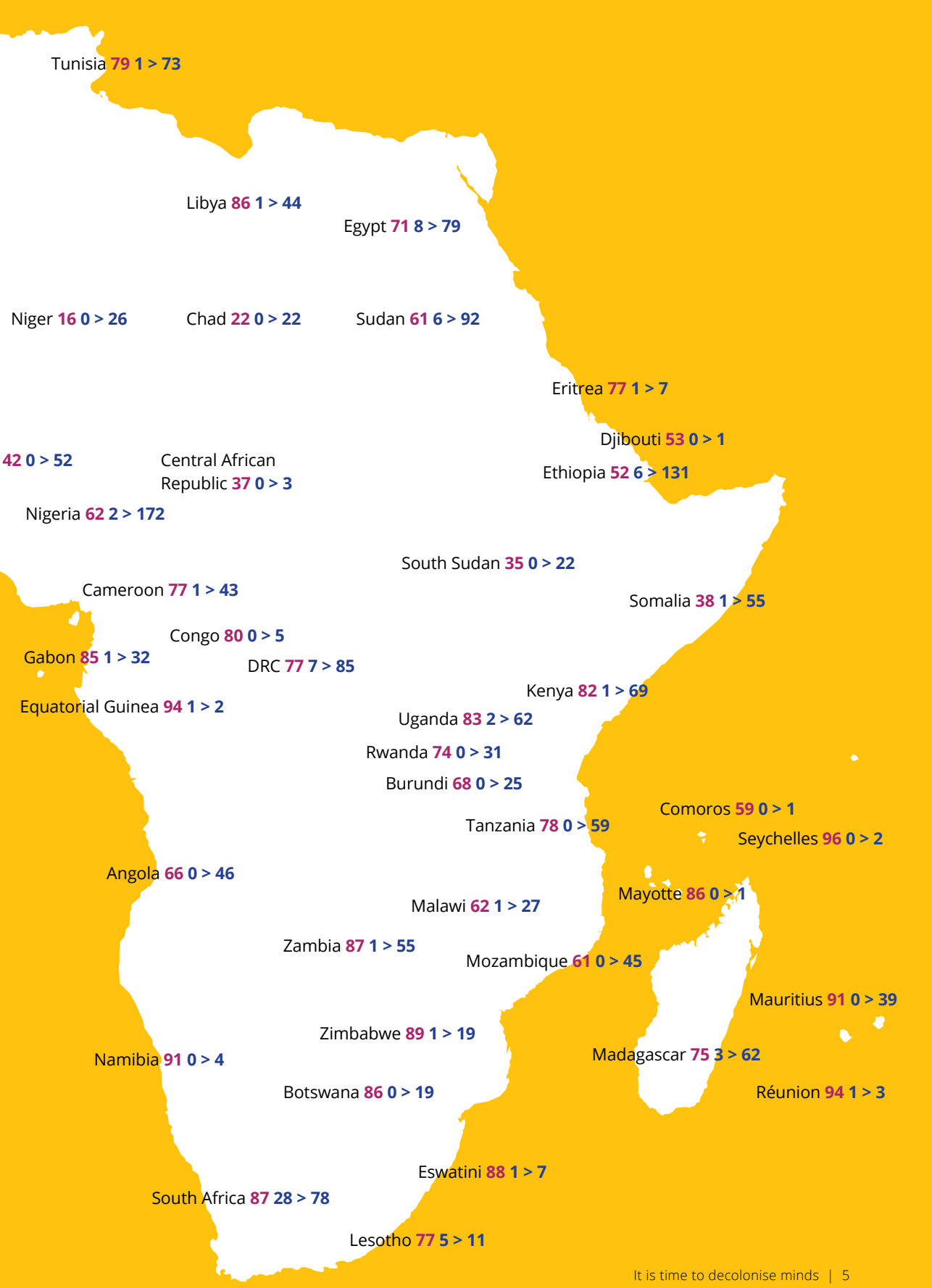
Africa's knowledge landscape

The knowledge landscape of Africa is changing rapidly. The number of years of schooling increases, just like the adult literacy and the number of universities.

https://www.africaknows.eu/country-profiles/

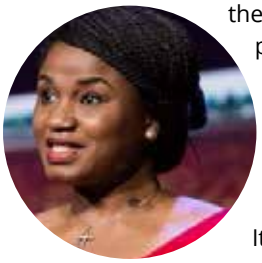
Current adult literacy rate in %

Number of universities (public and private) in 1960 > 2020


Tunisia 79 1 > 73
Libya 86 1 > 44
Egypt 71 8 > 79
Niger 16 0 > 26
Chad 22 0 > 22
Sudan 61 6 > 92
Eritrea 77 1 > 7
Djibouti 53 0 > 1
42 0 > 52
Central African Republic 37 0 > 3
Ethiopia 52 6 > 131
Nigeria 62 2 > 172
South Sudan 35 0 > 22
Cameroon 77 1 > 43
Somalia 38 1 > 55
Congo 80 0 > 5
Gabon 85 1 > 32
DRC 77 7 > 85
Kenya 82 1 > 69
Equatorial Guinea 94 1 > 2
Uganda 83 2 > 62
Rwanda 74 0 > 31
Burundi 68 0 > 25
Comoros 59 0 > 1
Tanzania 78 0 > 59
Seychelles 96 0 > 2
Angola 66 0 > 46
Mayotte 86 0 > 1
Malawi 62 1 > 27
Zambia 87 1 > 55
Mozambique 61 0 > 45
Mauritius 91 0 > 39
Zimbabwe 89 1 > 19
Namibia 91 0 > 4
Madagascar 75 3 > 62
Botswana 86 0 > 19
Réunion 94 1 > 3
Eswatini 88 1 > 7
South Africa 87 28 > 78
Lesotho 77 5 > 11

Chika Ezeanya-Esiobu

'Reconstruct the African's mindset!'



Chika Ezeanya-Esiobu holds a PhD in African Development and Policy Studies from Howard University in Washington D.C.. She has worked for and presented her ideas to institutions such as the London School of Economics, the United Nations Development Program, the African Union, and the World Bank. Among her publications is Indigenous Knowledge and Education in Africa. Chika is currently the principal of Julani Varsity and the Director of Publishing at African Child Press. She is a visiting honorary Senior Lecturer with the University of Rwanda, College of Business and Economics.

Africans must reconstruct their mindset from distrust and disrespect to one of respect, validation, and originality. It requires a deconstruction of what has been inherited or 'copied and pasted' from non-Africans. Media play a fundamental role in this.

I will start my keynote by telling a personal story. One day in 2009, I walked into the office of the late professor Sulayman Nyang, who taught me at Howard University. At this time, I was working on my manuscript about former slave Olaudah Equiano.
During my archival research, I had discovered that almost all the materials were written by European explorers, in a language that was overwhelmingly negative and derogatory of African people and that was full of untruths, half-truths, and bias. Worst of all, these were the texts that Africans themselves were taught about.
Depressed by my findings, I thought it better to stop the project. Professor Nyang looked at me with apparent fire in his eyes and told me that I had to work with the materials I had: 'Deconstruct them, and try to reconstruct them, to reflect your objective and unbiased view of the people of that era.'
I went straight to the library, ready to tackle the most negative, disparaging, and depreciative narrative I could lay my hands on, and to work through it until I could rid it of all traces of untruth and present the world with as much unbiased information as possible about the Africa of that era.
It paid off. My book Before We Set Sail was one of six shortlisted out of 250 submissions to the Penguin Publishers Award for African Writing.

Mannerisms of influencers

There is a need to deconstruct what has been inherited, 'copied and pasted', and aggravated by powerful countries, international organisations, NGOs, and multinationals. Africans must become experts in the art of the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge.
It must lead to an entirely new way of understanding life and our lived realities as Africans. This work has never been actively pursued in the history of the continent.
We need to re-examine our structure of education and determine what will work for Africa and Africans. This requires understanding of our indigenous knowledge systems. We must also ask questions about the unaffordability and unworkability of the kind of democracy that we have inherited from the West. How can we fashion democracy in ways that will ensure widespread participation? The average African country might not need as many legislators as we have today. Consider making parliament a digital exercise, where profes-

Almost all texts were written by European explorers and were derogatory about Africans

sionals such as nurses, teachers, doctors, and lawyers become elected officials who convene online for a few hours per week for the sake of governance. In fact, this would be in line with democracy as practiced in many parts of traditional Africa, where there were no career politicians, but citizens who were farmers and pastoralists, who were often called upon to participate actively in governance.

Daring to invent the future

Africa's media play a fundamental role in deconstructing and reconstructing the African's mindset. But, first, they will have to decolonise, because it was the media who made Africans believe in their congenital inferiority. This task becomes even more difficult in today's social media world, where there is a race to copy the mannerisms of influencers and to follow popular opinion as espoused by global media conglomerates. Africa's media must cease from copying the West in the way stories are told.

Rather, we must build a generation of Africans who dare to invent the future. A generation of Africans whose idea of progress is generated from a paradigm of respect for what is authentically African. They will create new education models, governance models, business and leadership models, as well as healing and wholeness methods that the world so desperately needs at this time. Happily, it has been scientifically established that mindsets can be reversed.

Asante Sana.

African lessons for tackling COVID-19

Robin Breedeveld

Health challenges in urbanising Africa and win-win partnership, Panel D20, 4 December 2020

Almost nine months into the pandemic, Africa's case fatality rate of COVID-19 is much lower than the global average. Researchers mention Africa's young population and experience with Ebola as reasons for a lower number of deaths. Because of its experience with Ebola, Africa was probably better prepared. Many governments took drastic measures and were quick to announce lockdowns and designate isolation centres.

In this panel, experts discussed what health challenges COVID-19 poses in Africa. Despite rapid urbanisation, a large share of Africa's population is still living in rural areas – contrary to Europe. In rural areas, there is obviously more space to socially distance than in urban cities. This keeps infection rates low.

