

The background of the top half of the cover is an abstract, textured composition. It features a central globe-like shape with a grid of latitude and longitude lines, rendered in a golden-brown color. The globe is set against a backdrop of soft, painterly washes in shades of light blue, teal, and pale yellow. Scattered throughout are small, shimmering golden particles and faint, ethereal patterns that suggest movement and complexity.

# TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

FOR THE GLOBAL CRISES OF OUR TIMES

**Rob D. van den Berg**

**Cristina Magro**

**Marie-Hélène Adrien**

EDITORS



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## CHAPTER 3

# Evaluation in an Uncertain World: A View from the Global South

ADELINE SIBANDA AND ZENDA OFIR

**Abstract.** The wicked and intersecting challenges facing the world, brought about by the multiple shocks of COVID-19 and the accelerating impacts of climate change and other effects of the Anthropocene, require that the global evaluation community think and work in fundamentally new ways. It is time that the potential of the Global South – in which we include minority Indigenous societies around the world – is realized, not only because it is most vulnerable to the irresponsible behaviour of societies worldwide, but also because it has important strengths that can help chart a new path for the transformative and sustainable development the world urgently needs. Evaluation will be key in supporting the drastic, much-needed changes. Although exploitation in many different forms persists around the world, the Global South must address the consequences of centuries of colonization, as well as ongoing imperialism and engineered power asymmetries in global governance, economic and financial systems that continue to favour the economically rich Global North. It has become essential that all those who shape and work in the global evaluation system collectively ask how decolonization of the mind and of practice in both the Global South and Global North can be achieved. This is necessary to respect and appropriately attend to the conceptual and methodological experiences, knowledge and wisdom that are deeply embedded in the many diverse cultures of the Global South and that can help advance evaluation in support of systems change and transformation.

## An Uncertain World

The year 2020 will always be known as the year in which the world was transformed. The sudden shock of the COVID-19 pandemic brought upon humanity an intertwined health, social and economic crisis of extraordinary proportions that has devastated the physical and mental well-being, education, employment and income of large swathes of populations around the world (UN DESA 2020). It has been a major disruptor of normal life and of business as usual.

It is also an accelerant. What might have taken years has been achieved in months. This is most visible in the movement to digitally distributed work, online retail, education and other services, as well as in the loss of privacy through much more rapid data accumulation by those with the platforms to do so. And although, on the sociopolitical front, the efforts of the Black Lives Matter movement to eradicate racism have made significant gains, so too have the wealth and opportunity disparities and the ideological polarization within and between societies. Reminiscent of feudal and colonial times, in large parts of the world, vast power is now once again concentrated in the hands of a few.

Before the pandemic struck, the 2020 Global Risk Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF 2020a) highlighted the series of complex, interconnected risks facing humanity. The most severe were considered to be socioeconomic, resulting from economic confrontations and political polarization, whereas environmental risks were considered the most serious in the long term, creating a planetary emergency. Other top risks were seen as geopolitical, with tensions resulting from a shift in the balance of power from West to East, and technological, with digital fragmentation and potential information infrastructure breakdown leading to unequal access to the Internet, insufficient global governance and cyber insecurity.

A subsequent study of the short-term effects of COVID-19 indicates an increase in geopolitical concerns due to tighter restrictions on the movement of people, exploitation of the crisis for geopolitical advantage and a reduction in North-South development assistance (WEF 2020b). Technological risk will remain high, with more sophisticated cyberattacks and unforeseen effects of automation. Crucially, the pandemic has had a twofold effect. On the one hand, it has highlighted the urgent need to address the effects of the Anthropocene era, one of which is pandemics such as COVID-19. On the other hand, it has turned attention away from environmental concerns and towards intensive efforts to contain the economic and social fallout of COVID-19. At the time of writing, it is still

uncertain whether the notions of green and circular economies that bring these two dynamics together will be taken up at the necessary scale.

Yet the world remains far from achieving the intent set out in the Paris Agreement. Climate change is occurring more quickly and with greater consequences than expected, while the accelerating pace of biodiversity loss may soon lead to the disruption of entire supply chains and the collapse of food and health care systems around the world (UN DESA 2020). The interconnected nature of the global risks, the magnitude of the 'black swan' pandemic and accelerating challenges worldwide mean that strategists, decision makers and ordinary people going about their daily business face unparalleled uncertainty under rapidly changing circumstances. If the world is to address the major challenges that confront humanity in this century, the capacity to address unpredictability will be an essential part of the quest for greater resilience in mindsets, behaviours and the institutional systems that hold society together.

## An Entangled World

The COVID-19 pandemic has graphically demonstrated the connections between actions and events around the world – and thus the interdependence between people and the social-ecological systems on which humanity depends. This has several major implications for efforts to solve the new and intractable challenges facing humanity today.

*We need a systems view of the world to inform change strategies.* 'Like a double helix, the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] and the COVID-19 pandemic responses are intertwined and cannot be tackled by a piecemeal approach' is how the United Nations Development Programme recently articulated the need for a complex systems-informed approach to responses and solutions (UNDP 2020). Reinforcing the ambitious agenda underlying the SDGs, integrated solutions are considered crucial for building a greener, more inclusive future. Actions and challenges affect one another across country borders and from a global to a local level; a Blue Marble perspective on the world's societies and ecosystems (Patton 2019) is imperative, and this must be reflected in practical responses and solutions.

