Negotiating Inclusion and Digital Entrepreneurship in a Zambian Innovation hub: A Post-colonial Perspective

Andrea Jimenez
Information School, University of Sheffield, Sheffield. United Kingdom
a.jimenez@sheffield.ac.uk
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2166-8574

Christopher Foster
Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, Manchester. United Kingdom
christopher.foster-2@manchester.ac.uk
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7827-2485

Abstract: The goal of this paper is to look at the inclusion agenda in digital entrepreneurship through a postcolonial lens. While recognising that inclusion has long been embedded in development models relevant to digital entrepreneurship, most literature assumes an economic logic of inclusion, through incorporating people so they can benefit from being a part of a globalised economy. However, this viewpoint ignores the underlying historical, political, economic, and social dimensions that influence how inclusion occurs in digital entrepreneurship. To accomplish this, we draw on postcolonial theory to examine how a Zambian innovation hub negotiates inclusion dynamics between the hegemonic Western narrative as well as local understandings, needs and preferences. We describe the hub's tensions in trying to fit into the global innovation agenda, and how this impacted inclusion within the hub. In doing so, we hope to provide a broader and more critical framework for thinking about inclusion in digital entrepreneurship.

Keywords: innovation, inclusion, post-colonial, digital entrepreneurship, global South.

1. Introduction

Digital entrepreneurship has become increasingly central to innovation, given the impetus of information and communication technology in an increasingly interconnected world [1] [2] [3]. With emerging digital technologies (i.e., big data, blockchain, 3D printing, data analytics) digital innovation provides a rich area for new venture opportunities [4]. It has also transformed the entrepreneurial process into less bounded, less predefined and more diverse phenomena [2]. Digital entrepreneurship is taking place all over the world, promoting and producing digital technologies that feed into the digital economy [3].

In the African context, digital entrepreneurship has become highly visible and often celebrated with the mainstream and business press [5] [6]. The rise of digital entrepreneurship in Africa is aligned with assumptions of the 'flattened world' - that because digital entrepreneurship can be done by anyone and anywhere, it creates a level playing field [5].

Within Africa, in line with other regions, the orientation of digital entrepreneurship has increasingly moved beyond firm profit to encompass broader economic and social inclusion agendas [5] [6]. In this context, development discourses emphasise the ideas of innovation and entrepreneurship in meeting development goals [7]. This is particularly evident through the types of funding available for start-up firms in Africa, articulations of entrepreneurs and firm goals, and the emergence of institutions supporting and guiding digital entrepreneurship which push inclusive goals [5]. Digital entrepreneurship and digital technologies are presented as '[…] globally homogeneous, ubiquitous, openly accessible, and inclusive' [5, p.20].

This 'inclusion turn' within digital firms and innovation ecosystems gives to rise to tensions. On one hand, global norms of digital entrepreneurship remain at the centre, grounded within entrepreneurism, innovation and profit (as exemplified by the stories of successful global tech firms). The prevalence of inclusion agendas, on the other hand, suggest orientations and goals in Africa that imply different configurations and worldviews. The growing reference to inclusion within digital entrepreneurship has led to emerging research in the global South that has explored tensions where overlapping economic and inclusion goals exist [8] [9]. Such scholarship provides important insights through unpacking cases of digital entrepreneurship in the global South.

We draw from these views to argue that research needs to think more holistically about the assumptions and tensions linked to the 'inclusion turn' in digital entrepreneurship. To understand and affect genuine inclusion in innovation and

entrepreneurship, it is not possible to consider firm-level tensions without linking these into broader patterns of development in the global South. We need to think more critically around the broader structures that underlie the inclusion agenda, moving beyond 'surface level' actions of firms in Africa to consider the way ambitions and goals of individuals and organisations align to norms of digital entrepreneurship. This approach aligns with others recent studies that have begun to investigate the embeddedness of digital entrepreneurship in Africa in broader geopolitical, economic, and historical contexts (e.g. [5] [7] [10]).

Of particular importance in an Africa context, and less understood, is how assumptions around digital entrepreneurship are shaped by, and embedded within long running legacies of global inequalities and dominance that still play a key role in shaping the assumptions and dynamics. As Jack and Avle [11] state, the digital turn represents a continuation of power and privilege structures, mirroring colonial histories and unbalanced representation in decision-making in many ways.

