Decolonising the Organisation: A Call to Action

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Chapter 14

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Abstract

This concluding chapter synthesises the key insights and arguments presented throughout the book, urging scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to reconsider how colonial legacies embedded in organisational structures and practices can be deconstructed. It reiterates the urgent need for transformative change, highlighting the limitations of Eurocentric frameworks in addressing systemic inequities in diversity, employee experience, and management practices. The chapter emphasises the importance of reimagining organisations as spaces of equity, inclusivity, and cultural authenticity. Drawing from decolonial theory and practical

examples discussed in earlier chapters, it offers a roadmap for fostering organisational environments that integrate Indigenous knowledge systems, amplify marginalised voices, and embrace participatory approaches in management and decision-making.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Modern workplace, Inequalities, Inclusion

Introduction

When we embarked on this volume, the ambition was bold but simple: to challenge the often-invisible endurance of colonial logics within organisational theory, practice, and governance, and to imagine how organisations might be reconstituted as sites of equity, pluralism, and relational accountability. Across its chapters, this book has rolled up its sleeves; it has shown what decolonial methodology looks like, how theoretical reorientation might proceed, and how everyday organisational practices can be reanimated with Indigenous and marginalised logics.

This concluding chapter draws those strands together in three interlocking moves. First, it synthesises the key insights developed in the prior chapters and revisits the limits of Eurocentric frameworks in addressing the deeper architecture of inequality. Second, it offers a practical, normative roadmap for decolonising organisations by addressing actors at multiple levels, including scholars, practitioners, and policy makers. Third, it reflects on the challenges, tensions, and open questions that this agenda must live with if it is to remain generative rather than dogmatic.

Lessons from the Journey: What We Have Learned

One of the persistent lessons across the chapters is that Eurocentric managerial paradigms do more than offer misfitting analogies; they also function as infrastructural defaults. They shape curricula, funding logics, editorial gatekeeping, performance metrics, and even assumptions of organisational rationality (Banerjee, 2022). These defaults inevitably marginalise epistemic practices and values that do not mirror Western modernity, rendering them peripheral or invisible. The chapters on African SME social capital (Chapter 4) and colonial legacies in African institutional structures (Chapter 6) demonstrate that repealing coloniality necessitates dismantling the infrastructure (i.e., curriculum, accreditation, governance, and gatekeeping) that continues to validate Western rationalities over others.

The second major lesson is that decolonial inquiry must begin at the level of knowledge and method. Decolonisation does not start with new policies or symbolic gestures, but with how

we think, listen, ask, and co-create. Chapter 2's articulation of CBPR and the 6Rs attests that research itself must be transformed from an extraction model to one of co-responsibility. Chapter 3's use of Śūnyatā as a critical metaphor signals that ontology and epistemological posture matter, in that decoloniality cannot be reduced to new data sets or codes but involves rethinking how knowledge is constituted. Scholars such as Allen (2024) have similarly demonstrated that developing decolonial reflexivity, particularly among Western-based researchers, necessitates sustained efforts to disrupt assumption-laden positionalities.

A third insight is the importance of contextual translation rather than universal importation. A recurring refrain is that one cannot parachute DEI models, leadership theories, or HR instruments from the West and expect them to operate justly. Chapters 7 and 8 illustrate how Western-origin theories must be translated and reworked rather than simply adopted. For instance, the notion of "voice" in leadership may have different cultural valences, obligations, and silences in hierarchical settings; inclusion may need negotiation with sociocultural values of relationality. This aligns with broader critiques in decolonial management studies that insist on pluriversalism, recognising multiple vantage points and multiple rationalities (Mielly, 2024).