*We need concerted collective action.* Sustainable development has become the responsibility of all countries in the world, whether economically rich or poor. At the same time, geopolitical strife and political myopia have the potential to lead to rapid deglobalization and a shift away from cooperation across geopolitical and ideological boundaries. The crises that

define the era of the Anthropocene demand a revisiting of concepts and values that undergird development. 'We cannot go back to the way it was and simply recreate the systems that have aggravated the crisis. We need to build back better with more sustainable, inclusive, gender-equal societies and economies' (Guterres 2020). Efforts to recover from the devastation of the pandemic are likely to weaken commitment to the most vulnerable and might delay action towards a greener, more equitable future. Priorities will have to change, and clear articulation is needed of the values that will help determine the appropriate balance between people and the planet, as well as between the economic, social, environmental and technological aspects of progress articulated in the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement.

## The Divide: Global South, Global North

*[T]he story we've been told about rich countries and poor countries isn't exactly true. In fact, the narrative we're familiar with is almost the exact opposite of reality. There is a very different story out there, if we are willing to listen to it. –Jason Hickel, The Divide (2017)*

At present, all indications are that fallout from the pandemic will severely affect the majority of the world's population, especially the more than 6 billion people in some 140 countries commonly seen as 'developing' countries, or the Global South (UN DESA 2020). Some argue that it is inappropriate to divide the world into the Global South and Global North<sup>1</sup>. There is, they say, too much social, economic and cultural diversity within each, as well as rising incomes in some poor countries, increasing inequalities in many rich countries and increasingly fluid political alliances around the world. Yet disregarding the differences between these two parts of the world has led to many false narratives about development progress, priorities and strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction is not geographic, but socioeconomic and political. The economically rich countries are incidentally nearly all located in the northern hemisphere; the economically poorer ones are mostly, but not exclusively, south of the equator. The 'Global North/Global South' terminology has recently become more popular as a result of the backlash against the notion that some countries are 'developed' and therefore superior, a state that the others should strive towards and that can set standards for others. In turn, the developed/developing country terminology replaced the even more patronizing notion of a First, Second and Third World.

The differences between the Global South and North are in part historical, with solidarity among countries in the South resulting from a shared history of colonization, marginalization and disempowerment. In his book *The Divide*, Jason Hickel (2017) dissects the deliberate creation of poverty and what he calls the ‘economics of planned misery’. Global indexes and analyses continue to highlight the many persistent disparities between these two parts of the world while book upon book and document upon document have revealed how these disparities are largely the result of the odds having been stacked against the South (Chang 2008; Moyo 2009; Stiglitz 2002).

It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic will further inhibit the efforts of the most fragile countries to escape their enduring poverty traps. According to estimates, it might push half a billion people around the world back into poverty (Oxfam 2020) and 71 million into extreme poverty (UN DESA 2020); some 1.6 billion people in the informal sector are facing destruction of their livelihoods (ILO 2020). This will put exceptional strain on many countries – most of which will be in the Global South given their often relatively weak institutions, limited access to technology, frequent political instability and greater vulnerability to human-induced disasters.

## The Urgency of Transformational Change

*The UN and member states are sleepwalking towards failure...it is time to acknowledge that the SDGs are simply not going to be met. –Philip Alston, The Parlous State of Poverty Eradication (2020)*

The magnitude and nature of the risks facing humanity in 2020 leave little doubt that, without extraordinary action, the chance of achieving the SDGs by 2030 is fading quickly (UN DESA 2020). Transformational change – drastic, large-scale change that fundamentally changes the structure of a system so that it will not return to its prior state – has been a central part of the 2030 Agenda. It is seen as essential to achieving the targets of the Paris Agreement. No less important for some, transformational change is also seen as a change in systems to support social justice and inclusion within and between societies (Mertens 2008).

Both the Global South and North carry responsibility for transformational change but from two very different vantage points. The economically rich countries in the Global North must curb the planetary boundary overshoot that has resulted from their patterns of overconsumption (Raworth 2017; UN DESA 2020), curb the injustices and inequalities in their own



countries, change strategies that harm other societies and contribute to equal opportunities for all. In the Global South, governments must continue to work towards escaping poverty traps but are now also under unparalleled pressure to deliver services, provide social protection and ensure social cohesion under highly challenging circumstances (UN DESA 2020). Adaptability, agility and resilience are essential for appropriate responses to these challenges and risks. This means that many countries in the Global South with less educated populations, more fragile institutions, fewer financial resources and less power are in a weaker position to effect urgently needed positive transformations.

What can and should evaluation contribute in this situation?