The paper approaches digital entrepreneurship and innovation from a discursive perspective. It looks to move beyond positivist ideas of 'best practice' that 'solve' the tensions between economic growth and inclusion. Rather, closer attention is paid to assumptions embedded within notions of digital entrepreneurship in Africa - how they are invoked across range of innovation actors and what this means for power and agency within North-South relations. Our research question is therefore "How is the process of inclusion influenced by global discourses within organisations supporting digital entrepreneurship and innovation?" Our goal is to provide a broader and more critical frame for thinking of digital entrepreneurship. We aim to recast discussions of 'profit vs inclusion' and 'reality vs practice' into broader discussion of structure and relations. The discussion follows recent IS calls for more intense study new digital work environments, and to better theorise inclusionary and exclusionary practices (e.g. [12]).

We support the theoretical discussion of inclusion through the analysis of one particular type of organisation supporting digital entrepreneurship in the global South: innovation hubs. Technology and innovation hubs are coworking and support spaces for those who are seeking to develop digital innovations such as mobile applications, software development, 3D printing, robotics and more. They also support digital enterprises, including online shopping and more [5]. Innovation hubs provide an insightful example that embody some of the tensions we describe above - they are seen in some contexts as an entrepreneurial space (i.e. as innovation incubators, business accelerators) and in others as a space promoting inclusive transformation and development through entrepreneurship [13]. In this sense, innovation hubs assist us in examining how digital entrepreneurship and the discourse of inclusion in development intersect, how these two aspects interact and complement one another, and any tensions that may arise.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. We begin by looking at what inclusion as a discourse involves, and highlight current limitations in how structure and long-standing inequalities within inclusion. We then introduce postcolonial approaches to further strengthen the discursive form of inclusion, recasting innovation as discourses within larger patterns of power and uneven development. This theoretical discussion will be supplemented by an empirical study conducted at a technology and innovation hub in Lusaka, Zambia's capital city. Detailed analysis of this innovation hub has already been discussed elsewhere (see [13] [14] [15]). However, in this paper we focus on two specific internal organisational processes of the hub that relate to inclusive/exclusive practices: tensions between global/local dynamics and gender relations.

This analysis sheds light on the challenges that global South organisations supporting digital entrepreneurship face to become inclusive spaces and challenges as they look to help enter Africa into the global entrepreneurship ecosystem. Through our more discursive framework that centres power and uneven relationships, we highlight that tensions around inclusion represent a space by which individuals look to negotiate between powerful global norms and their lives and goals. Studies of inclusion then cannot be seen merely as incorporating people into already existing processes, but need to focus on how actors are challenging the broader structural conditions of power which reproduce uneven relations and reinforce the limitations for inclusion. This is particular brought home in the how organisations supporting digital entrepreneurship and innovation are faced with distinctive challenges where inclusion is something that is desired, yet ultimately limited by the broader contexts of norms, expectations and funding.

2.   Inclusion as a Discourse within processes of uneven development

Inclusion has long been embedded in development processes, including development models relevant to digital entrepreneurship policy and practice. Concepts like inclusive growth [16]; inclusive development [17]; and inclusive innovation [18] [15] provide conceptual approaches to frame how innovation goals and research might align to inclusion and development. Digital entrepreneurship projects have often mirrored such ideas, for example France's Development Agency (AFD) Digital Challenge's which focuses on 'the promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives managed by women and/or men, tackling the challenges of women's inclusion and gender inequalities […]'1 has led to the creation of organisations and initiatives suited to promote inclusion in the global South. Inclusion can be orientated around

---

1 https://vc4a.com/afd/innovation-for-women-in-africa/ [Accessed 13.04.2022]

initiatives that include poor people in the development of a 'participatory' innovative agricultural project [19]; to develop grounded innovation platforms (GRIPs) [20], and more.

Inclusion, both social and economic, is embedded in different ways within the broader framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With the goal to 'leave no one behind', inclusion is predominantly focused on the poorest and most marginalised groups being incorporated into the process of socioeconomic development [21]. Such approaches have been critiqued in that in practice, inclusion in the global South is often rendered as economic [22]. Common ideas of economic inclusion and development often aligns with the 'post-Washington consensus' following neoliberal structural adjustment. The assumption here is that inclusion comes through market reform and improved fiscal policy for countries of the global South to reap benefits from being part of a globalised economy. This inclusionary discourse risks new forms of exclusion or/else adverse incorporation for the marginalised [23].

Overall, in these different conceptualisations, inclusion is often seen as a value-neutral process to solve local problems, which 'overlooks the underlying political, economic dimensions of poverty and exclusion, choosing to treat these instead as essentially local problems...devoid of historical materiality… [and] actively script-out larger historical context.' [24, p. 528]. It is crucial to further augment the inclusion literature with a recognition that inclusion often plays a role as a discourse that embeds assumptions and expectations, and a need to highlight historical aspects as important. This implies recognising tensions between the local context, and ideas around culture with Western discourses and narratives, which are dominant in a globalised world [25]. The next section introduces postcolonial theories as an overarching approach from which to think about inclusion critically.

