

TOWARDS A MORE DECOLONIAL, ANTI-RACIST AND FEMINIST PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



METHODS:

In knowledge creation processes, methods are political in that they are informed by broader power relations, and they also (re)produce those power relations.

Our methods provided space to examine broader politics of knowledge creation processes such as who participates in knowledge creation and how do they participate, what counts as knowledge creation processes, whose knowledge and experiences count, what protocols guide research processes and how are those protocols developed.

Methods as a site of action in public engagement involves centering the public by accounting for geographical, historical, social, and political contexts. These contexts in turn inform the design of public engagement activities.

Methods as a site of action involves fostering a space for diverse perspectives, ways of being, and ways of knowing. This approach implies different goals and strategies co-constructed by the participants in public engagement activities.



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MAPPING OBSTACLES:

More work is needed to break the links between international cooperation work and colonial legacies and practices.

First map obstacles by identifying how colonial and racist practices influence their programs, projects, cultures and policies.

An approach that informs and is informed by social justice projects is essential in addressing structural obstacles in the use of these approaches in public engagement.



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Formal structures of power (nation state, companies) set up patterns of domination. But women in different countries have a parallel form of power that is transmitted through different movements.

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POWER:

Unequal power relations are enmeshed in political, cultural, and economic systems. Changing unequal power relations in the international cooperation sector is a first step towards addressing structural factors that hinder the use of decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches in public engagement.

Cultivate power relations that are divested from colonial, imperial and racist structures and systems by fostering collective power. Power with the people provides immense possibilities for conceptualizing alternative ways of being that are in resistance to colonial, racist and patriarchal systems.



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Language will only serve to strengthen decolonial efforts as long as it comes with an honest intent of being translated into action.

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LANGUAGE: Language can be used to deconstruct colonial, racist and patriarchal systems and structures and to cultivate alternative structures and systems.

Decolonial, anti-racist and feminist projects have to involve critical conversations about the connections between colonialism, racism and patriarchy and the international cooperation sector.

Language as a site of political struggle aims to change not only how social issues are problematized and articulated but also how they are addressed.



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KEY AREAS OF ACTION: CENTER COMMUNITIES



The understanding, respect and responsiveness to the belief systems, customs and institutions of a group of people or community is crucial to understanding a community's experiences, aspirations and priorities in terms of public engagement.

To center communities in public engagement in ways that embrace difference requires acknowledging that communities are integral to public engagement not only as mere “recipients” or “beneficiaries” of public engagement activities but also as agentic actors in their own right.

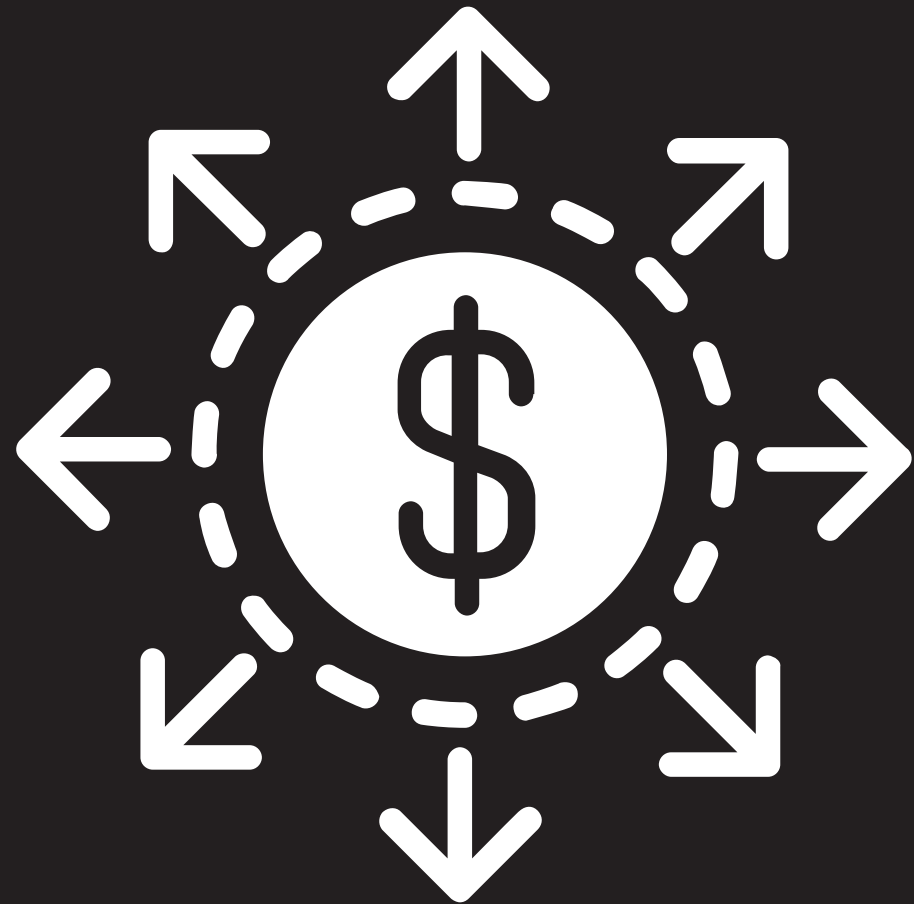
Listening to communities is another important step that can strengthen the use of decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches in public engagement. Rather than prescribe specific agendas or even these concepts to communities, an approach that does not always work, listen to communities.

All the voices and ways of looking at things are taken into consideration and amplified instead of being censored by other organizations or the state.



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KEY AREAS OF ACTION: INVEST RESOURCES



Investing resources in this work therefore requires a more critical look at the funding systems, processes, practices and channels. Looking at how resources are allocated, who has access to resources and who has decision-making power around resources.

Resources are needed to strengthen and support staff's skills, experiences, and expertise in their use of decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches. This has to be a long-term investment.

Participants make an urgent plea to funding organisations to provide resources to communities and organisations that need it the most by directly funding local partners, ensuring their autonomy and removing restrictive conditions attached to funding.

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KEY AREAS OF ACTION: FOSTER OPEN DIALOGUE



To navigate a public space where these concepts are already always laden with biases, organizations have to be strategic in how they use these concepts in their public engagement work.

Rather than act as a space to craft singular understandings of these concepts, these dialogues are better used as a bridge to bring different voices and perspectives together in conversation.

Open dialogues are also fundamentally important for building trust and co-imagining alternative realities.

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KEY AREAS OF ACTION: BUILD RELATIONS OF TRUST AND SOLIDARITY



There is an urgent need to connect and harmonize efforts in decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches in public engagement to broader processes of social justice.

Forming relations that are fundamentally opposed – and in active resistance – to extractive and imperialist practices is essential for decolonial, anti-racist and feminist work.

Relations of trust and solidarity enable actors to put the heart into the work and to create space for communities to express their connection to their work, their lands, and their aspirations in a variety of ways.

Relations of trust and solidarity create the space that is needed to move beyond top-down approaches to approaches that foster co-learning and the co-construction of projects based on the priorities of the communities as identified by the communities.

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KEY AREAS OF ACTION: CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY



Asking questions around how power shapes relations highlights the intricate channels via which structures of power function in systems, institutions, discourses, and knowledges to shape people's lives.

Working in a system that is still colonial, racist, capitalist, patriarchal implies that actors can (re)produce and perpetuate these practices in their work.

Critical reflexivity is not in any way a neutral exercise. The mechanisms via which reflexivity is conducted are sites of political action and therefore central to decolonial, anti-racist and feminist work.

Critical reflexivity mechanisms therefore need to include channels and space for communities to provide feedback.