## Evaluation for This Time

The era of the Anthropocene demands that evaluation follow a new evolutionary path. It must accompany and assess responses to ongoing transformations such as those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It must also support interventions aimed at triggering and shaping urgently needed transformations, such as mitigating the effects of climate change. To do so effectively, evaluation itself, and the system that shapes it, needs to transform. A free-standing practice that has been evolving slowly from project and programme evaluation in the West – one characterized and shaped by the preferences of clients, the pressure to show quick results and simplistic use of performance measures and indicators (Picciotto 2020) – will not be suited to the demands of this era.

What Thomas Schwandt (2009) calls the Western evaluation imaginary – the way in which we collectively see evaluation in the contemporary western world – provides for the common understanding and hence practices that have given evaluation an Enlightenment bias and made it ‘thoroughly modernist’. Although the globalization of evaluation over the past two decades has opened it up to many different influences, development evaluation in particular remains in essence a Western practice (Chouinard and Hopson 2016; Waapalaneexkweew/Bowman-Farrell 2018) in spite of early caution about the belief in Euro-Western universalism and practices in evaluation, increasing awareness of the importance of culturally responsive evaluation and exemplary contributions by Indigenous and Black evaluators (see e.g. Chilisa 2017; Cram et al. 2015; Cram, Tibbetts and LaFrance 2018; Hood, Hopson and Frierson 2015).

Brouselle and McDavid (2020) echo the notion that evaluation is not ready for the Anthropocene and point out that ‘most evaluators think in a

micro context, a legacy of evaluation practice that serves other disciplines, decision-makers, policy-makers, funding agencies and beneficiaries'. The few evaluators working in climate adaptation and mitigation (see e.g. Rowe 2019; Uitto, Puri and Van den Berg 2017) and the newly developed Blue Marble Evaluation approach (Patton 2019) have contributed most, and most visibly, to Anthropocene-oriented evaluation practice – focusing on sustainable development as large systems change that connects people and nature.

During a keynote speech at the 13th Biennial Conference of the European Evaluation Society, Schwandt (2019) noted the emergence of post-normal evaluation, which is based on new ways of thinking and forms of evaluation practice that reflect 'assumptions of unpredictability as well as incompleteness, instability and a plurality of perspectives in value determination'.

All of this points at least in part to new frontiers for evaluation. Realist Evaluation, Developmental Evaluation, Dynamic Evaluation, Principles-Focused Evaluation and Blue Marble Evaluation already provide a sound basis for further work from this perspective, but the political economy of evaluation; focus on bureaucratic and indicator-driven, results-based management and lack of professionalization and capacity deficits that constrain evaluation (Picciotto 2020) also work against uptake of these approaches in the evaluation system beyond a focus by some on experimentation, adaptive management and adaptive learning. Complexity-oriented frameworks and systems-informed methodologies are emerging but have as yet only limited application in practice.

Evaluation in service of transformational change can, on the one hand, relate to evaluation as a critical voice in environments marked by significant inequalities and power differentials, in line with Mertens's (2008) notion of transformative evaluation and, on the other, in environments marked by uncertainty, ambiguity and interpretability. In both cases, this places evaluation in the role of wayfinding (Schwandt and Gates 2016). It is necessary to push evaluation professionals not only to answer the question 'What makes this the right thing to do?' but also to engage with 'What makes this the right thing to do if evaluation is to contribute to its full potential to the challenges the world faces?'

Evaluation scholarship that can enhance theory and effectively translate it into practice is urgently needed to advance post-normal evaluation in service of transformation. More than that, evaluation professionals in the Global South need to determine what the systematic practice of evaluation would have looked like in terms of concepts, theories and practices if it had not been invented and advanced primarily in the Global North – and with a lens that can best support efforts to inform transformational change at

this time. Although this is unlikely to change key aspects of the valid critique against current practices that beg for professionalization (Picciotto 2020), it will enhance our understanding of how far we can stretch the contours, boundaries, limitations and value proposition of the field in different parts of the world. More than that, we believe that the potential for supporting transformation through evaluation, and for transforming evaluation through a focus on transformation, can benefit from emphasis on the innovations that lie silently in world views, philosophies and traditions in the Global South.

## Power Asymmetries in the Global Evaluation System

Long-standing patterns of power that have emerged as a result of colonialism have influenced the evaluation field. Haugen and Chouinard (2019) note that power is complex, intangible and invisible. The purpose of evaluation is often to help donors or development agencies justify their existence. Funders and commissioners have the power to make decisions about who participates in evaluations, what is evaluated and what data are collected – often marginalizing communities that may have different priorities and no means to implement the development projects they want for themselves (Chilisa 2015). The power dynamics continue between international and national evaluators; national evaluators are often downgraded to research assistants, regardless of their qualifications. These power asymmetries often go unchallenged. Evaluators from the Global South often unquestioningly accept terms of reference because of their own colonized mindsets, which leads them not to question the value or merit of their assignment, regardless of their high level of experience, or they are reluctantly forced to accept the situation because they need the money or want to develop their profile and capacity.

## Colonization and Decolonization

The power asymmetries in the evaluation system can best be understood through the experiences and legacies of colonialism in the Global South.

### Stages of Colonization

Hoppers and Richards (2011) refer to phases of colonization. The first phase was the colonization of lands and physical spaces, followed by the colonization of the mind through education and other societal systems.