3.   Postcolonial theories

We focus on postcolonial theory as a perspective to examine how the global dimension and hegemonic Western narrative affects processes of inclusion. Postcolonial theories and approaches examine 'a range of social, cultural, political, ethical and philosophical questions that recognize the salience of the colonial experience and its persisting aftermath.' [26, p. 277]. It stems from the premise that certain practices and discourses from colonial times still have legacies and underlying institutions and assumption prevail, dominating our systems today. This school of thinking has been heavily influenced by poststructuralism, through seminal contributions by Edward W Said, Homi K Bhabha and Gayatri C Spivak, among others [27]. In broad terms it suggests that postcolonial states need to break from neocolonial ties to develop independent thinking and practice.

A key contribution of postcolonial's theory is considering the gap between the 'local' and the 'global', by challenging the notions of 'the centre' and 'the margin' as reproduced in Eurocentric accounts of development [28]. Alternative concepts have been proposed that disrupt such hegemonic narratives that situated certain countries (and types of knowledge) in subordination from others. Concepts like, hybridity [29] are understood as a way to understand knowledge and culture not as universal, but as dynamic, translatable and specific. Within this more plural perspective, one can observe different processes and tactics by which those in colonised positions may adopt the coloniser's cultural and linguistic codes to destabilise power, through actions like translation, mimicry and appropriation.

According to Bhabha [30], for instance, mimicry is a strategy of colonial power and knowledge strategy in which the colonial subject is encouraged to mimic the coloniser by adopting the coloniser's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions, and values. Furthermore, the contribution of postcolonial theory relies on signalling the significance of the global dimension of colonisation, and connecting it to 'the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes' [31, p. 501]. Importantly, it examines the global effect of colonisation and sees globalisation as historically informed, with strong roots in colonial relations. As a result, contemporary societies cannot be analysed and understood without acknowledging colonial legacies [32]. This is of particular relevance when looking at digital entrepreneurship in Africa. Authority is given to 'universal' norms of innovation, managerialist and best practises for entrepreneurship. African entrepreneurs are seen as needing to adopt these as a way to support digital entrepreneurship [7].

Postcolonial approach provides with a roadmap for inclusion because it looks at systemic power in a global scale. It seeks to destabilise the Western dominance and hegemonic viewpoint for alternative perspectives. In this sense, it is constantly challenging perceptions that look at the global South in need to mirror global North. Instead, it centres the needs and perspective from postcolonies, their standpoint and their complexity. Importantly, rather than assuming that an inclusive approach will bring positive benefits, it questions what inclusion means, inclusion of what, for who and for what purposes, as well as what happened that caused the exclusion in the first place.

4.   Approach

Analysis comes from the case study of a technology and innovation hub in the city of Lusaka, capital of Zambia. This hub was founded in 2011 and throughout the years has been transforming and adapting its organisational structure to

adjust to both local conditions as well as external aspects, such as evolving funding and global innovation networks. We describe these changes in relation to different dimensions of inclusion that were experienced by members of the hub. In doing so we are highlighting, in line with postcolonial perspectives, how these different aspects of inclusion are influenced by broader structural inequalities that stem from global South contexts.

Research was undertaken as an interpretivist qualitative case study which followed an ethnographically informed approach by the first author through immersion in the research setting in two different time periods [33] [34]. First in a period of 3 weeks, almost at the beginning of the hub inauguration in 2012, a second time for over a period of three months, 3 years after the launch. Data collection included semi-structured interviews to hub members, hub co-founders, managers and also people outside of the hub that were involved in the Zambian technology ecosystem. Interview questions with hub members followed a flexible structure divided into three main areas: their experiences prior to the hub (what brought them to the hub); the impact of the hub in their lives (careers, personal); and their perception of the hub, the people and the interactions. Some questions for hub co-founders and managers evolved around the strategic challenges faced in structuring the hub, and decision-making. Participant observation was also conducted by visiting the hub on a daily basis and using their workspace, as well as attending the events they organised and events they were invited to. Through participant observation, it was observed that understanding gender dynamics was important. Thus, additional interviews with female participants were focused around gender dynamics and challenges faced at the hub and society at large. Interviews were conducted to understand members' experiences of their work alongside participant observation.