Alvin Mutengerere of SolidarMed Zimbabwe also mentioned the difference in lifestyle. People in rural areas eat a lot of fresh vegetables and walk long distances, which keeps them fit. People in cities drive in cars and generally eat less nutritious foods. A better lifestyle leads to less heart disease and diabetes. Even though health services may be more available in urban areas, the lifestyle that comes with city life poses a challenge to health. Higher numbers of heart disease and diabetes in cities pose an extra challenge to dealing with COVID-19.

Although Africa has had far fewer infections than Europe and the US, the continent is dealing with similar issues. For example, patients with noncommunicable diseases (NCD), such as diabetes or heart disease, were highly affected. Drawing from his research in Zimbabwe, Mutengerere said that as a result of increasing pressure on health care caused by COVID-19, many of them could not get regular check-ups and medicine. Because NCDs are related to lifestyle, the issues COVID-19 posed on NCDs might have been more prominent in urbanised areas. If diabetes or heart disease are not closely monitored, the risk of COVID-19 becoming deadly for these patients increases. It is thus a vicious circle. Poverty in urbanised areas also contributes to higher infection rates. Nicholas Walter Otieno Ajwang', professor of sociology at Pwani University, explained that in Eldoret, Kenya, a household's income, place of residence and health insurance significantly affect access to health care. The consequences of COVID-19 are especially visible in poorer, urbanised areas.

Since the case fatality rate is lower in Africa, lessons drawn from the African context are relevant globally. But further research needs to be done to explain the difference.

Take-aways

• The case fatality rate of COVID-19 is lower in Africa than elsewhere
• Africa's young population, experience with Ebola and quick action by governments could have caused this
• Just like elsewhere, the poor and the urban were most affected

Freddy Weima

Rethinking the higher education ecosystem

Freddy Weima is director-general of Nuffic, the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education. He has held this position since 2012. Prior to that, Weima worked at three different ministries in the Netherlands, in politics, and at CAOP, the knowledge and services centre for labour issues in the public domain. Weima trained as a political scientist and has worked as a lecturer in that field.

The COVID-19 pandemic puts at risk the education of an entire generation. But there are silver linings, such as tech-celeration (accelerated digitalisation) and glocalisation (the local use of globally developed services). The post-COVID world should by all means be a world permeated with positive change.

'Never waste a good crisis.' When Winston Churchill spoke these words, he was obviously not referring to a global pandemic. Nevertheless, these were wise words from an iconic leader. Given when he spoke those words, he might not have had as much inclusion in mind as we have now.

So let me paraphrase Orunmila, a contemporary of Socrates. Orunmila was not of Greek ancestry, so his words and teachings are not part of the standard teachings in philosophy in the West. That doesn't mean they're less applicable than Churchill's quote. Orunmila states that there might be more wisdom in the world than we know of, if only we give foreign knowledge the chance to reveal its wisdom on its own terms.

The technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education sector as a whole is faced with a daunting task: how to make sure no one is left behind in a time of great uncertainty. As the academic year unfolds, the full impact of this unprecedented pandemic is becoming increasingly clear. To give you an example: nearly five million students worldwide usually study abroad every year. For instance, in July 2019, nearly 150,000 international students arrived in Australia. In July 2020, there were 40.

Shut off from education

The shift from residential to remote learning doesn't only affect teachers, staff and students. On a fundamental level, the pandemic challenges the very structures and experiences that constitute TVET and higher education. Issues such as digital divides, equity and equality of opportunity shift even more into focus. There is a very real chance that an entire generation will be excluded from education, with girls and women especially in danger of being left behind.

According to UNESCO, 9.8 million students on the African content alone are affected. A large number of youth are completely shut off from education. Some higher education institutions have transitioned smoothly to distance learning, but the majority has not.

No matter how the pandemic evolves in the

months and maybe years ahead, every small step forward lays the groundwork for positive change. All of us joining digitally is one such step. Sharing and disseminating the knowledge learned today is another. Looking back on what has been done and reflecting on these activities is another way to improve actions for the future.

Silver linings

There are plenty of silver linings, as attested by the words and concepts that have recently entered our vernacular. One such concept that reverberates in digital halls is tech-celeration, the accelerated adaptation of all things digital. As a recent McKinsey report mentions, years' worth of digital transformation have been compressed into months. In some cases, almost overnight, innovative strategies for on-boarding new students were developed. Switches to blended learning were made. Transitions to on-line learning tools and platforms took place in the span of mere weeks. Sometimes even days!
Another concept that I would like to share with you is that of glocalization, defined as services developed globally but adjusted to accommodate users at a local level. This is something that's rapidly evolving in education, especially higher education. At Nuffic, we see how our knowledge of curriculum reform, gained in almost seven decades of experience, adds to the strength of our partners. But we also see how they tweak, modify and make it their own.

Amplified local knowledge

Conversely, local expertise adds a dimension that not only strengthens local projects, but also enriches ideas on a global level, thereby echoing the words of Orunmila. It may well be that this amplified local knowledge leads to questions about existing knowledge structures. This might have fundamental consequences in the longer term.
At Nuffic, we believe education is the engine for growth. Any engine consists of thousands of parts that are all interlinked. All are vital to the overall performance. And any engine, throughout the course of history, has been improved by adding new perspectives and insights to the design.
As part of 'decolonising the mind', I hope that the same amount of effort will be put into rethinking the ecosystem at the foundation of education. That policy and practice, across countries and continents, will be shaped with a better future in mind, for each and every person. The post-COVID world should by all means be a world permeated with positive change.

The higher education sector as a whole is faced with a daunting task

What struck me most

'Africa indeed Knows! What became clear from the conference is that there is a wealth of knowledge in Africa. However, know ledge and successful practices aren't always widely shared, even within sectors such as the agricultural education and training sector. African networks facilitating and stimulating the exchange of these "islands of inspiration" can play an important role in connecting the various types of African knowledge out there. That way Africa will truly know!'

Anika Altaf, *panel convenor, knowledge broker at Food & Business Knowledge Platform*

'This virtual conference was very memorable for two reasons. First, before COVID-19 international conferences were mainly face-to-face presentations and discussions. This time, it was a big virtual conference with participation from a wide spectrum. I was impressed by the effective delivery of a global virtual conference. Second, it was an exciting event because it was my first time as a convenor. As a middle career researcher and academic, I was nervous at first.
However, I enjoyed all processes including corresponding with conference organisers, pre-conferencing, mobilising and giving guidance to panel contributors, and finally the actual hosting of the conference as chairperson and convenor. This was a great experience, an excellent opportunity to network and work with several teams virtually.'

Nicholas Mugabi, *panel convenor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Makerere University*

'As a student I see how often academics stay within their niche without relating their research and findings to the world. Yes, focusing on one specific thing is the way to create knowledge. However, academia often fails to translate its knowledge to wider discourses. Due to this, knowledge stays useless: it does not improve the world. I see the Africa Knows! conference as a space that creates these necessary academic dialogues.'

Sol Basarán, *panel reporter, student at Leiden University*

'For me, the "elephant in the room" in the Africa Knows! conference has been the issue of language. Several speakers have pointed out the importance of transitioning to African language use in all levels of education – perhaps the most outspoken example was Dr Chika Esiobu. Probably, the area where the language issue is the most pressing is that of Technical and Vocational Training and Education (TVET). As education expands, the average ability of students to learn in what is essentially a foreign language will decrease. In-class practices like "translanguaging" may temporarily ease the situation, but if the colonial language remains the language of exams, the problem remains. No practical solution seems to be in sight. I will examine this issue in my dissertation, which I hope to be able to defend later this year.'

Bert van Pinxteren, *participant, senior programme officer at ActionAid Netherlands*

Erika Kraemer-Mbula

Harnessing home-grown innovations for trans-formative change in Africa

Erika Kraemer-Mbula is professor of economics and chairholder of the DST/NRF/Newton Fund Trilateral Chair in Transformative Innovation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Sustainable Development, at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Her work focuses on alternative development paths for African economies. She specialises in the analysis of innovation systems in connection with equitable development and inclusive development, and has done pioneering work on innovation in the informal sector.

According to conventional indicators and metrics, Africa isn't very innovative. But when you look more broadly at innovation, the continent is a source of inspiration. In particular, maker-spaces and the informal economy provide fine examples of home-grown innovation.

The pandemic reminds us of the importance of looking more broadly at innovation. In Africa, non-technological forms of innovation, often community-based, have proved invaluable. For instance, the informal sector has responded rapidly with the production of face masks and hand sanitisers. We've seen the installation of mobile solar-powered handwashing stations, often handmade with limited technology. Community groups have provided schooling and food solutions.
Science, technology and innovation are at the centre of the continent's vision for transformation. In 2013, the African Union adopted Agenda 2063, a blueprint and masterplan for the future. In 2014, the African Union also adopted a science, technology and innovation strategy for Africa. It calls on the member states to develop an innovation and knowledge-driven economy. On the global level, we have the sustainable development goals of the UN.

How is Africa responding to this strategic focus on innovation on the national, continental and global levels? When we take conventional indicators such as investments in research and development (R&D), Africa is at the low end. Its share in world expenditures on R&D between 2010 and 2016 was only 0.8 per cent. On almost all rankings of the most innovative economies in the world, Africa is practically absent. According to these figures, practically no innovation takes place in Africa.

Math scores

But is this true? Maybe we have to think differently. R&D, patent-driven and high-tech innovation may not be what we find predominantly on the continent. Let's have a look at makerspaces and the informal economy. Tech hubs (physical spaces that foster innovation for technology start-ups, ed.) have been on

the rise in Africa, counting over 600 now. About 6 per cent of them are makerspaces. Like everywhere in the world, they have 3D printers, laser cutters and CNC machines. Some of them are community-based or run by women or refugees, others university or government-based or hybrid. They have different types of goals. Some want to support new businesses, including social enterprises, others are dedicated to outreach activities such as education. What's interesting is that they attract young people, and Africa has the youngest population worldwide. They're often based on collaboration, knowledge sharing and peer learning. There are fascinating examples of start-ups emerging from these makerspaces, successfully blending technological knowledge with a deep understanding of local needs. A well-known example is Ushahidi ('testimony' in Swahili, ed.), a mobile platform for monitoring elections and crisis.