Achieving independence from the colonial administration did not remove all stages of colonization; colonization of the mind through education and the way development and development evaluation are practiced still remain. Maldonado-Torres (2007) notes that persistent patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism continue to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production well beyond the colonial administrations. Colonialism is maintained alive in books, criteria for academic performance, cultural patterns, common sense, self-image of peoples, aspirations of self and so many other aspects of our modern experience.

Education systems still based on Western curricula and methods of education have influenced views of development and evaluation held in the Global South (Chilisa 2012; Gaotljobogwe et al. 2018). This is further entrenched in the minds of Global South evaluators. What are currently promoted as ideal development models are measured using yardsticks from the Global North, and anything conceived and designed by the Global South is said not to meet the 'standards' (Chilisa 2015).

### **About Decolonization**

Decolonization is the change that colonized countries go through when they become politically independent from their former colonizers, but decolonization is not merely a matter of political independence. Structures of government and other institutions, how post-colonial countries are economically organized and how people in those countries are encouraged to think are often still determined by the former colonial powers because of the economic and cultural power that they wield. To overcome this legacy, it is essential to decolonize the intellectual landscape of the country and, ultimately, to decolonize the mind of the formerly colonized (Oelofsen 2015; Gaotljobogwe et al. 2018).

Such is the case with evaluation. If it is to be truly transformative, the values, power dynamics and intellectual landscape that have shaped the evaluation field today must be questioned. Going below the surface and beyond the symptoms to address the deep causes for the state of evaluation, we must look closely at the layers of complexities within the silenced communities that are often the subject of our inquiry.

### **Decolonizing Systems**

To do this, we must think in systems. The process of decolonization is not a one-time event. It is a process that can take decades, across multiple

sectors and spheres of life, within and outside the international systems that direct and shape evaluation. Such a process is also resisted not only by the colonizers, but also by those from the Global South whose minds are still bound by the chains of colonialism (Lent 2017; Ikuenobe 2017).

Within the evaluation context, this requires a twofold focus. Decolonization means confronting and challenging the colonizing practices that have influenced evaluation in the past and are still present today. It implies questioning subtle colonial expressions in evaluation and development practice, for example definitions of 'households' or 'beneficiaries', forced participation, indicators of empowerment, ethical procedures and the paradigms currently shaping the practice. Chilisa (2015, 14) argues that

Decolonisation of evaluation can be viewed as the restructuring of power relations in the global construction of evaluation knowledge production, such that the African people can actively participate in the construction of what is evaluated, when it is evaluated, by whom and with what methodologies.

The way evaluators have aligned themselves with world views, theories and practices that have emanated from specialists in the Global North has diluted their impact and potential for transformation by reinforcing the existing way in how 'development' is viewed and 'done'. In our experience, there are zealous gatekeepers on both sides, policing and suppressing any move away from the current state of affairs. These same gatekeepers often express their resistance by questioning, for example, whether it is possible to ensure rigour and reliability in the data collection and analysis processes if Indigenous methodologies are used. This argument reveals the importance of the world views or paradigms used in characterizing 'rigour and reliability'; they are often expressed from a post-positivist paradigm rather than from an Indigenous, relational paradigm.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that decolonization alone will not work. We need a simultaneous process of decolonization *and* de-imperialization – letting go of the egotism that reproduces and maintains the idea that the Global North has everything to teach the rest of the world and nothing to learn from other people and their civilizations. These processes require effective dialogue between the colonizers and the colonized. In addition, de-imperialization is necessary to dismantle the racially hierarchical modern world system and reconstruct the asymmetrical power relations in this system. Decolonization must be deepened to address deep cultural, psychological and epistemological issues.

## The Power to Transform Our Future Comes from Within: Examples from the Global South

The responsibility to address the power asymmetries in evaluation and to embrace and promote evaluation scholarship from the Global South lies with both Global North and Global South evaluators. The power to transform is within all of us. We therefore must transform from within to transform the world that we live in. It is about shifting our mindsets – decolonizing and de-imperializing the mind.

### Philosophies in East and Southeast Asia

For millennia, philosophies such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism have shaped the world views, traditions and actions of populations in Southeast and East Asia. Buddhism, an ancient philosophy developed around the 6th century BCE, lends itself to interpretations of common concepts and practices in evaluation that differ significantly from the norm (Dinh, Worth and Haire 2019; Russon 2008; Russon and Russon 2010). Among others, the trigrams in the highly influential *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*, reflect combinations of yin and yang – concepts related to the interdependence and complementarity of nature and mind, of the cosmos and humans, of natural events and political systems; it is perceived that opposing the natural order of the universe will lead to disaster and destruction.

Furthermore, Buddhist understanding of causation is that all phenomena exist as a result of the interaction of multiple factors. Cause and effect cannot be isolated; they arise together and are recursive. This interdependence means that the observer of a process of cause and effect cannot be isolated from the process itself (Russon 2014), that there is a middle way between determinism and uncertainty and that intrinsic validation rather than empirical verification is required for evidence (Dinh, Worth and Haire 2019). Buddhism also perceives the world as being in a state of transient flux, with endless processes of change, which means that ‘impact’ as we define it does not exist – only ‘a combination of conditions that come together in a certain way at a certain point in time’ (Russon 2014).