Interviews were supplemented with ethnographic observation of daily practises, events with members, and management meetings, which resulted in the creation of research diaries. Following both visits, a review of online sources to keep up with the hub's activities was conducted. The data was organised and coded in the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo, with a focus on what the respondents perceived to be their experience and their work within the hub. Initially, the data was analysed adopting theoretical lenses based on ideas from innovation, entrepreneurship and gender/intersectionality[2]. Reflection on the categories that emerged from the interviews led to further analysis of the case from a postcolonial perspective, with a specific emphasis on the gender aspects of the case, which was identified as an important element in participant's responses. This stage enabled an iterative process of deepening the analysis and generating additional insights from the data. The names of respondents, as well as the name of the organisation, are kept confidential, and pseudonyms are used instead.

5.   Findings

Findings show different tensions between the need to think globally (mainly related to adopting Western strategies of innovation and looking outside for expertise) with an interest in developing local content and strengthen the community. These tensions resulted in different forms of inclusion and exclusion, which will be detailed next.

Inspired by a proliferation of technology and innovation hubs in other parts of Africa, the innovation hub was founded in 2011. The founders were technologists turned entrepreneurs who wanted to provide a space for people interested in innovation to connect and work. Initially it was based next to a Belgian NGO, who offered funding, space, free internet and some computers. And so it often gathered young people, the majority of them with strong interest in technology but insufficient training. Throughout the years the hub has functioned as a coworking space for entrepreneurs and innovators to connect, collaborate and work on their projects to turn them into reality [35]. Hub membership was free and diverse, with young people interested in learning skills like programming, editing, as well as entrepreneurial skills.

The hub has strongly focused on developing local talent and contributing to the local ecosystem over the years. They set up a team within the hub to teach members programming and coding through workshops. As part of this training led by local experts, members of the hub have developed a number of projects focused on local content, including an app to translate local languages, an app containing the main tenets of the Zambian constitution, an online shopping platform, and more. This shows evidence that from inception there was a strong desire to promote local knowledge and become independent from external sources. The following presents different dimensions that created challenges for inclusion within the hub.

5.1.   Funders vs local ambitions

Significant tensions were experienced due to the way that external discourses around entrepreneurship, often shaped by Silicon Valley rhetoric, led to internal changes within the hub. This change had an impact on who was included as a member, as well as how members felt included in the hub (see [15]). For example, the hub relied predominantly in funding from international development organisations, which is a common trend for hubs in Africa [36]. These

---

[2] Data analysis was initially undertaken as part of the first authors PhD based on these frameworks.

international organisations had specific expectations for the hub around scaling startups rapidly. This led to tensions between how to fulfil the funders expectations against internal goals related to capacity building and developing local content. In this context, the hub adopted a series of strategies to negotiate the fit between the local agendas and a logic of business and international development.

In some of these strategies, we see a strong need to align with Western model of organisation and development [37]. For example, several hub members referred to the work being done at the hub as a means of assisting Zambia "catching up with the rest of the world" in terms of technology, entrepreneurship and development. Designing/working with technology and development are both considered to be interconnected:

> "and it does give a good name for our country as a whole, and it just helps us compete on a global level so I think that besides making money we push ourselves for our technology and our development." (Charlotte).

In this endeavour, the hub would provide training for those seeking to pioneer in emerging technologies (e.g. robotics, programming), thinking that there would be a future market and investment for these. In some cases this became a reality, but despite many efforts to improve their readiness for new technologies, investment was slow to arrive. As one of the management members explained:

> "So first of all, the most common thing that is always been the, like a problem for ever, is access to capital. And we looked at that in the beginning I never thought it was going to take a while to sort that out." (Timothy)

This situation – between training for the future technology and a general lack of investment –resonates with what others have identified in other African contexts [5] [6] [7]. Access to capital is a significant challenge, yet many hubs are following Silicon Valley rhetoric of looking to market pioneering tech to drive investment, only to discover a very different reality [7]. Moreover, even where there has been such investment in Africa, data is showing that these are often obtained by international and white funder-led startups, many of them with less engagement on the ground [38] [39].

Another strategy of the hub was promoting risk-taking and failure as natural parts of entrepreneurship, a very common discourse in the Silicon Valley culture [46]. A member explained that in Zambia, most have been educated to seek safe employment opportunities and not take risks. As explained by one member

> " In [University], if you're in the sciences classes, in exams for example, if you get a question wrong, they deduct marks. If you get it right, you get extra marks, if you don't try, you just get zero. So you're already being told that you'll be penalized for trying if you get it wrong. And by the time you are graduating, you're already feeling like 'mmm, let me take the safe option, because it's guaranteed. If I lose, I just get zero. But I'm not going to take any risks" (Mariani).