It has been estimated that we need 2.5 million engineers in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6, about water and sanitation. But over 250 million children still don't have access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics education. And even in the strongest countries, such as South Africa, math scores still lag behind those in other developing regions. It requires a rethinking of the continent's educational system. How can we accelerate innovative approaches to education? Makerspaces are a fine example. They experiment with alternative solutions such as hands-on learning, critical thinking and problem solving. These solutions are paying off, and students are enthusiastic about it.

Tonnes of waste

The second area I want to discuss is the informal economy. With a share of 75 per cent of non-agricultural employment, this is the predominant form of employment in Africa. It will likely grow even more rapidly given the loss of jobs in the formal economy due to COVID-19. Conventionally, the informal economy is seen as rudimentary, uninventive and focused on survival. But recent studies show examples of very innovative behaviour, including entrepreneurs using the informal economy as a test base for new business models. Innovation there is not driven by R&D or high tech, it's based on scarcity, the exchange of ideas, collaboration, copying and imitating, and a participatory approach. Many workers in the informal economy adhere to the ideas of the circular economy. Informal waste collectors in Johannesburg, where I live, recycle tonnes of waste from landfills annually. Their activities contribute to nine of the seventeen SDGs. As a result, South Africa has a recycling rate of plastics of 42 per cent, while it is only 6 percent in the United States.

According to the official figures, almost no innovation takes place in Africa

My conclusion is that constrained environments can provide useful lessons for innovation. We can learn a lot from home-grown solutions, looking beyond the conventional indicators and metrics. We should harness local African innovation as an approach to address African priorities. We may not need to look outside for solutions – instead, we may change the way we think about change.

Moving from a payer to a partner

Menno Bosma

The European Union and Africa's knowledge infrastructure, Panel C13, 18 January 2021

In 2018, the then European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker launched the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Growth and Jobs. The new Commission under Ursula von der Leyen is keen to move further towards a partnership of equals driven by mutual interests. But the panel judged the actual relationship between Europe and Africa as still highly asymmetric, particularly in terms of knowledge infrastructure and effective use of African sources of expertise through co-creation. According to Jean Bossuyt of the European Centre for Development Policy Management, there is still too often a tendency for European policymakers to talk 'to' Africa, rather than 'with' Africa.

Patrick Develtere of KU Leuven, Belgium, added that for the relationship to transform, Europe needs to step away from the idea of being the giver of resources, knowledge and other things to Africa – moving from being a payer to a player and partner. He argued for a whole-of-society approach, including all actors and agencies on the two continents, especially when it comes to knowledge transfer.

The panel pointed to the risk of institutional mimicking in Africa. The idea of an African Union modeled on the European Union was seen as inherently a-historical. Many of the assumptions underlying the European model do not apply.

This holds true for the centrality of state authority (considering pre-existing actors such as traditional and religious instances in Africa) as well as the economic imperatives for integration. The challenge for Africa is to choose its own integration menu, trajectory and sequencing process, also learning from the limits of the European model (e.g. in terms of agility).

There are many more African study centres in Europe than institutes dealing with Europe in Africa. And few young Europeans study in Africa. According to professor Léonard Matala-Tala of the Université de Lorraine, France, this will not change until Africa offers the same equipment and standards as Europe. This entails the improvement of infrastructure, including internet, sanitation, and basic necessities like water accessibility.

The panel concluded that the relationship between the continents in terms of knowledge infrastructure and reciprocal uptake remains too one-sided and needs to be transformed in the coming years.

Take-aways

- The actual relationship between Europe and Africa is still highly asymmetric
- Europe needs to step away from the idea of being the giver of resources
- Better African infrastructure is needed to attract European students and prevent Africans from leaving

Etienne Ehouan Ehile

Chains on our minds and spirits

Professor Etienne Ehouan Ehile is secretary-general of the Association of African Universities (AAU), the apex higher education organisations in Africa. The AAU was established in 1967 to promote inter-university collaboration, and has over 400 universities in 46 countries as members. Professor Ehile is the former cabinet director of the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene in Côte d'Ivoire and former president of the Université d'Abobo-Adjamé, now Université Nangui Abrogoua.

Although the home of the human species, Africa has lost its identity. Colonisation made Africans depreciate themselves, their history and their culture. The decolonisation process begins with the mind, and the onus is on education.

I see colonisation as the second way of undermining a people's sovereignty, after slavery. To colonise is to 'appropriate a place or domain for one's own use'. Therefore, decolonisation is understood as the desire to regain independence.
Africa is evidentially the original home of the human species and the cradle of civilisation. Historians suggest that the first Greek philosophers may have all had some schooling in Africa. A century after the era of Plato and Aristotle, Africa gave birth to the university concept.

Prison walls

Different regions of Africa were subdued by the Persians, the Greeks and later by the Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, English, Belgian, French and Germans. The continent's greatest strength, its humanity and hospitability, was used against it. The conquerors brought with them their religions, cultures, names, languages, thoughts and philosophies, and imposed these on Africans. They also created and deepened divisions and inequalities, with classifications such as European versus non-European; white versus native; national versus foreign; me versus other; Christian versus animist; urban versus village; dominant versus dominated. The African became a commodity, and his Black body created wealth for the Caucasian and the Asian. His skin colour became a definition of who has the power. He forgot what it was to be an African.

According to John Henrik Clarke, an African-American historian, professor, and a pioneer in the creation of Pan-African and Africana studies, 'to control a people you must first control what they think about themselves and how they regard their history and culture. And when your conqueror makes you ashamed of your culture and your history, he needs no prison walls and no chains to hold you.'
The loss of the African identity was deepened by the colonial partitioning of Africa into English-speaking, French-speaking, Portuguese-speaking, Arabic-speaking and Spanish-speaking geographical enclaves that did not take into consideration the initial ethno-linguistic configurations of the affected people. The principal issue of the 21st century for the African is therefore the issue of identity. When you know who you are, it is hard for someone to oppress you.

The decolonisation process begins with the mind, and the onus is on education. Our main challenge in Africa is the Eurocentric educational system inherited from the colonial

masters. Education is supposed to create wholeness, content and socialisation, but this was narrowly used by the colonial administration to maintain law and order in the colonies, to facilitate commerce and for missionary activities, particularly evangelisation.

New form of colonisation

The newly independent countries saw their universities as symbols of national pride and sovereignty. But is there a true African university or do we have a copies of the European university? Celebrated modern historians have queried why the curricula on philosophy, history and mathematics all start with the Greeks while the Nubia and Kemet civilisation in Africa existed several centuries earlier. And while transformative education requires Africa to learn from good practices from anywhere in the world, have African scientists ever concluded research on the technological design of the Sungbo's Eredo trench in Nigeria, a man-made trench built from 800 AD to 1000 AD that may have taken more energy to build than the pyramids?

The formation of the Association of African Universities in 1967 gave impetus to the promotion of African identity through inter-university cooperation. Despite these concerted efforts, traces of the colonial legacy and imprints still exist in African universities. Particularly in West and tropical Africa, where the colonial administration was solely responsible for financing education, this legacy has seen most of the state-run and state-owned higher education institutions depend heavily on state funding, both in terms of recurrent and capital budgetary allocations. The ivory tower concept is another colonial legacy, with the locations of colonial university colleges mostly in the suburbs of urban centres. The same applies to discriminatory staff policies with remunerative packages that are more generous for expatriates than for African staff. Countries such as the Soviet Union and China offer African students scholarships to study in their countries and contribute personnel and resources to teach their languages and cultures within departments of modern languages in African universities. Does this not smack of a new form of colonisation?

Colonisation is the second way of undermining a people's sovereignty, after slavery

I am tempted to agree with an inspirational pan-Africanist who asked what slavery/colonisation had changed and answered that nothing had changed except for the location of our chains. Instead of fetters on our hands and legs, we now have chains on our minds and spirits.

Building bridges between islands

Sol Basarán

How can curriculum decolonisation operate in the third space in Global South-North collaborations? Panel H50, 3 December 2020

A panel meeting consisting of digital squares showing the pixelated face of one panellist per square. Divided by this online platform, in their own delimited digital square, each panellist focused on one dimension of curriculum decolonisation. The speakers presented the individual, the institutional, the global and the local as parallel dimensions. 'They sometimes clash,' said Dina Belluigi of the University of Queen's University Belfast.

The focus started on the individual. The decolonisation of institutions requires self-knowledge from academics, because the academic's values and beliefs inevitably affect his or her research. Auto-ethnographic tools, such as The Decolonising Academic Identity Map, are useful in this self-exploration. This tool consists of depicting in a schematic way, for example through a drawing, the persona as an 'island' with its own influences and values. Through different examples of this tool, Virginia King showed how the pixelated squares are in reality not that delimited. 'Bridges can connect the academic and the institutional,' she said. However, Dina Belluigi partially burned down

these bridges. 'Yes, individual decolonisation is a requirement, but sometimes, the individual might not have as much power as the tool makes us think. In order for the island to have an influence over the mainland, the mainland needs to be more radical.'

This individual/institutional debate was followed by the local/global debate. The last two panellists argued that tools such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), which aspires for the internationalisation of the curriculum, can also be used for the decolonisation of higher education. In other words, implementing COIL can be a way to reconstruct the bridges. However, there are different instructions to rebuild: should local knowledge or rather global knowledge lead decolonisation? The panel was again trapped in online delimited squares, with the pixelated face of a panellist per square.

This online distance faded away in the end, when the participants concluded that 'to decolonise and humanise' (as Katherine Wimpenny of Coventry University put it) requires a merging of dimensions. The institutional decolonisation needs the individual and the global needs the local.