Dinh, Worth and Haire (2019) applied Buddhist principles to the most significant change technique and found them compatible. Evaluation rooted in Buddhism will be well aligned with systems thinking and complexity science, as well as with the essential values that are being advanced to address the challenges of the Anthropocene. There are also clear parallels between these principles and the world views and approaches of other

Indigenous societies in the Global South and around the world. Buddhist values and principles also underpin the Gross National Happiness Index and philosophy that have steered Bhutan's policies over past decades towards making it the world's only carbon-negative country (Yanka 2018).

### **China's Transformative Development**

China has transformed in just four decades. It has been responsible for lifting some 850 million people out of poverty – nearly all the progress in reducing poverty worldwide during that period (Alston 2020; World Bank 2018), yet it did not follow any dominant narrative about development such as the neoliberal structural adjustment programmes that forced economically poor countries in the 1980s and 1990s to reverse their impressive economic gains after the end of colonization (Chang 2008; Hickel 2017; Moyo 2009; Terreblanche 2014). Detailed analyses (Ang 2016) have shown that some of the key reasons for China's success have been its treatment of development as a complex adaptive system, anchoring its five-year development plans in concepts such as directed improvisation and co-evolution and using evaluative practice in defined ways. It has been explicit about the values and principles that guide its policies and programming. It has also illustrated graphically that development narratives and models based on Euro-Western conventional, often reductionist wisdom can be inappropriate and even destructive, yet we apply them unquestioningly in theories of change and in evaluation frameworks.

### **Indigenous Societies Worldwide**

Over the past two decades, Indigenous evaluators from minority populations in New Zealand, Australia, the Pacific and North America<sup>2</sup> have made great strides in bringing alternative framings for evaluation theory and practice to the fore in support of culturally responsive and culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation. The underlying philosophies apparent in these frameworks reflect a complex adaptive systems view of the world, with values shaped by social justice and a holistic perspective that honours relationships between people, as well as between humanity and nature, in

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<sup>2</sup> Although many of these countries are generally considered to be part of the Global North, their indigenous communities have had experiences similar to those in the Global South.

line with current notions of sustainable development – all essential for solutions to the challenges of the Anthropocene.

Cram, Pipi and Paipa (2018) note that Indigenous ways of knowing and evaluation are ‘holistic, relational, and oriented to a place of dwelling’; build trust based on respectful practices and reciprocity and honour emergent, self-determining processes framed by Indigenous evaluators and owned by respected communities. Tyson Yunkaporta (2020) demonstrates how well aligned Indigenous wisdom in Australia is with current understanding of global systems and complexity concepts – emphasizing relationships between people and with nature, the importance of living within the pattern of creation and ensuring perspectives different from conventional dominant frameworks and narratives to resolve contemporary challenges.

You would think a complex system like a marketplace would be able to interact more dynamically with complex ecological systems. This kind of dialogue always breaks down, however, when it is mediated by the cult of reductionism... Perhaps a first step would be a subtle shift in the focus of inquiry to include an Indigenous orientation, examining multiple interrelated variables situated in place and time (Yunkaporta 2020, 170).

Indigenous framings of life and hence of evaluation tend to be circular and cyclical. Life is a state of constant flux, and change is part of the natural cycle of life, a ‘two-way process of interaction with the universe’ (Mustonen and Feodoroff 2018, 110). The Athabascan Circular Model (or Seasonal-Cyclical Model) that Alaska Native peoples use reflects this logic. Anderson et al. (2012, 577) describe how Debbie, an Indigenous workshop participant, articulates her sense of theory of change when shifting from a linear to a cyclical model:

A circle is a model just about any Indigenous person can relate to. Linear thinking does not make sense to me. How can something end and not begin something else?...many non-native people complain no end about winter coming; the cold weather, the darkness. Without winter, how would we have spring and summer? I do not understand the complaining but it happens, and it irritates me.

A multidimensional, culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation model based on Stockbridge-Munsee/Lunaape traditional teachings acknowledges the importance of situating living (and hence evaluation) within a broader historical context and the entangled effects and value of the lived experience of interaction – including colonization. It encourages the resolve to enable and restore balance through contributing, developing



relationships and sharing with others and to honour new beginnings and individual and societal development based on experience, knowledge and wisdom from within and from others (Waapalaneexkweew/Bowman-Farrell 2018; Waapalaneexkweew/Bowman-Farrell and Dodge-Francis 2018).

The world of the Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) is also about 'kinship with other people, with our environment, and within the cosmos' (Cram et al. 2015, 306). Kaupapa Māori evaluation legitimizes and recentres Māori reality and view of the world and asserts their right to conduct evaluations that are by, with and for Māori; evidence generated in a Māori context by outsiders will, therefore, not be considered credible unless permitted in a supportive role.