To change the idea of risk taking as problematic, they'd invite successful entrepreneurs from other parts of the world to share their stories. In one of these cases, they invited a white South African to speak about her successful business. She discussed her experiences working diligently and being extremely disciplined, as well as how this contributed to her success. During conversations with several hub members after the talk, it was noted that they reflected on how her experience was significantly different from their own, partly due to positionality and context (Research diary).

Such tensions had to be negotiated. In some cases the hub looked adapt their organisation. For example, they diversified some of their events, moving away from entrepreneurship 'capacity building' and knowledge towards more diverse workshops. Such workshops might look to better connect with more relevant entrepreneurship directions for hub members, such as hair treatment and fashion, even though they were a technology and innovation hub. In other cases, however, the tension between what the funders wanted and what the hub thought was relevant resulted in a stronger alignment with the funders' interests.

Following postcolonial thinking, their lack of autonomy also resulted in aspects of translation and mimicry. The discourse began to shift from a strong emphasis on capacity building for aspiring technologists and entrepreneurs to predominantly startup development, which had an impact on the hub's membership demographics [14].

5.2. Gender inclusion

One of the aspects where the hub had a strong focus was on gender inclusion. Since its inception, the hub has hosted a female-led organisation that aims to empower and encourage more women to work in technology. This network defined itself as seeking to increase the meaningful participation of women and girls in technology, providing free training in ICT skills, exposure to emerging technologies, mentorship, networking and career progression opportunities. They targeted three different groups: girls in high school, in college and young professionals.

As a result of the trainings and workshops a significant number of women and girls learned digital skills, including coding languages like PHP, website design and robotics. Several of them also developed mobile applications targeting a female audience (e.g. a mobile application for women's rights, a group of women developing gaming applications, etc). They also made training videos to discuss women's issues and organised workshops before bigger events to target specifically women. Not only did they organise IT related events and work, but through the women's network a number of events were held at the hub that included sectors characterised by more gender-balanced or female dominated, like fashion events and events for natural hair.

Given the broader societal challenges in Zambia, co-founders of the network considered that often women who wanted to learn digital skills did not have the financial resources. To be as inclusive as possible, their organisation applied for grants to provide their services for free. This allowed them to visit a wide range of schools, both in rural and urban areas, where they provided training for younger girls as well as talks to encourage them to study digital related fields. During their visits to rural areas, members of the network became aware of the significant differences between Lusaka and the rest of the country. As described by one of the network's co-founders:

> "And then in November we had a chance to go to Soezzi and to Kitwe, and for me I think that was the biggest reality check that I've had recently. [...] I'm more aware of the economic differences and what's actually going on. And even when you look at the statistics, about 40-45% of Zambian women are getting married under the age of 13, it's hard to believe that when you're in Lusaka and you're interacting with people your age who are not yet married or who are getting married by choice. But then when you get outside of Lusaka, is a completely different story." (Mariani).

Interviews with the network co-founders led to interesting insights around gender inclusion. They recognise the gender imbalance around technology and were focused on improving that. They experienced dilemmas around how to achieve this in a way that would be both effective and as inclusive as possible. Their approach considered that training women and girls needed to go alongside working to improve the technology ecosystem. As explained by one of them:

> "And if the tech ecosystem is working for guys, then it means that it's going to start working for the girls as well, and start working for everyone." (Mariani)

These distinctions influenced how they perceived the hub as an inclusive or exclusive organisation. According to Jack and Avle [11], how people perceive their own sense of marginality, privilege, and inclusion is critical to how they live out the geopolitics of technology in their daily lives. In this case, those who identified as being raised in the capital spoke about the hub as an inclusive organisation, which welcomed them and allowed them to do their work in equal terms in comparison to male counterparts. However, those who identified as coming from rural areas often described the hub as a predominantly male-centred organisation, where they did not feel always included [15].

The experience of this network demonstrates an attempt from the hub to emphasise on a gender inclusive approach, with many benefits. There was a tension here between wanting to address gender imbalances and support the technology sector in Zambia. This occasionally caused frictions, as some female members felt excluded, while more active members interpreted a lack of attendance as a lack of interest in the work. Some respondents attributed a lower number of female members to individual's responsibility, rather than structural factors. When asked about the lack of female attendance, some of the more active female members responded that girls "are not interested in that sort of thing" (Vicky) and "obviously they didn't see how important it was" (Rouse).