Take-aways

• Individual, institutional, global and local dimensions of decolonisation sometimes clash
• Decolonising institutions requires self-knowledge from academics
• Internationalising the curriculum can be used for decolonising it

Sean Jacobs

Behind the scenes of knowledge production in and on Africa

Sean Jacobs, originally from South Africa, is associate professor of international affairs at the Julien J. Studley Graduate Programs in International Affairs at The New School. He is founder and editor of Africa Is a Country, a site of criticism, analysis and new writing.

It's a fact that the university's central knowledge production role is under threat. Most knowledge consumed by the general public is consumed online. Whether neatly packaged as TED Talks, 'Big Ideas,' explainer articles and videos, or livestream 'debates' and 'seminars' on a loop, that's how most people learn about the world of ideas. It has also sadly resulted in 'my truth', particularisms and the move away from universal struggles for a better world. Academia is itself to blame. The university is increasingly privatised and knowledge has to be 'practical'. Journals are behind paywalls with the contents and politics increasingly obscured. Africa is not exempt: it has even been ground zero for some of these calamities. The structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s gutted African universities and turned academics into consultants. Add to that the agendas of funding organisations, on the one hand, and political interference from ruling parties and authoritarian states for academics to toe the party line, on the other hand.

Then there's Africa's subservient position globally, which extends to knowledge production. As the Zambian economist Grieve Chelwa wrote in 2015 on Africa Is a Country (a site I founded and edit), there is a well-established tradition in the social sciences where Euro-Americans lead the discussion and shape knowledge about Africa from afar.

Chelwa described how the most important conference on the challenges of economic development in Africa takes place every March in Oxford. Pre-COVID, African economists, once their papers were accepted, had to face the challenge of cost (plane tickets, visa fees) and migration barriers (applying for permission to travel) to get there. 'Then there's the North East Universities Development Consortium Conference held every year in a north-eastern university in the US. Last year's was held at Boston University and all the papers presented were either on Africa or on other parts of the developing world. And then there is the African Economic History Workshop, which has been held at LSE, Lund and in Geneva since its inception in 2005. This year it will be held at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. I could go on and on.'

Journals are no different. The most influential journals on economics in Africa (the Journal of African Economies and the Journal of Development Economics) are both based in the northern hemisphere. The JAE lists two African-based scholars out of 27 on its editorial board and one of these is a white South African actually based in the US. The Journal

of Development Economics has 64 people on its editorial board, but no one from Africa or a developing country. Chelwa was not impressed and concluded that the message is clear: 'By physically locating these meetings in places far away and disproportionately under-representing African-based scholars on journals' editorial staff, the view is affirmed that the answers to Africa's problems and the storylines of Africa's past can only be weaved elsewhere under the leadership of Western scholars … Africa cannot be a leading participant in the debates that ultimately shape its destiny.'

Racist history

Probably the most forceful indictment of the unequal way in which knowledge about Africa has been produced was a 2018 presidential lecture by ASA President, Jean Allman, '#HerskovitsMustFall: A Meditation on Whiteness, African Studies, and the Unfinished Business of 1968.' The ASA is the African Studies Association, the largest global association of African Studies. The association is based in the United States.

In her lecture, Jean reminded her audience of the ASA's compromised and at times racist history in which it empowered white American universities (in collusion with the US government and major foundations) to sideline the discipline's actual founders in the US: black academics at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). At the time, Allman called for some truth and reconciliation commission-style introspection on the part of ASA and for it to make right by veteran black academics, some who left the ASA over their treatment.

To Allman's point, recently the editorial board of the African Studies Review, the house journal of the ASA, shamefacedly acknowledged that in the journal's over 60 years of existence it had never had an African or African-American editor. It took a new editorial board, the most diverse in its history, to point this out and make work to change it.

But back to Jean's 2018 lecture. It was met with a standing ovation, but then it died down. And, as Allman would write in November 2020, instead white colleagues her age and the generation after hers were quick to point out they were different, that it wasn't them; that they had 'a clear need to establish distance from the historical narrative (and the accompanying statistics) I had offered.' And as Jean would point out in 2020, '… the anecdotes were inevitably about what they had "done" to counter "prejudice", as if they had single-handedly figured out a way to transcend, to exist outside the structures of academic power and privilege within African Studies. Not one person shared how they might possibly be implicated in the reproduction of that racialised power and privilege.'

These responses left Allman drained and disappointed.

In November 2020, on the eve of the 63rd annual meeting (or conference) of the ASA, Allman wrote a blogpost for Africa Is a Country. In this article, Allman expresses her optimism over changes at the ASA and in African Studies scholars since. (The ASA, for example, has a majority of black members on its board and now makes sure that either its president or vice president – they're appointed for one-year terms – either is an African or African-American scholar.) Nevertheless, Allman felt compelled to conclude: '… For those white scholars like me, who have benefited deeply and for decades from the systemic mechanisms of affirmative action support first granted to [white African Studies scholars] 60-plus years ago, for those of us who are as old as the ASA (and older!), "this hour of decision", this now, might be the moment for enacting a kind of personal academic reparation: don't just move the furniture around to make extra room … step aside.' Let's hope we heed her call.

Marina Diboma

Decolonise business as well!

The colonial way of doing business was: imagining what Africa needed from the European point of view. It implied that Africans had to cherish every Dutch company or trade mission that came their way. It was a one-way street. When I started working at the Netherlands-African Business Council in 2009, this way of doing business still existed to a certain degree. Many more Dutch business missions were traveling to Africa than the other way around. Fortunately, this has changed in the last five years. In fact, more African business missions have been visiting the Netherlands than Dutch missions visiting Africa. Still, African entrepreneurs have a hard time getting a visa, whereas Dutch entrepreneurs usually acquire one in a single day. Apparently, it's seen as a privilege to visit the Netherlands. To me, decolonising business means, in the first place, facilitating access for African entrepreneurs. Indeed, some of them join these missions to look for new markets for their products. We need to make it easier for African products to reach the European market. Doing business should be about equal and win-win partnerships – a two-way street, in other words.

This correlates with another issue. Several times, I witnessed young Africans on a business mission being perceived as potential migrants, not as entrepreneurs. That kind of behaviour is far from welcoming and rooted in prejudice. On the other hand, in Africa they don't always see me as the leader of a business mission. They expect an older white man, not a young black women. But once they realise their mistake, our counterparts appreciate it. And rightly so, because diversity and inclusion are good for business. So, to me decolonising also means rejecting stigmas and treating each other openly and with respect.

My third point is that knowledge should be distributed more fairly. Take agricultural knowledge, in which the Dutch excel. Why doesn't Wageningen University have a branch in different regions in Africa? French and Canadian universities have established partnerships with African universities. They train African teachers to build a knowledge economy in Africa that covers the entire value chain. Africans should be able to buy African chocolate bars in their own shops instead of imported European chocolate. Shouldn't Côte d'Ivoire be one the biggest chocolate countries, ahead of Belgium or Switzerland? We all know that these two European countries do not grow any cocoa.

My last point concerns Africa's workforce and innovative power. Few people know that transferring money to individuals by smartphone started in Kenya in 2007. Europe could make good use of the mpesa app during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another consequence of the pandemic is that fewer expats are being sent to Africa. Remote work is the new way of working. An increasingly large number of Africans are well educated, entrepreneurial and innovative, so why aren't Europeans hiring people there instead of sending them from here? It requires considering Africa not as a mere sales area but as a pool of talent. For me, that would be another form of decolonisation.

Marina Diboma, *deputy managing director at the Netherlands-African Business Council (NABC)*

Knowledge is not a one-way street

Robin Breedeveld

Leave no knowledge behind, Roundtable A03A, 2 December 2020

Educational partnerships and alumni networks are needed, both on an intercontinental and a global level, so that no knowledge is left behind. That's what the speakers of this roundtable agreed upon. Representing a variety of organisations, they discussed the future of knowledge cooperation with and between Africa, Europe and beyond.
As Freddy Weima, director of Nuffic, said, kicking off the proceedings: 'Strong internationalisation and international cooperation strategies are needed on a policy level.' Not just internationalisation, but also the way in which internationalisation takes place needs to be re-evaluated. Hilligje van 't Land, secretary general of the International Association of Universities, stressed that 'the two-way flow [of knowledge] is not a good one. We need a circulation of ideas.' In circular flows, everyone contributes to knowledge and is affected by the others' supply of it. Cooperation should never be linear (developed in Europe or the US and targeted at Africa) but should equally come from the African continent and be implemented in European curricula.

As Abednego Corletey, head of the IT Unit of the Association of African Universities, highlighted, fair deals between the global North and the South in knowledge cooperation

must be established to build balance. To do so, international policies between Africa and Europe should be further established. The time in which we live comes with fast digitalisation, which might lead to higher accessibility to knowledge. But policies should ensure that this access becomes inclusive.

To guarantee that not only standardised knowledge is supplied, Corletey stressed that we need 'cooperation for the sharing of indigenous knowledge'. This knowledge should be taken into account in international policy and educational institutions. The participants in the panel agreed that education is diverse and should therefore not appear as a one-way street.

How to create such a balanced, circular flow of knowledge? One of the first steps is dialogue. Dialogue in which every stakeholder gets the opportunity to participate. The second is inviting all forms of knowledge, making it a win-win situation for all. The participants saw Africa Knows! as a step in the right direction as the conference provides a platform for appreciating the diversity of knowledge. As Weima concluded: 'This conference is a way to forge new partnerships and to find new connections.'

Take-aways

• Global educational partnerships and alumni networks are needed
• Cooperation between Europe, the US and Africa should be circular, not linear
• Indigenous knowledge should be shared with and valued by the world

Mustapha Mekideche

Generating African solutions for African problems

Mustapha Mekideche is former vice-president and founding member of the National Economic and Social Council (CNES) of Algeria and a former chairman of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Panel at the African Union (AU). He was founder and general manager of the National Petrochemical Company (ENIP) and founding member and vice president of UNEP. Since 1998, he has been working as an independent consultant.