### Ubuntu in Africa

Global South communities are often bound by traditional belief systems, values and cultural practices passed from one generation to another. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, this is embraced in the concept of *ubuntu*, a Zulu term that means 'I am what I am because of who we all are'. Ubuntu is based on a set of explicit values that includes caring, sharing, reciprocity, cooperation, compassion and empathy – recognizing that, to develop, flourish and reach their full potential, human beings need to conduct their relationships in a manner that promotes the well-being of others and the environment (Mawere and Van Stam 2016). The values championed in ubuntu have informed and shaped African cultural, social, political and ethical thought and action (Mawere and Van Stam 2016). Studying languages that include the idea of ubuntu shows that it is more than just a word; it is a lived reality. It is what defines 'being African'<sup>3</sup>. Ubuntu values emphasize well-being and the environment.

The notion of ubuntu, oriented towards communal or societal rather than individual interests and grounded in a sense of relationships that include nature, reflects similar concepts in other societies in the Global South and in Indigenous communities in the Global North. For example, the Aztecs, whose descendants still live in Latin America, practised socially centred virtue ethics centred on the cooperative, on family and friends and on the collective rituals and routines of daily life (Purcell 2018). Confucianism in China (revived as New Confucianism in the 20th century) has as fundamental principles the notions of *ren* or 'humaneness', which emphasizes harmony

<sup>3</sup> Khomba (2011) explores a number of African languages with ubuntu derivatives, showing the breadth of *ubuntu*.

in society, and *li*, which embodies the web of interactions between humanity and nature. In Māori society, concepts such as *whānau* and *whanaungatanga* emphasize the importance of extended family or kinship, societal collectives and establishing and maintaining relationships in society (Cram et al. 2015; Paipa et al. 2015).

### South–South Cooperation

A good example of evaluative approaches reflecting the Global South/Global North divide can be found in efforts to develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks that recognize the different values and principles underpinning South–South and North–South international cooperation (Besharati, Rawhani and Rios 2017). Both include a focus on results, but whereas North–South development assistance tends to focus on process qualities such as local ownership, mutual accountability, harmonization, alignment and inclusive partnerships<sup>4</sup>, South–South cooperation principles have a very different tone – valuing solidarity, partnerships between equals, national sovereignty and ownership, non-interference in domestic affairs, mutual benefit or win-win and fostering collective self-reliance (UN 2009). Efforts to find common ground at the high-level meetings of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation became mired in controversy (IDS 2018) because many countries in the Global South do not want to let the criteria, measures and methods of North–South development assistance dictate how South–South cooperation is understood and its performance measured.

## Global Risks from a Global South Perspective

A review of the global risks referenced earlier in the chapter reveals that some risks and their impacts might result from the fact that the relevance for, and ways of knowing of, people from the Global South are not taken into consideration; this represents a certain form of colonization. We discuss here two of these risks, using the concept of ubuntu, to illustrate the power dynamics at work and the neglect of Indigenous knowledge and social norms, culture and historical perspectives.

<sup>4</sup> As determined at the Paris Declaration on Development Effectiveness in Paris in 2005, the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008 and the Busan Outcome Document in 2011.

## Technological Risk

When we consider data and technology, inequalities and power asymmetries are more powerfully reflected in the Global South than the Global North. Data are often assumed to be accurate and neutral, good for evidence in the evaluation profession, but this is not always the case. Sensitive evaluation data about vulnerable populations can be stolen or misused in cyberattacks, or sensitive on-line meetings can be disrupted, especially now that most discussions and interviews have moved on-line. Data and technology can be used in ways that harm people at critical moments; for example, psychometric tests may lead to discrimination against certain groups of people during major life events such as going to university, borrowing money or getting a job or promotion. These data systems create a vicious circle, feeding on each other (O'Neil 2016). Poor people are more likely to have bad credit and live in high-crime neighbourhoods, surrounded by other poor people. The result is that poverty is criminalized.

Thus, contrary to the belief that tools and technologies are scientific and fair, algorithms can be biased or racist, reflecting the make-up and beliefs of the designer. Major software companies in the North also tend to develop and test algorithms based on averages of data taken from mainly white men (O'Neil 2016). A completely different picture will be produced if the diversity in society is taken into account. At a MerITech conference in 2019, it was noted that some facial recognition systems misidentified black people 5 to 10 times as often as white people.

It is a tragedy that many continue to use such data as the Truth. These systems define their own reality and use it to justify their results. When evaluators use these data in assessments, the evidence will be inaccurate. This situation is of particular importance in the Global South, which largely depends on software from companies in other parts of the world. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of remote sensing, (automated) online data collection and big data will accelerate, which will exacerbate data interpretation challenges in the Global South, where accurate data – and the nuanced data derived from qualitative information – are needed.

This is contrary to the traditional values undergirding much of the Global South; for example, ubuntu emphasizes caring, sharing, reciprocity, cooperation, compassion and empathy. Technology and data experts very often do not involve Global South societies, including Indigenous populations, in design, testing and feedback mechanisms. There is no co-creation, cooperation or caring about how the data and technology can prejudice their whole being and affect them for the rest of their lives.