Even though the hub adopted a gender inclusion approach (by providing the space, training and support to the women's network), there were still challenges experienced by some. Here we can also see what Rõnnblom [40] describes as the process of inclusion focused on targets, where gender inclusion translates into women becoming objects of inclusion. This is informed in many ways by the way Western discourses around inclusion, which neglects wider structural inequalities, and instead speaks of inclusion as a problem that is mostly in the hands of the individuals. Here we can see what Ahmed [41] describes as a 'happy diversity model' whereby the hub, by hosting the network of women and visibly having more women as members provided a positive image of the organisation, consequently allowing inequalities to be 'concealed and thus reproduced' (p. 72). This process of inclusion did not recognise the complexity of the female members, and thus did not see the differences between them.

From a postcolonial lenses, this raises the issue with the hybridity as a way of obscuring uneven power relations. Findings show that a group of female members experienced a privileged position in comparison to others. This privileged position was not shared by all women, even though the hub adopted an inclusive approach to gender.

6.   Discussion

Our analysis of this innovation hub led us to understand that it has been operating within a complex set of relationships, discourses and funding mechanisms that lead to multiple forms of inclusion/exclusion at different levels: within tensions between broader global discourses and funding practices; and within internal gender relations and dynamics. These, we argue, are often shaped by broader aspects of inequality found in society due to various structures of power that continue until today [11].

Inclusion and exclusion processes are heavily influenced by social and historical forces dimensions [42]. Although digital entrepreneurship in Africa is proposed to be beneficial for inclusion, there are many challenges faced. Findings revealed that different aspects affected how inclusive the hub was at different points in time. Following postcolonial thinking, there is a distinction between broader global dimensions, characterised by funders' interests, which influenced how the hub moved to become more for startup development. As mentioned previously, throughout the creation of the hub there has been a tension between a need to think globally and get external sources of funding, and the desire to develop local content, improve people's skills from both rural and urban areas.

We also distinguish broader cultural structures, which influenced inclusion in relation to intersectional dimensions. More specifically, wider gender and class structures in Zambian society, influenced who felt included within the hub. Sometimes these tensions resulted in successful innovations, with the development of successful mobile applications regarding local content, like the local languages app and the Zambian constitution app. In other situations, these tensions revealed further practices of exclusion. For example, having to adapt to the expectations of the Western funding organisations.

Overall, the process of inclusion within the hub reflected the broader context and structures of disadvantage in society. For example, the logic of inclusion around gender involved providing a space for women, training and also developing grants with a gender approach. Furthermore, the hub initially adopted an inclusive approach by providing a free space and offering free training to anyone who wanted to attend. With donor funding, it changed its strategy to only consider working with those who create startups and can develop innovations, placing Zambia in the global discourse of innovation. The focus on local content was still relevant, however, it became more of an expert-based, income specific target.

Even though most literature on inclusion within organisations are informed by including people by adopting managerial strategies and promoting a logic of economic growth, what inclusion means in innovation hubs is influenced by existing power structures that position them as dependent on external funding and support. This then reveals the need to adopt a theoretical framework that deconstructs those wider dimensions affecting the way organisations are framed [28]. In other words, what happens in a hub demonstrates that inclusion should consider structural and historical dimensions that recognise exclusion is not entirely the result of individual action, but of centuries of inequalities becoming institutionalised [31].

In this sense, the innovation hub organisation is part of a global discourse of innovation, where members look outside their boundaries to learn, implement ideas and get inspired. Often these are coming from the West because historically, innovation and technology are fields that have been developed in the West mostly, the South being recipients of said dispositives [43].

7.   Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to explore inclusion from a discursive perspective in organisations supporting digital entrepreneurship and innovation in the global South. It follows scholars who challenge the analysis of southern empirical phenomena based on the assumption of transferring ideas and models from the 'developed' countries to Southern ones [5]. Furthermore, it is also based on the assumption that countries in the South are lagging behind but are certainly following the same trajectory of modernisation [44]. These assumptions orientate the various ways in which uneven power relations are impacting forms of inclusion in Southern organisations such as the innovation hub discussed.

Inclusion in organisations is embedded in a wider social, historical and organisational context, resulting in multiple social categories in which individuals are positioned. What form inclusion takes then is not devoid of those wider structures which shape the day to day of an organisation. In this sense, in inclusion sometimes we focus on one specific category, thinking we are moving forward/progressing in making organisations more inclusive. Yet inclusion is a complex process with multiple meanings, that individuals, groups and organisations need to negotiate. Often development organisations have crudely though of inclusion in terms of numbers or specific processes. While this may provide a degree of inclusion, with positive benefits it rarely thinks more broadly about these terrains of inclusion. Structural inclusion is about dealing with the wider dimensions society faces, because they do not stop when you enter the workspace of the organisation [45].