How to achieve inclusive and sustainable development on the African continent? Industrialisation and intra-African trade are key. But that means meeting challenges such as security, demography, technology and energy.

How can we achieve inclusive and sustainable development on the African continent that will generate much-needed, large-scale job creation, significantly reduce poverty and create social cohesion and ultimately peace?
My thesis is that the emergence of Africa will go hand in hand with industrialisation, which means the transformation on the continent of its raw materials and the development of intra-African trade. This industrialisation necessarily implies the appropriation and mastery of knowledge and technologies by Africans. The vector will be its youth on the continent, its diaspora in the rest of the world and its entrepreneurs.

We all know that globalisation constrains the growth trajectories of all countries and that the dominant school of economic thought structures economic policy choices around the world, especially in Africa. But contemporary economic history teaches us other lessons, which we Africans will have to take into account for the future. The international regulations put in place after the Second World War are being undermined by those who created them. Examples are the rescue through budgetary means of the international banking system during the 2008 financial crisis, and, more recently, the approaches to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis. These are far removed from classic neoliberal crisis exit programmes (budgetary financing of growth, involvement of central banks to support national plans for recovery and ultimately the cash flow of companies, for example). It also runs contrary to the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) that were presented in the past to African countries, as a magic bullet by the Bretton Woods institutions.

Four major challenges

For once, we will allow ourselves to have our own reading of growth and the paths to achieve it. I call it African solutions for African problems. All the countries that have emerged up to now, including South Korea, Malaysia, China and Brazil, have done it by developing their own strategy. They have relied on the dynamism of their national private sector, their local elites and their diaspora, in partnership with the international industrial groups that

dominate global value chains.

Africa will have to meet four major challenges, which generally determine whether or not one can gain access to inclusive development:
• The security challenge. Dangers such as transnational terrorism and narcotrafficking require strong African cooperation, under the leadership of the African Union, police, defence, security and intelligence institutions. This involves securing trade and energy routes and creating an African Free Trade Area.
• The demographic challenge. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the marriage rate and the birth rate have risen sharply again. This poses a challenge for the care of young people, the balancing of social security funds and the payment of pensions, and it impacts energy demand.
• The technological and productivity challenge. By meeting this challenge, African economies will be capable of transforming raw materials and agricultural productions instead of exporting them. A necessary step is to build transparent and efficient markets instead of the inefficient informal markets dominant in Africa. The knowledge-based economy, backed by a broader and faster digitisation of society and businesses and the promotion of innovation, must be supported by the public authorities, in partnership with the university system and research.
• The energy challenge. This is a strategic element of the solution to meet the first three challenges. Africa has a lower coverage of energy needs than any other continent, despite the existence of enormous conventional and renewable natural resources. The development of African energy systems should be a priority for each African country.

The challenge of bridging the digital gap between Africa and the rest of the world can and must be taken up because it is carried by the continent's youth, especially academics. It is the digital vehicle that best enables technology transfers to benefit African productive systems. In conclusion, it is clear that the knowledge-based economy is at the heart of this new economic paradigm for Africa, bearing the hopes of more than a billion Africans. It is at hand. Africa is back.

Industrialisation means the transformation in Africa of its raw materials

‘Youth should co-develop educational programmes’

Robin Breedeveld

Youth employment, knowledge and the labour markets; knowledge and society, Panel G41, 15 December 2020

‘Youth in Nigeria must not be seen as a problem to be solved, but as a resource that must be tapped into,’ said Paul Michael from the University of Benin during this panel. He pleaded for the use of indigenous knowledge in tackling unemployment issues. By focusing on traditionally inherited talents, employment can be more efficiently realised in a more valuable way. He pointed out how in pre-colonial Nigeria, education was already centred on an individual’s talent and that we need to re-incorporate that into education today. According to Michael: ‘Societal expectations or pressure must give way to the freedom to develop one’s talent into a career pathway.’

When implementing programmes aimed at individuals’ talents, it is not easy at all to remove these social expectations, however. Aniek Santema, life skills expert at Edukans, explained how life skills training in Ethiopia was influenced by the political context. Life skills lessons aimed at helping young people to make responsible decisions, Edukans observed, ‘were influenced by the ideas that donor organisations held about what responsible decision-making is.’ Donor organisations regarded migrating as an irresponsible choice, for example. Migrants were invited to talk about their negative experiences during the life skill lessons. To ensure that such life skill lessons are addressing the youths’ needs rather than donors’ expectations, Santema argued that young people must be put at the heart of the life skills lessons.

When it comes to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), both in Kenya and Guinea-Bissau, the skills acquired by students do not meet the labour market’s demands. Maria Antonia Barreto and Clara Carvalho from the University of Lisbon argued for the national certification of TVET teachers and graduates, and better quality of TVET education. John Mugo, executive director of the Zizi Afrique Foundation and Lucy Heady, chief executive officer at Education Sub-Saharan Africa, stressed the need for data collection to improve TVET education.

One of the conclusions drawn from the discussions is the necessity of not only establishing relationships between employers and training institutions, but also putting young people at the centre of developing educational programmes. Besides, there is a need to return to talent-based education, as traditionally was done in pre-colonial Nigeria.

Take-aways

- The labour market needs to establish relationships with TVET institutions to make sure students acquire skills that are in demand with employers
- Indigenous forms of knowledge about creating employability are valuable in addressing unemployment
- Youth must be put at the centre of educational programmes to ensure that education addresses their needs

Learning from the Sahel

Menno Bosma

Re-imagining the Sahel: the place of endogenous knowledge, Panel E31, 3 February 2021

According to this panel, the Sahel is a place that defies easy generalisations and accommodates multiple realities. Although the region is often in the headlines for negative reasons such as conflict and poverty, the Sahel possesses perplexities and riches from which the world in general and Africa in particular can learn.
Independent researcher Ekaterina Golovko added to her paper on the Sahelian border space that borderland is a space of multiple sovereignties, of negotiation, change and power relations. Her discussion with the border police inspired her to think about the incoherence of the idea of border and reality. She used the concept of 'hybridity' based on the 'real' history of the Sahel.

The discussion touched the subject of closing borders in the name of the COVID-19 pandemic and for food security. This form of protectionism constrains human and livestock mobility and stirs up conflicts. But closing borders is no guarantee for ensuring national food security. The panel concluded that border strategies cannot be based exclusively on international standards and that quality research and new ideas can only come from collaboration involving different fields of knowledge.

Boubacar Haidara of the Université de Ségou said that researching the Sahel region is problematic due to its inaccessibility and insecurity. Research is often conducted away from the field, which affects its quality and quantity. As a consequence, it is hard to find funding for (more) research.

To solve this, collaboration should be created between international and local researchers. Truck drivers can also create data using modern technologies. Ton Dietz of Leiden University called their role crucial and mentioned the example of truck drivers doing research to fight on-the-road-corruption in East Africa. Whether you see the Sahel as a meeting ground or as a battleground depends on your perspective, said Rahmane Idrissa of the African Studies Centre Leiden. He wrote a paper on Sahelian intellectualism and described how West African, Islamic and western cultural influences meet in the Sahel.

Oriol Puig-Cepero of the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, who researched climate change and livelihoods in the Sahel, emphasised the importance of traditional local knowledge. Local practices, such as pastoralists' nomadic circular mobility, should be incorporated in policies for climate adaptation and mitigation. Desertification and re-greening are a fact of life in the Sahel and require local coping strategies.

Take-aways

• The Sahel defies easy generalisations and accommodates multiple realities
• Truck drivers are crucial to solve the lack of research on the Sahel
• Traditional local knowledge can contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation

Felix Ameka

‘Don’t museumise African languages and knowledge!’

Are African languages colonised? Is ‘glocalisation’, the local use of globally developed services, the way to do justice to African languages and knowledge? Felix Ameka, senior university lecturer at the Centre for Linguistics at Leiden University, presents his view.

Ameka participated in the panel discussion on language history and its present relevance. In his paper ‘Oral genres as sources of knowledge in West Africa’, he underlined the importance of oral traditions and mentioned proverbs and festivals as examples of sources of knowledge. Until recently, Felix was president of the Netherlands Association for African Studies (NVAS). He is informally known as the father of African studies in the Netherlands.

To what extent are African languages still colonised?
‘I would say they are post-colonised. Languages are dynamic; they’re constantly influenced. Before the colonial era, African languages already exchanged words. Later they incorporated English, French, Dutch and Portuguese words that current speakers of these languages wouldn’t recognise. Take duku, the Ewe word for a square piece of cloth or headscarf. It’s borrowed from the Dutch doek. Is that colonisation? No, it’s appropriation, or even indigenisation. We nativised languages such as French and English. Aspects of Ghanaian English are not understandable to the uninitiated. I see it as one of my languages, not as a colonial language. English also absorbed many words from African varieties over the years. The Oxford English Dictionary adopted Ghanaian words such as tweeaa (an interjection of contempt, ed.).’

What’s the role of language in decolonising the mind?
‘It’s very important. But Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the author of Decolonising the Mind, did not fully appreciate the English bias in his use of “mind”. Most African languages don’t have the Anglo concept mind, maybe soul. So what exactly are we decolonising? To me, decolonising means restoring the plurality of our languages and knowledge systems. The colonial powers replaced them with their one and only truth: an educational system that doesn’t accept variety and is based on literacy. Western parents match spoken words with pictures and written words even before their children come out of the womb. But the primary mode of African communities is oral. So part of decolonising would be to capitalise on orality to educate people in the digital age.’

Is ‘glocalisation’, the local use of globally developed services, the way to do justice to African languages and knowledge?
‘No, that’s another colonial strategy, even

worse than the old one! Then you give concepts and ideas external to the local context an African icing. You have to start from the local. I'm involved in a project exploring the contextualisation of financial terms in Tanzania, such as budget. But Swahili originally has no word for budget. Later it was borrowed as bajeti. But for the people in the project it doesn't mean income and expenditure, but putting crops aside. You should understand their concept and infuse it in the project instead of using the western meaning. So we taught them the global concept of budget and let them understand that the putting aside concept is to save, not to budget.'