## Environmental Risk

From the concept and values of ubuntu, we note the emphasis on well-being and environment. Africa had a history of conservation before colonization. In southern Africa, people have traditionally lived in harmony with nature, and the philosophies of sustainability and conservation were inherent in their societies. As hunters and gatherers, Indigenous people depended on natural resources for survival.

Every human society has its own unique culture that is closely related to the environment and nearby natural resources; culture and biodiversity conservation are tightly interwoven because, as the environment changes along with the availability of resources, the culture of the affected people may also change. Through cultural practices, local people acquired valuable knowledge and skills for the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources, yet the conservation practices of the past (and present) often cast doubt upon traditional systems of biodiversity conservation and labelled them as unscientific and unreliable (Ministry of Environmental Affairs 2008). It is important to question these traditional systems of biodiversity conservation to understand how they managed, monitored and evaluated their environment to ensure sustainable use of resources.

Before colonization, there were strategies in the Global South to address environmental risks and impacts. In Africa, tradition, culture and religion influenced resource use, and there were controls to reduce depletion of resources. Land use was managed through controlled access to natural resources. Among other influences, resource use was influenced by religious beliefs and affected by local traditional healers; there were traditional prohibitions against killing certain species such as hyena or chameleon; people were prohibited from hunting or eating their totem animals, such as lions, eland, zebra, monkeys, squirrels and crocodiles (Ministry of Environmental Affairs 2008) and areas were demarcated for specific purposes, possibly to prevent overuse of these species. Some areas were set aside for religious purposes, including sacred forests, burial sites and hills for ceremonies and rituals. There were also areas that were not inhabited, to prevent degradation of fragile soil (Department of Environment Affairs 2008).

These practices changed during colonization for many southern African countries. In Zimbabwe for example, Indigenous people were moved to unproductive land or reserved areas and sometimes to lands that were fragile and unsuited for human habitation or large populations, yet when current conservation or environmental efforts are evaluated, the history of the communities and their cultural heritage are often not taken

into consideration. This leads to conclusions that communities are causing land degradation because of overpopulation or because they live in watershed areas or fragile soils. There is often little examination of how they came to be there in the first place and often no attempt to understand their side of the story and how Indigenous knowledge or their ways of knowing can be tapped into to find solutions.

One may ask why it is this way. Power relations are a major factor. The person who commissions or funds the evaluation has the power over what is done and how. The commissioners of the evaluation have an important voice, whereas the communities in need of 'development' are often perceived as not knowledgeable enough to craft their own destiny or have an independent, authoritative voice in plans and implementation activities. Global sustainability is rarely addressed using Indigenous world views and perspectives. Discussions of Indigenous knowledge systems tend to be polite acknowledgements of connection to the land rather than true engagement (Yunkaporta 2020).

## Evaluation and Social, Political and Economic Inequalities

Evaluation design is a highly challenging task influenced by political factors and implementation realities. Social, political and economic inequalities in access to natural resources and public programmes on health, education and livelihood securities need context-sensitive approaches combined with diversified tools and techniques. Development is not only a question of economic betterment, but is also about improving people's sense of belonging, self-realization and hopes for the future. Similarly, evaluation is not only about measuring goal attainment and impacts, but also about understanding the sociocultural fabric of society and the bridging of gaps in unequal opportunities. This has led to multiple ongoing efforts in Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world to develop tailored monitoring and evaluation approaches and methods that account for the intersections of gender, culture and rights.

## Stimulating Evaluation Practice in the Global South

The South-to-South Evaluation Initiative was developed in 2018, building on two decades of committed efforts to identify and address asymmetries

in evaluation in the Global South. Leaders of five regional voluntary organizations for professional evaluation in the Global South have spearheaded the initiative<sup>5</sup>, with the goal of traversing 'the last mile' in addressing asymmetries in power, decision-making, resources and knowledge in the evaluation ecosystem in the Global South to contribute to the sustainable development of all nations. It has been raising awareness and advocating for early adopters to join the initiative, and some of the engaged regional associations have started to inspire stronger evaluation scholarship and research on evaluation in the South.

One such example is the Made in Africa Evaluation initiative that the African Evaluation Association is implementing. It is an evaluation agenda that is increasingly prioritizing evaluation for transformative development based on evaluation frameworks and techniques – rooted in African world views and Africa's development vision and priorities and aimed at inspiring respect for human dignity yet fully engaged with international evaluation practice. The Made in Africa Evaluation has an implicit theory of change that reflects world views and frameworks that recognize the interconnectedness of people and their environment and is rational yet mystical and spiritual (Chilisa 2015; Gaotljobogwe et al. 2018). It has recently mobilized financing for a set of research initiatives on evaluation from Global South perspectives in an effort to enhance scholarship and study in this field of work.

The Made in Africa Evaluation is intended to challenge the prevalent practice of designing evaluation approaches and tools without attending to cultural responsiveness or to the diversity that manifests itself in the plethora of cultures, religions, languages and histories on the continent and in gender and ethnicity. It is also set to challenge the extractive nature of evaluation practices that fail to benefit those in the society who give their time and expertise for the sake of the evaluations. It must question the perennial success stories told about interventions when realities on the ground are completely different. It is encouraging greater engagement with and recognition of African data collection methods such as storytelling, folklore, music, dance, oral traditions and the use of African languages (Chilisa 2015). The African Evaluation Guidelines have also been revised using a Made in Africa Evaluation lens.