This paper makes two important contributions. It studies the emerging phenomena of digital entrepreneurship and innovation and the growing role of inclusion in these processes. It develops theoretical considerations on inclusion through adopting postcolonial theory, to show the existing challenges around inclusion in digital entrepreneurship and

innovation in the global South. In this sense, we argue that if inclusion is detached from a recognition of power and inequality, then it loses its power to be a transformational process and instead becomes a managerial tool [41].

Organisations supporting digital entrepreneurship and innovation are springing up all over the world, with a great number of these just in the African continent, where the discourse is it will help address inclusion challenges. As Friederici et al. [5] state 'As misguided as Silicon Valley comparisons may be, people and enterprises across Africa are forced to engage with them'. We agree with this view, but we further argue that this engagement can help to focus on how much of the challenges digital entrepreneurship faces in Africa are from global forces of inequality, as a result of colonial histories. Such discussions should be at the centre or funding applications, policy recommendations and practice that place emphasis on inclusion agendas.

Rather than assuming digital entrepreneurship in Africa will provide a level-playing field in the global digital entrepreneurship scenario, we could consider how it may continue to amplify existing inequalities and the global North/South divide. Our contribution lies in exploring organisations supporting digital entrepreneurship and innovation and expanding theoretical implications of inclusion in the global South, and showing how inclusion in the global South should consider global dimensions. Inclusion, we argue, is contextual, embedded in context, and related to how people perceive themselves. It is, however, influenced by larger historical and geopolitical dimensions. This implies that we must approach inclusion holistically, viewing it as a discursive practise rather than an outcome of digital entrepreneurship.

8.   References

[1] Mutua, W.; Mbwana, A. (2012). Innovative Africa: The New Face of Africa, Essays on the Rise of Africa's Innovation Age. (N. Sambuli (ed.); Afrinnovator).

[2] Nambisan S. (2017). Digital Entrepreneurship: Toward a Digital Technology Perspective of Entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. 41(6):1029-1055.

[3] Shen, K. N., Lindsay, V., & Xu, Y. (2018). Digital entrepreneurship. *Information Systems Journal*, 28(6), 1125–1128.

[4] Davidson, E., & Vaast, E. (2010). Digital entrepreneurship and its sociomaterial enactment. Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, June. https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2010.150

[5] Friederici, N., Wahome, M., & Graham, M. (2020). Digital Entrepreneurship in Africa: How a Continent is Escaping Silicon Valley's Long Shadow. MIT Press.

[6] Ndemo, B., & Weiss, T. (2017). Digital Kenya: An Entrepreneurial Revolution in the Making. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

[7] Pollio, A. (2022) Acceleration, development and technocapitalism at the Silicon Cape of Africa. *Economy and Society*, 51(1), 46-70.

[8] World Bank (2014). Enhancing Access to Finance for Technology Entrepreneurs in Southern Africa. Washington, DC. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/21073

[9] Masiero, S., & Ravishankar, M. N. (2019). Exploring Hybridity in Digital Social Entrepreneurship. IFIP Advances in Information and Communication Technology, 551, 295–306.

[10] Paxling, L. (2019). Exploring technology design among mobile entrepreneurs in Kampala: An open space workshop. *E J Info Sys Dev Countries*. 86(2), 1-11.

[11] Jack, M., and Avle, S. (2021). A Feminist Geopolitics of Technology. *Global Perspectives* 2 (1). 1-18.

[12] Trauth, E., Joshi, K. D., & Yarger, L. K. (2018). ISJ Editorial. *Information Systems Journal*, 28(6), 989–994.

[13] Jimenez, A., & Zheng, Y. (2017). Tech hubs, innovation and development. *Information Technology for Development*, 24(1), 95-118.

[14] Jimenez, A. & Zheng, Y (2021). Unpacking the multiple spaces of innovation hubs. *The Information Society*, 37(3), 163-176.

[15] Jimenez, A. (2019) Inclusive Innovation from the lenses of Situated Agency and Intersectionality: Insights from Innovation Hubs in the UK and Zambia. *Innovation and Development*. 9(1), 41-64.

[16] George, G., McGahan, A. M., & Prabhu, J. (2012). Innovation for Inclusive Growth: Towards a Theoretical Framework and a Research Agenda. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(4), 661–683.

[17] Gupta, J., Pouw, N. R. M., & Ros-Tonen, M. A. F. (2015). Towards an Elaborated Theory of Inclusive Development. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 27(4), 541–559.