Linguistic justice should be done, you say: what does that mean in practice?
'That you take account of all languages, in education, governance, health and the economy. We must switch from a hierarchical to a syncretic approach. If not, our languages and knowledge systems will be museumised.'

Are you optimistic about the decolonisation of language and knowledge?
'In my childhood my teacher invited a man to our class who had fought in Burma. That's how I learned about World War II. Seeing and hearing people makes things more understandable. We should take advantage of the digital technology. It can help, for example, to spread languages that never have been written. But a prerequisite is that we move from a monolithic way of thinking to a pluralistic one. There isn't one way of understanding things. Educational content should give voice not just to the received western science, it should be inclusive of multiple knowledge systems. The survival of the world depends on diversity, so let's embrace it!'

'The colonial educational system doesn't accept variety'

Children are in school but not learning

Robin Breedeveld

Educational foundations, Panel A01, 2 December 2020

The enrolment of children in primary and secondary schools is relatively high throughout sub-Saharan Africa. However, the panellists of 'Educational foundations' established that many children are not learning. Besides, there is a big gap between acquired knowledge and employers' demands. This results in high levels of unemployment.

One of the reasons many children are not learning is because schools do not teach in the local language, said Emmanuel Manyasa, executive director at Usawa. 'When children first learn reading and writing in their mother tongue, they are later better capable of learning in other languages as well.' Manyasa, Hester van de Kuilen (PhD student at University of Amsterdam) and Mark Hoeksma (programme leader at Edukans) noted that children from rural areas and poor families are especially prone to these learning issues. Rural schools are disproportionally affected by the fact that the local language is not used in teaching, as well as by a scarcity of teaching materials and overcrowded classes. Van de Kuilen added that in Rwanda teachers work double shifts, which affects their class preparation negatively.

To tackle these issues, Gbeognin Mickael Houngbedji, PhD student at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, proposed partnerships between different layers of society, such as government, market and civil society. To reduce unemployment, Houngbedji advises governments to 'try dual study and apprenticeship collaborations between the schools and companies.' That will result in graduates that better suit the profile employers are looking for.

Hoeksma and Van de Kuilen explained that another way to improve children's learning is through 'learner-centred pedagogy'. When children are encouraged to think critically and creatively, they acquire more knowledge than when the teacher merely lectures without the children participating. This approach to learning has received positive feedback from teachers. They were satisfied with the less hierarchal and more 'friendly' relationship that they established with their students. Furthermore, Malawian teachers said they felt empowered during the training. Students' learning outcomes were also positively affected. They felt more motivated and confident, and there was more interaction between boys and girls.

Take-aways

- Students learn better when they are taught in their mother tongue
- The gap between acquired knowledge and employers' demands results in high levels of unemployment
- 'Learner-centred pedagogy' has received positive feedback from teachers and students

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

The cognitive empire in Africa: knowledge, consciousness and epistemic freedom

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni holds a chair in Epistemologies of the Global South, University of Bayreuth, Germany. He is also a research professor and director for scholarship in the Department of Leadership and Transformation in the Principal and Vice-Chancellor's Office at the University of South Africa. He previously headed the Archie Mafeje Research Institute for Applied Social Policy at the University of South Africa. Sabelo has published extensively on decolonisation.

Africa's knowledge systems have been invaded and colonised. This has created a highly seductive cognitive empire. African intellectuals and academics, who are produced mainly by modern and westernised universities, therefore have to navigate a complex knowledge terrain and make difficult choices.

The cognitive empire and mental colonisation

The cognitive empire is responsible for the mental colonisation of Africa. For a definition of the cognitive empire, one has to go to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who termed it 'metaphysical empire'. Robert Gildea calls it 'empire of the mind' and Ashis Nandy termed it the 'intimate enemy'.

It's this cognitive empire, which enabled Nelson Maldonado-Torres to develop the concept of the 'coloniality of being'. That refers to the colonisation of being human itself through the social classification of the human population and racial hierarchisation in accordance with invented differential ontological densities. This serves an important purpose of identifying those who have been removed from the human family through social classification and racial hierarchisation into targets for genocide, enslavement, and colonisation (physical, economic, and mental).

The colonisation of being human itself and its redefinition in racial terms is an essential prerequisite for the 'coloniality of knowledge', because those who have been socially classified and racially defined as subhumans (as black) are automatically said to be without knowledge, without history, without civilisation, without development and all other features attributed to human beings.

The cognitive empire achieves all this through techniques such as redefining being human itself, the 'theft of history' (appropriations of human histories and monopolising them as European history), epistemicides (the killing of other people's knowledges), linguicides (the

killing and displacement of other people's languages and introduction of colonial languages) and culturecides (introduction of cultural imperialism and killing other people's cultures).

African intellectual consciousness and its pitfalls

The major result of the invasion of the mental universe of the colonised is what's known as alienation – from one's culture, one's knowledge, one's history, and indeed, from one's self. Alienation results in what W.E.B. Dubois termed 'double consciousness' and what Frantz Fanon termed pitfalls of consciousness. Ali A. Mazrui introduced the concept of 'cultural schizophrenia' imposed by alienation. Alienation is fundamentally a form of dehumanisation.

More dangerously, alienation and pitfalls of consciousness result in a disconnection between 'social location' and 'epistemic location' in one's locus of enunciation. This point was delivered in a more powerful sense by Ramon Grosfoguel when he introduced what he termed the 'epistemic decolonial turn'. This is why some African scholars are socially located in the subaltern side of power but write as though they are on the privileged side of the modern colonial power spectrum to the extent of defending Eurocentrism and the cognitive empire. Therefore, African intellectuals and academics find themselves having to navigate a complex knowledge terrain and make very difficult choices.

The four tough choices for African intellectuals

The first choice is radical emulation (radical assimilation) of the Eurocentric republic of letters and its protocols as well as standards. This choice is mainly manifested by the older generation of African scholars who studied in Europe and North America. The seduction worked wonders on them. They speak about academic standards and intellectual rigor as always embodied by Europeans and North Americans. While Thandika Mkandawire identified this first generation as having been part of the anti-colonial struggles and as having been the first beneficiaries of political decolonisation, they remained very proud of having been educated in Europe and North America.

Those who have been defined as subhumans (as black) are automatically said to be without knowledge

It was these African intellectuals and academics that Kwame Nkrumah was engaging with at the University of Ghana in Legon in the 1960s, trying to persuade them to embrace the nationalist Africanisation agenda and privileging of African culture and experience, though they were adamant about keeping standards imposed by the University of London. This is why Nkrumah, as head of state, pushed for the establishment of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. Therefore, it's not ironic that institutes of African studies sometimes existed as separate entities within universities in Africa, which are expected to embrace Africa in all their faculties and departments.

When Julius Nyerere became the first black Chancellor of the University of East Africa in 1963, comprising Makerere, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, he agonised over the question of international standards versus Africanisation (indigenisation and nationalisation of institutions of higher education). His conclusion was that a careful balance needed to be made. As a result, we continue to have 'universities in Africa' rather than 'African universities'. Their Africanisation resulted in the changing of racial profiles of leaders of universities, the

professoriate and indeed increased access to higher education by African students.
The second choice is liminality (trying to exist in-between and being in a perpetual intellectual and academic limbo, so to speak). Such academics are trying to belong to both worlds, intellectually speaking. They exhibit in concrete terms what W.E.B. Dubois termed 'double consciousness'. It's among the 'liminals' that one finds what Francis Njubi Nesbitt termed the comprador African intelligentsia who use their knowledge of Africa to gain positions as agents of neo-colonialism. It is also within this group that the 'postcolonial critic' is found, especially the one who makes a living by condemning everything African under the guise of being an honest academic and an objective researcher.

The third choice is radical alterity (delinking, nativism, and even ghettoisation). This is the extreme opposite of radical emulation. It takes the form of a shift from Eurocentric fundamentalism to Afrocentric fundamentalism. What's even more problematic about this position is that the logic of racism isn't ruptured, but rather the racial gaze is inverted. However, the Afrocentricity scholarship has managed to transcend Afrocentrism without losing focus on privileging African knowledge, culture and agency in countering Eurocentrism. What is also problematic about this intellectual positionality is not only the danger of cutting oneself from the wider intellectual world but also to do scholarship through 'counter-factualisation,' that is, where European scholars write about European empires one brings evidence of existence of empires in Africa. What's upon us is the fourth choice of decolonising the mind (undoing what the cognitive empire did to African minds and the reconstitution of knowledge).

Decolonisation and epistemic freedom
Fortunately, the cognitive empire has never been totally successful in its invasion of the African mental universe. It has always encountered resistance. Thus, one can say that since the colonial encounters, the African people have been resisting the cognitive empire in various ways. In the 1960s, African historians have mounted the most effective challenge to imperial and colonial historiography. Cheikh Anta Diop consistently and meticulously challenged Eurocentric historiography and used the case study of the Egyptian civilisation effectively.

At the University of Ibadan, a respected and robust African nationalist school of history emerged in the 1960s to challenge colonial historiography, including its methodology. As far back as 1968, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and his colleagues at the University of Nairobi were mounting a direct challenge to the Department of English, calling for its abolition. The 1970s witnessed the growth of Black Marxist political economy interventions represented by the University of Dar es Salaam (the Dar School), with its emphasis on writing history from below and rupturing the iron cages of knowledge. In 1973, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) was formed, and it has maintained an independent position in the production of relevant knowledge to Africa despite being funded externally.

Thus, the resurgent and insurgent decolonial struggles of the 21st century are picking up some of the perennial questions and challenges haunting the knowledge domain in Africa. Today, the cognitive empire is being unmasked and challenged directly by such movements as Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter.

Thank you.