Another lesson is that decolonisation is not only about representation but about the redistribution of authority. The chapters on storytelling, mapping, doctoral experience, and algorithmic justice highlight that decolonisation is fundamentally about epistemic agency. In Chapter 5, communities on Mozambique's corridor co-designed digital narratives, resisting the researcher-as-interpreter model and shifting toward researcher-as-facilitator. Chapter 9 illustrates how doctoral students from the Global South navigate epistemic dissonance in UK institutions through reflexive narratives. Meanwhile, Chapter 13 argues that fairness in algorithms cannot be reduced to metrics but must be made accountable to historically marginalised communities (Mohamed et al. 2020). Decolonial organisations, in this view, must configure structures that allow formerly marginalised actors to name, decide, and shape the logic of their own inclusion.

Finally, the work–life chapters remind us that labour and productivity are themselves fields of contested colonial legacies. The so-called "neutral" categories of productivity, identity, balance, and care are shaped by colonial modernity. The ideal worker model (white, male, unencumbered) continues to marginalise racialised, care-laden, Indigenous, migrant, or gig workers. As Chapter 12 shows, in many non-Western settings, work is not a separate sphere

but entangled with family, community, and identity. Decolonising organisations thus implicates rethinking assumptions of what counts as work, what temporalities are valued, and how care is recognised. Together, these lessons affirm that decolonising organisations is a transformational endeavour, not a decorative add-on. It touches every layer, including epistemic scaffolding, governance, policy, performance metrics, and everyday relational practices.

Towards a Roadmap: Principles and Actions for Decolonial Organisations

Following the conceptual and empirical foundations highlighted throughout the book's chapters, the next step is to map a call to action. The roadmap is not a static blueprint but a flexible compass. It revolves around five interlocking principles that together outline what a decolonial organisation might look like.

The first principle is epistemic accountability and pluralism. Organisations must no longer treat knowledge as a commodity to be extracted, validated, and consumed. Instead, they must host epistemic pluralism under accountable conditions. This means institutionalising co-creation frameworks for research and decision-making so that communities or marginalised stakeholders help define agendas, methods, interpretation, and dissemination (Omodan & Dastile, 2023). It also means reconfiguring editorial boards, curricula, and governance bodies to prioritise epistemic difference, not just demographic diversity. Finally, it requires developing mechanisms by which stakeholders can question, veto, or retract knowledge products that misrepresent or distort local worldviews.

The second principle concerns relational governance and participatory decision making. Decolonial organisations are not controlled from the top; they are governed in collaboration with the communities and actors whose lives they impact. This requires introducing participatory management structures, such as worker councils and deliberative forums, where decision-making rights are explicitly shared. It also involves adopting radical participatory design in organisational interventions, from office layout to technology deployment, and strategy reviews to performance systems (Udoewa, 2022). Reflexive pauses within decision cycles can provide moments for stakeholders to reflect, critique, or withdraw consent over policies in flight, ensuring that governance remains dialogical rather than imposed.

A third principle is the shift toward governing for care, interdependence, and cultural authenticity. Organisations must move from instrumental rationality (efficiency, optimisation)

to relational rationalities that centre care, community, and cultural flourishing. This reorientation demands reimagining performance metrics so that they include care work, cultural labour, relational maintenance, and community impact. It also implies flexible temporal arrangements that align with communal rhythms such as holidays, rituals, and caregiving cycles, rather than being bound by Western clock time. Equally, it requires valuing interdependence by promoting team-based evaluation, collaborative projects across silos, and shared responsibility for well-being.

The fourth principle is technological justice and algorithmic accountability. Technologies are never neutral; they embed values and can reproduce hierarchies. Decolonial organisations must treat digital systems, data flows, algorithms, and supply chains as sites of justice. This involves subjecting algorithmic systems to participatory audits, where fairness is assessed not by abstract metrics but by local and historical understandings of equity (Mohamed et al., 2020; Correa Lucero & Martens, 2025). It also requires insisting on data sovereignty and local stewardship, ensuring that communities control how their data is collected and shared (Barrett et al., 2025). More broadly, it demands that digital infrastructures be chosen or designed in alignment with local logics of reciprocity and autonomy (van Stam, 2021). Reverse tutelage, that is, inviting organisations in the Global North to learn from Indigenous digital practices, can also rebalance epistemic hierarchies in the digital sphere.