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<sup>5</sup> African Evaluation Association; Asia Pacific Evaluation Association; Caribbean Evaluators International; Community of Evaluators South Asia; and Latin-American and Caribbean Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network

## Business Unusual: Mobilizing for the Future

The major shifts the world needs to respond to the challenges of the era of the Anthropocene also require a major shift to 'business unusual' by the evaluation sector. The sudden shock of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the whole of humanity. It knows no borders and has made everyone vulnerable, yet it has also brought solidarity and galvanized the world, demonstrating that drastic change on a global scale is possible. This willingness to act should encourage the global evaluation community to increase the intensity with which it addresses power asymmetries and injustices in global systems in general and in evaluation ecosystems in particular. We should collectively draw vigorously and respectfully from the diversity of experiences and knowledge systems available. Neglecting to ensure that all parts of the world contribute substantively to evaluation depletes its transformative potential.

What and how we evaluate, who we work with, how well our work empowers people in the Global South and how we respond in real time to global catastrophes – climate change, pandemics, biodiversity loss, overconsumption and wars, all increasingly leading to profound social instability and suffering – must change. We must find appropriate spaces for all world views and knowledge assets – even though few academic centres are focusing on evaluation in the Global South while good evaluators in the field are constantly overworked. Because this inevitably diminishes the chance of creativity and innovation, solutions must be found.

Evaluation professionals and communities and societies in the Global South should be consistently valued – their ways of knowing solicited and respected, their practices embraced and encouraged – whether they are working in the Global South or the Global North. It is essential to question narratives, models, frameworks and theories of change about development and evaluation imported from the Global North. We must study, synthesize and make visible insights and narratives from different knowledge systems about the nature of concepts such as change, causality and evidence. We must rethink the values and approaches that underlie assessments of progress, success and impact, and we must insist on making cultural responsiveness part of all terms of reference. We must conduct, synthesize and learn from evaluations of South–South cooperation and innovative approaches to sustainable development while working together to advance South–South evaluation. We should develop mechanisms for intensive generation, documentation and accumulation of innovative Global South approaches to the challenges the world faces and update education curricula and short-term training with Global South–developed theories and practices.

If the field of evaluation is to help facilitate transformational change on a large scale, evaluation professionals must use and expand on the principles laid out in *Blue Marble* – developmental and principles-focused evaluation – but it must also pay special attention to incorporating complex adaptive systems concepts, power dynamics in systems and explicit values such as those espoused through the notion of, for example, ubuntu (caring, sharing, reciprocity, cooperation, compassion and empathy) – values that will help us respect, collaborate, co-create and empower.

The crises facing humanity offer us challenges but also opportunities to do the best we can in our professional practice. Evaluation specialists worldwide must stop enclosing themselves in a cocoon as if only the evaluation world matters, and they must learn from other disciplines, sectors, fields of work and worlds of financing. New types of partnerships for collective action, South–North as well as South–South, will be essential to create transformation systems in evaluation – that is, change agents aligning to work in synergy towards common goals.

Such actions will demand commitment, a sense of urgency and robust positioning of evaluation in the global sustainable development agenda. They will also require renewal in the global evaluation agenda, centred on the demands of the Anthropocene and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. If evaluation professionals – financiers, commissioners, managers, educators, researchers and evaluators – across the Global South and Global North share this responsibility, working in tandem and on equal footing for the benefit of all, we may well become the best that the field of evaluation can offer the world at this critical juncture.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the enormous challenges humanity is facing. It has been facilitated by other crises as climate change, biodiversity loss, economic exploitation, and increased inequity and inequality. The UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change call for transformational change of our societies, our economies and our interaction with the environment. Evaluation is tasked to bring rigorous evidence to support transformation at all levels, from local to global. This book explores how the future of the evaluation profession can take shape in 18 chapters from authors from all over the world, from North and South, East and West, and from Indigenous and Decolonized voices to integrative perspectives for a truly sustainable future. It builds on what was discussed at the IDEAS Global Assembly in October 2019 in Prague and follows through by opening trajectories towards supporting transformation aimed at solving the global crises of our times.

*By combining practical experiences with perspectives drawn from new initiatives, this book offers invaluable insights into how evaluation can be transformed to support transformational change on the global stage.*

Indran A. Naidoo, Director of the Office of Independent Evaluation of IFAD

*Across continents, educational systems, and historical complexities, this book builds up the language we all should speak about our field. A mandatory read for all young evaluators.*

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*After reading these chapters you will have a sharper look at what is relevant when managing or doing an evaluation, and you will notice that 'business as usual' will no longer be an option.*

Janett Salvador, Co-founder of ACEVAL, Former Treasurer of ReLAC

*This book offers original, visionary discourse and critical perspectives on the challenges evaluation is facing in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.*

Doha Abdelhamid, Member of the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology

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