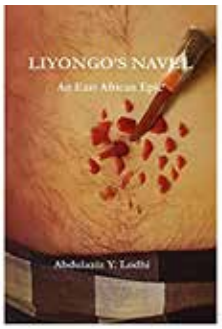
How the Fumo Liyongo legend was captured by the state

Sol Basarán

Language history and its present relevance, Panel D28, 3 December 2020

The panel discussed three examples of language evolution in East Africa: the Iraqw identity in Tanzania, the Swahili Ajami literature in Angoche and the Fumo Liyongo Legend. While these examples were quite different from each other, three main ideas resonated in all three lectures.

First, language is fluid: it is shaped by its surroundings. Languages and traditions are in communication with and affect each other. This point was especially relevant in the discussion about Swahili Ajami literature. In Angoche, Mozambique, the influence of orality, Swahili Ajami literature and Arabic script led to a unique 'intermarriage' of cultures and traditions. This intermarriage was also present in the example of the Fumo Liyongo legend, as the narrative and its interpretation changed throughout time and across regions.



Second, language actively impacts its surroundings. For instance, language is a powerful tool for identity formation. The example of the Iraqw, the ethnic group inhabiting part of the Great Lakes region of East Africa, proved this point as it showed how the expansion of the Iraqw language influenced the growth and preservation of the Iraqw identity. The third idea is that due to this identity-formation power, language is often linked to state building. The role of language in state formation was also touched upon in the Fumo Liyongo legend example. This ancient legend has always been told in different ways across East Africa. However, nowadays this narrative is presented as a monolithic part of national literature, for example in Tanzania. A legend that can be found across borders and in different ways is now limited by the state, as states have appropriated it as a part of their national literature.

In other words, language and literature are shaped by context and shape their context. Ignoring this, as often has happened and continues to happen in state formation, is a simplification of reality. This demonstrates how knowing and understanding the origin and history of languages and literary traditions is relevant to avoid flawed discourses.

Take-aways

- Language is fluid, it is shaped by its surroundings
- It actively impacts its surroundings as well, providing identity, for example
- Language also plays a role in state formation

Restitution is not the only solution

Sol Basarán

Decolonising African heritage inside and outside the African continent, Panel B09, 19 January 2021

This panel about decolonising African heritage was an example for the other panels at the conference. First, because the philosophical questions and the theories that were treated did not take away the space for engaging in a radical discussion. The panel offered space for more philosophical questions such as: what does restitution mean? How should restitution work? How do objects acquire meaning? How can restitution shape this meaning? How does ownership work? Nevertheless, in contrast to what happens quite often, in this panel, the abstract discussion did not limit the space for specific case studies. In other words, the theories did not take away the space for action. The panellists presented examples such as library decolonisation, postage stamp decolonisation, specific cases of national museum collections and the role of curators.

Second, even though these case studies were (extremely) disparate, they were still connected and made sense as a whole. The panel not only consisted of scholars presenting their articles in five minutes; rather, panellists engaged in a spirited dialogue with each other.

They responded and completed each other's arguments.

This dialogue between people presenting case studies made it possible to define a path for action. For instance, the panellists agreed that diverse collaboration is an essential step in decolonising African heritage. Specifically, it means collaboration between countries, museums, curators and societies.

Another step is to go further than limiting yourself to the current practice of restitution. The decolonisation of African heritage is not just about where the objects are, but also about what they mean and how the knowledge about them is transmitted. For example: museums in Africa still follow colonial ethnographic methods of collecting data, according to Charles Mulinda Kabwete of the University of Rwanda, and should abandon this.

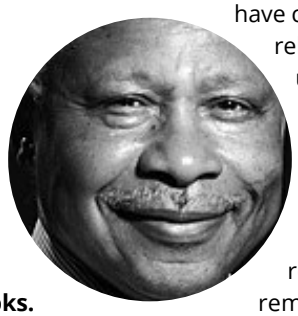
The dangers of creating a universal path were also emphasised. Anna-Maria Brandstetter, an anthropologist at the University of Mainz, argued that there is no formula: real decolonisation requires a lot of research and individual solutions.

Take-aways

- Collaboration is an essential step in decolonising African heritage
- Decolonisation of African heritage implies more than restitution
- Real decolonisation requires research and individual solutions

M.A. Mohamed Salih

Mutual universality and the debate on the decolonisation of the African mind



M.A. Mohamed Salih is emeritus professor of Politics of Development and is connected to the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He wrote African Democracies and African Politics, among other books.

It is common knowledge that Africans were the first to write about colonialism as an embodiment of oppressive political and economic methods which simultaneously shape the mindset and psyche of the colonised subjects.

The genre of the African liberation struggle is laced with warnings of the danger that political liberation would be incomplete without liberating the African mind. African political decolonisation, therefore, was treated as a first step towards decolonising the African mind. However, I argue that the decolonisation of any human mind is bound by the mutual universality of the conditions which have produced and sustained the coloniser and the colonised minds and mindset.

A distinct anomaly in the debate on decolonising the African mind is that it often shies away from naming global capitalism, the heir of colonialism, as the dominant factor responsible for reproducing structural elements of the colonisation process, which it has inflicted on the mind - African or non-African. If the post-colonial situation had negated or vanquished the political and economic foundations of colonialism, then perhaps the debate on decolonising the African mind would have been superfluous. Without the presence of powerful memories of colonialism, there would have been no need for debating what is understood as a continuing colonisation of the African mind – more than six decades after the physical departure of the colonial powers. In a sense, the manifestation and quality of the relational power between the hitherto colonised Africans and the coloniser have changed, but the structural power relations remain, to a large, extent, unchanged.

The possibility of decolonising the human mind in an age caught between the quest for universality and the attempt to reinvent vernacular peculiarities, is remote. It is even more remote if the academy refuses to acknowledge that it is part of, or at least the facilitator of, the process of the colonisation of the African mind. This avowed impossibility stems from two major sources of contention. The first is the ferocity of a global capitalist system that has

We live in an age of mutually universalised colonised minds

reached every part of the globe. The second source of contention is the existence of spaces of resistance oblivious to the realities created on the ground by global capitalism. To be sure, decolonising the African or any human mind rests not only on restructuring the relentless forces of global capitalism (economic, science and technology, production and military might), but also its relentless cultures, lifestyles, ethics and morals.

A careful assessment of the human conditions under global capitalism could or should make us realise that we live in an age of mutually universalised colonised minds. This universal mutuality is not colonial in the old sense. It is new in a sense that it has reconfigured and institutionalised multiple spaces of hierarchical colonised minds that are difficult to totalise because the process operates differently in multiple spaces (culture, knowledge, science and technology, commerce, as well as the states and their positions in regional or global institutions).

Limited powers

Let me use the academy as an example. During the last decade, I attended workshops on the decolonisation of the African university. In most cases, the main questions raised were about what to decolonise, the staff or the curriculum. It is erroneous and undesirable to succumb to the rhetoric which presumes that decolonising the curriculum would automatically lead to the decolonisation of the mind. This situation is particularly so because the process of decolonising the mind involves decolonising a global capitalist system and its pervasive economic, technological, scientific, education system, and relenting cultural edifice and luring lifestyles.

A cynical look at the academy (both African and non-African) would make us realise that it is almost impossible to decolonise because it is the bastion of the reproduction of universal knowledge, complete with evaluation and quality assurance systems, and staff promotion that are universal by their very nature. The minds of those who populate the academy are equally colonised and colonising in a sense that they have limited powers to decolonise their minds, let alone launch a crusade to decolonise the African mind. To be sure, the structures of the mutuality of universal coloniality is pervasive and cuts both ways. The question is whose minds need to be decolonised and whether decolonisation of the mind is decolonisation from the universality of knowledge. Or is it decolonisation from the political and economic global capitalist system which sustains and reproduces the colonisation of all minds, Africans and non-Africans alike?

‘Let local innovators participate in the mainstream!’

Johanna Dekker

Resilience and scarcity, Panel F37, 8 February 2021

African small and medium enterprises (SMEs) prove to be resilient under conditions of scarcity or volatility. Therefore, their inclusion in the co-creation of transformative sustainability pathways has to improve, according to this panel.
‘Africa does know, and there are very interesting lessons to draw,’ said Sietze Vellema of 2SCALE, an incubator for inclusive agribusiness in Africa. Vellema’s guiding question was how to insert the capacities of local innovators into the mainstream. 2SCALE tries to help its partners achieve this. An example is 2SCALE’s support for Shalem in Kenya. This social enterprise sources sorghum from smallholder farmers. It manages to navigate scarcity and volatility in a resource-constrained context while providing access to affordable and nutritious food. 2SCALE helps them activate their target group, people who live on less than 2 dollars a day.
Peter Knorringa of the Centre for Frugal Innovation in Africa advocated a bottom-up perspective and focusing on opportunities instead of problems. The role of agencies is central, he said, and inclusion of SMEs would serve to enrich policy. His colleague Elsie Onsongo pleaded for the inclusion of communities and their knowledge in the innovation process. Increasing connectivity between local practices and knowledge systems can shorten the innovation cycle. Abel Ezeoha from Nigeria Ebonyi State University pointed out that engagement models developed by multinationals such as Heineken and FrieslandCampina did not work as they were based on corporate responsibility and did little to support the development of frugal innovation in African sectors.

Multi-stakeholder platforms help to engage the state and embed innovations in local contexts, said Million Gebreyes of Bonn University. Policy and policymakers should become more responsive to dialogue. Joel Onyango of the African Centre for Technology Studies in Nairobi approached the issue from a different perspective, namely how to engage policymakers as researchers. He advocated moving from dialogue to co-production, as dialogue spaces are elitist, with always the same people participating. Informalising information would create opportunities for decolonising research. Co-production exercises for development would create inclusive spaces and promote the ownership of solutions, which means that projects will continue despite the government pulling out at the end of an intervention.
The question remained how to rethink the current infrastructure. André Leliveld of the Centre for Frugal Innovation in Africa put it succinctly: ‘Let people sit at the table, not just the solution!’