Finally, the fifth principle highlights institutional ecosystems and policy design. Organisations cannot decolonise in isolation. They must transform the ecosystems in which they operate, including supply chains, accreditation bodies, government policies, HR regulation, and inter-organisational networks. This entails advocating for accreditation reforms that integrate decolonial criteria, engaging in relational procurement frameworks that prioritise Indigenous or marginalised suppliers, and pressing governments to provide incentives for organisations that pursue decolonial certification. Building inter-institutional consortia that convene organisations committed to decolonial transition can also help sustain momentum and mutual accountability.

Challenges, Tensions, and Possibilities

A call to decolonise organisations is inherently fraught with contradictions. To proceed responsibly, we must recognise and live with certain tensions. One such tension is the risk of treating decolonisation as a metaphor. As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, decolonisation is not a metaphor but requires material and structural change, including land restitution and sovereignty

in settler-colonial contexts. While this book focuses primarily on epistemic and organisational domains, we must remain cautious not to dilute the political edge of decolonisation by reducing it to symbolic reforms.

Another challenge is institutional capture and tokenism. There is a constant risk that decolonial initiatives become window dressing, such as diversity offices, symbolic renaming, and superficial training, while underlying structures persist. Jammulamadaka et al. (2021) warn that token gestures risk re-colonising decolonial ideas. Guarding against co-optation requires designing initiatives that alter the distribution of power, not simply its representation.

Pluralism itself presents another tension. The routes to decolonisation explored in this book, including CBPR, metaphorical rethinking, contextual translation, storytelling, and algorithmic justice, do not coalesce into a single canonical method. This plurality is both a strength and a challenge, as it raises questions about which routes to pursue, how to reconcile conflicting local logics, and how to adjudicate competing claims. The task is not to prescribe but to remain attuned to dissonance, unsettlement, and ongoing generativity.

Resource constraints present further challenges. Transforming organisations in profound ways is resource-intensive. Many institutions, especially in the Global South, may lack funding or supportive infrastructure. This underscores the importance of donor realignment, grant-making reform, and redistributive funding models that support long-range decolonial work rather than short-term diversity wins.

Finally, we must acknowledge that decolonial transformation is not a guarantee of success. There will be failures, missteps, and backlashes. Organisations must embed iterative accountability mechanisms that allow retreat, revision, or disavowal when harm occurs. This requires humility, transparent conflict resolution, and a reparative culture rather than punitive perfectionism.

A Call to Collective Praxis

Decolonising the organisation is not a solitary project but a collective praxis. It demands alliances among scholars, practitioners, community groups, policymakers, funders, and, most crucially, the people whose lives organisations impact. For scholars, this means embarking on long-term co-design partnerships with communities, publishing in decolonial journals, challenging hegemonic assumptions in disciplinary training, and mentoring emerging decolonial scholars from underrepresented backgrounds. For practitioners and organisational

leaders, it involves commissioning internal audits of structural coloniality, piloting governance experiments such as worker councils and deliberative forums, and embedding local languages, storytelling practices, and cultural forms into strategy and operations. For funders and policymakers, the task is to shift funding from short-term projects to relational investments, reform accreditation and certification systems, incentivise participatory and non-extractive models, and create regulatory frameworks that favour relational procurement and labour justice. For community actors and stakeholders, the call is to assert epistemic claims, negotiate data sovereignty, and establish parallel accountability bodies when institutional ones fail.

No single actor can bring about the transformation alone. However, by weaving together partial, overlapping, and contestatory experiments, we can cultivate organisational ecologies that embody decolonial principles. The aim is not to create perfect organisations but to enable convivial ones by building spaces that make room for difference, tension, rearticulation, and dissent, not in the hope of closure but in the spirit of generative becoming.

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