Take-aways

- Improve the inclusion of African SMEs in the creation of transformative sustainability pathways
- Connect local knowledge to mainstream knowledge
- Make institutional structures more responsive to all stakeholders

Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju

‘African languages should be enthroned’

One of the most committed participants of the Africa Knows! conference was Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju. He currently works at the Department of English, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, doing research in Applied Linguistics and African Studies. How does he look back at the conference?

What are your main take-aways?
‘The conference offered an opportunity to catch up on centuries of debate on the African condition, and the relationship of the continent with the rest of the world. It became clear that there is still so much that is unknown about Africa, so much that had been taken for granted, which the conference attempted to unravel. The central role of language in decolonisation came to the fore once again in some panels. For me, the conference was a huge organisational success.’

Would you like to organise a conference like this yourself in Africa?
‘The conference is certainly worth replicating on the continent, and, yes, it is something that one would like to do, given the opportunity. But it requires a lot of dedication and resources. While there are substantial human resources on the African continent to organise such a conference, the great challenge would be in the area of financial and infrastructural support.’

Should (and could) African scientists be more involved in online education in Europe?
‘Digital communication and digital academic interaction are shaping up to be the new normal, globally, and African scientists are not excluded. The online education phenomenon is driven by the triple affordance matrix of economic affordability, multimodal affordance, including possibilities for big data, and temporal flexibility. Scientists globally are keying into these affordance matrices. So, you find academics Zooming in and out of these engagements. A two-way contact system can be set up between European institutions and African intellectuals to harvest bilateral interests and process recruitments. One challenge for African academics and scientists, however, is not only to key into the online drive in Europe and elsewhere internationally, but also to encourage the building of digital capacity back home.’

‘African scientists living in the diaspora should be their sisters’ and brothers’ keepers’

And how about African scientists living in the diaspora?
‘They belong to a privileged class, in terms of access to infrastructure, facilities and debates. The goals of building knowledge and knowledge dissemination capacities back home should always be kept in mind. African scientists living in the diaspora should be their sisters’ and brothers’ keepers.’

Should and shall local African languages play a more important role in education?
‘A study by Ayo Bamgbose in 2000 found that many African countries, mostly in the Franco-

phone and Lusophone axis, typically did not use indigenous African languages in education at all, while in the Anglophone axis the languages were used only in early primary education. Only Somalia and Ethiopia used indigenous languages at the secondary school level, while no African country used them at the tertiary level, except for teaching the language itself. The solution lies in the establishment of African languages as the language of education through a sustained policy of empowerment. The African Union in 2004 adopted Swahili as one of its official languages. This happened unexpectedly when former Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano decided to deliver his farewell address as chairperson of the body in Swahili. It was a solo act of decolonisation that provided a possible model for other African heads of state. Individual African countries would have to engineer the necessary policies to enthrone African languages as the languages of education. Then languages such as Akan, Hausa, Swahili and Yoruba could become the languages of the African continent.'

‘Artificial intelligence offers huge opportunities for Africa’

Johanna Dekker

Artificial intelligence and smart manufacturing in Africa, Panel F38, 9 February 2021

Africa has the fastest growth of value-added manufacturing in the world. New digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), add to this. But while currently AI hubs in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Rwanda are connected, there are no connections with northern Africa. ‘We’re our own biggest enemies,’ commented Jacques Ludik, president of the Machine Intelligence Institute of Africa (MIIA), which aims to build a collaborative African AI ecosystem. Ludik reacted to Ton Dietz, professor of African Studies in Leiden, who asked about the connection between sub-Saharan and northern Africa. The panel agreed that AI offers an enormous window of opportunity to the African manufacturing sector, but that more connections throughout the continent are a prerequisite for this.

Despite claims of Africa de-industrialising, the panel argued that the opposite is the case. AI technologies, in particular, have simplified processes and made manufacturing easier. The core use of AI is in predictive maintenance, asset performance and utility optimisation. It covers troubleshooting, monitoring, diagnostics, and predictions of processes in real time and helps to increase production while reducing risk and costs.

Wim Naudé from Cork University Business School mentioned the Ethiopian coffee supply chain as an example. Via the Internet of Things (IoT), the coffee is tracked and monitored and through blockchain and mobile finance linked with African fintech.

While these two speakers focused on the opportunities for entrepreneurs and SMEs, John Kamara of Nelson Mandela University pointed to the huge opportunities for AI-driven solutions at the low end of the value chain. Processes can be automated, especially in the bioscience industries, public health sector and financial services. ‘AI would create value faster for the common person on the street,’ Kamara stated. He called for the immediate education of 50,000 AI engineers.

Dorine van Norren spoke of the value that the African philosophy of Ubuntu could have for AI. Ubuntu means ‘I am because we are’, which is opposed to the western philosophical framework of cogito ergo sum, ‘I think therefore I am’. Ubuntu can be relevant when considering the ethics of AI in terms of responsibility. Peter-Paul Verbeek of the University of Twente helped UNESCO draft principles to guide the responsible and ethical use of AI. These principles include value-sensitive design, so Ubuntu – with its responsibility towards the community – is indeed reflected, he said.

Take-aways

- Africa has the fastest growth of value-added manufacturing in the world
- But the lack of connections between AI hubs hinders further expansion
- UNESCO’s AI principles reflect the Ubuntu philosophy

Luring youth into agriculture

Johanna Dekker

Policy reforms for ATVET in Africa/Integration of ATVET into broader systems of agricultural knowledge, skills and innovation, Roundtable H47, 3 December 2020

Agricultural tertiary and vocational education and training (ATVET) in Africa currently suffers from one main problem: it's unpopular with the youth. Although agriculture remains the dominant sector in many African economies, ATVET suffers from outdated curricula that fail to acknowledge students' prior knowledge or align the acquired skills with available jobs. Policy reforms are now centred on a modular approach. While the standard approach required students to follow all courses, a modular approach allows students to follow courses that are relevant to them. Caroline Mutepfa of the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) provided an example. In the pineapple value chain, courses would start with sowing pineapple seeds, move on to caring for seedlings and end with the harvest. Students with experience in this value chain could take a course on seedlings and skip the one on harvesting if they already had sufficient knowledge on the subject.

Mutepfa provided a structured overview of the continental approach to the reforms in ATVET using Agenda 2063. This blueprint for Africa's development centres on inclusive and sustainable development as well as regional and continental integration. A focal point is to ensure the inclusion of women. According to Mutepfa, the modular approach helps to achieve this. Historically, opportunities to move up into higher income segments of the value chain were taken by men. A modular approach helps women to do the same as it reduces the financial constraints women often face. They constitute the larger part of the agricultural workforce, so by acknowledging prior knowledge of all students, women are bound to benefit more.

The second speaker, Eusebius Mukhwana of the Kenya National Qualifications Authority, described the Kenyan experience in ATVET reform. A major constraint is the youth's lack of enthusiasm. In Mukhwana's view, they have a colonial mentality, which requires a decolonising of the mind. 'Everyone wants to be a manager,' Mukhwana said, 'working in clean jobs that are not there.' This preference for working in white collar jobs stems from Africa's colonial history, when Africans were systematically excluded from these kinds of positions.
Quality assurance is also central to Kenya's policy reform, as well as the establishment of occupational standards. The same diploma that could be gained in six months at one institution might take two years at another. Musa Abdullahi Mahadi of Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria also discussed the importance of quality assurance. He described how university and college partnerships helped facilitate a skills-oriented approach through the joint use of facilities, overcoming resource constraints.

Take-aways

- ATVET is very unpopular with the youth
- It suffers from outdated curricula and a mismatch between skills and jobs
- A modular approach can make ATVET more attractive, also to women

Looking back and forward

The Africa Knows! conference straddled many boundaries. It connected the North, the South, the West and the East of Africa. It connected Africa with Europe, America, Asia and Australia. It connected teaching, training, research, applications and innovations. It connected knowledge about primary, secondary and tertiary education. And it connected all of this to contextual issues and trends in Africa and in the world.

It was a truly multi-disciplinary event, with participants from the academic world, civil society and the business sector, and lots of input from beyond academia. The conference also straddled the boundaries of academic knowledge with indigenous and other forms of knowledge, including debates on religion, African spirituality and art. Documentaries, kora music and visuals about Africa's museums and universities added an artistic twist to the conference.

Leiden University and its African Studies Centre laid the financial and organisational foundation for the conference, together with 20 sponsors from Africa and Europe and fees paid by participants. Convenors came from all over Africa and Europe, as did authors and students. The latter played a prominent role in producing podcasts, panel reports and country knowledge profiles. Most papers and almost all panel video recordings have become an online resource, which is a major bonus of having been forced to make the conference virtual.

The virtual shape of Africa Knows! was unexpected, but a very welcome push to innovate. The conference used it to become multi-vocal: going beyond a classical academic conference with keynotes, panels and papers only. Blogs, podcasts, video recordings, higher education country profiles on a clickable map, an online magazine, collections of artwork, music and documentary films have all been part of the rich knowledge dish Africa Knows! served. And the results will be available as an online resource for many years to come – with a much smaller environmental impact than a traditional conference would have had.

Africa Knows! showed the importance and quality of online teaching and learning. More support programmes (such as fellowships) should be devoted to this. African diaspora scholars in Europe should play a substantial role in online teaching. We suggest that the follow-up of the Dutch Orange Knowledge Programme and like-minded programmes devote at least 25 per cent of their funding to such initiatives, and that African scholars become (co-)owners of them. Online teaching and learning have to become integral parts of African-European collaboration efforts.



Ton Dietz,
David Ehrhardt and
Marieke van Winden,
LeidenASA conference organisers

2SCALE

CODESRIA

LeidenASA

Ezafus

THE HAGUE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Food & Business Knowledge Platform

INCLUDE

African Studies Centre Leiden

aegis

AFLATOUN INTERNATIONAL

IARA

ecdpm

International Institute of Social Studies

NABC

THE NORDIC AFRICA INSTITUTE

EDUKANS

africamultiple CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE

Future Rural Africa

Nuffic

WAGENINGEN