[18] Foster, C., & Heeks, R. (2013). Conceptualising Inclusive Innovation: Modifying Systems of Innovation Frameworks to Understand Diffusion of New Technology to Low-Income Consumers. European Journal of Development Research, 25(3), 333–355.

[19] Swaans, K., Boogaard, B., Bendapudi, R., Taye, H., Hendrickx, S., & Klerkx, L. (2014). Operationalizing inclusive innovation: lessons from innovation platforms in livestock value chains in India and Mozambique. *Innovation and Development*, 4(2), 239–257.

[20] Refsgaard, K., Bryden, J., & Kvakkestad, V. (2017). Towards inclusive innovation praxis in forest-based bioenergy. *Innovation and Development*, 7(1), 153–173.

[21] Armstrong, D., Armstrong, A. C., & Spandagou, I. (2011). Inclusion: by choice or by chance? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(1), 29–39.

[22] Cookson, T. P. (2016). Working for Inclusion? Conditional Cash Transfers, Rural Women, and the Reproduction of Inequality. *Antipode*, 48(5), 1187–1205.

[23] Hickey, S., & Toit, A. du. (2013). Adverse Incorporation, Social Exclusion, and Chronic Poverty. *Chronic Poverty*, 134–159.

[24] Scheba, A., & Scheba, S. (2017). REDD+ as 'inclusive' neoliberal conservation: the case of Lindi, Tanzania. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 11(3), 526–548

[25] Mignolo, W., & Walsh, C. (2018). On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis. Duke University Press.

[26] Jack, G., Westwood, R., Srinivas, N., & Sardar, Z. (2011). Deepening, broadening and re-asserting a postcolonial interrogative space in organization studies. *Organization*, 18(3), 275–302.

[27] Bhambra, G. K. (2014). Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial Studies*, 17(2), 115–121.

[28] Mohanty, C. T. (2003). "Under western eyes" revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles. Signs: *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(2), 499 –535.

[29] Bhabha, H. K. (2012). The location of culture. In The Location of Culture (2nd Edition). Taylor and Francis.

[30] Bhabha, H. K. (2021). Of Mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse. In Literary Theory and Criticism. Routledge India.

[31] Ponzanesi, S. (2004). Touchstones. In Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora. State University of New York Press.

[32] Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 168–178.

[33] Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and Participant Observation. Handbook of Qualitative Research, 1(23), 248–261.

[34] Myers, M. D., & Newman, M. (2007). The qualitative interview in IS research: Examining the craft. *Information and Organization*, 17(1), 2–26.

[35] Gathege, D., & Moraa, H. (2013). Draft Report On Comparative Study On Innovation Hubs Across Africa (Issue May).

[36] Friederici, N. (2019). Innovation Hubs in Africa: What Do They Really Do for Digital Entrepreneurs? In N. Taura, E. Bolat, & N. Madichie (Eds.), Digital Entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa (pp. 9–28). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham

[37] Rafi Khan, F., Westwood, R., & Boje, D. M. (2010). "I feel like a foreign agent": NGOs and corporate social responsibility interventions into Third World child labor. *Human Relations*, 63(9), 1417–1438.

[38] Briter Bridges (2021). Africa Investment Report. In https://briterbridges.com/reports [Accessed 14.04.2022].

[39] Musse, E. R. (2019). UN-SILICON VALLEY: Lessons on Entrepreneurship, Diversity, and the Movement to Build an Alternative Startup Paradigm. Off Path Ventures LLC.

[40] Rõnnblom, M. (2009). Bending towards growth: discursive constructions of gender equality in an era of governance and neoliberalism. In The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending and Policymaking (pp. 105–120). Routledge.

[41] Ahmed, S. (2012). On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life. Dure Press.

[42] Cornell, S., & Hartmann, D. (2007). Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World (2nd editio). Sage Publishing.

[43] Jimenez A & Roberts T. (2019) Decolonising Neo-Liberal Innovation: Using the Andean Philosophy of 'Buen Vivir' to Reimagine Innovation Hubs, IFIP Advances in Information and Communication Technology (pp. 180-191). Springer International Publishing.

[44] Alcadipani, R., Khan, F. R., Gantman, E., & Nkomo, S. (2012). Southern voices in management and organization knowledge. Organization, 19(2), 131–143.

[45] Carrim, N. M. H., & Nkomo, S. M. (2016). Wedding Intersectionality Theory and Identity Work in Organizations: South African Indian Women Negotiating Managerial Identity. Gender, Work & Organization, 23(3), 261–277.

[46] Cook, K. (2020). The psychology of Silicon Valley: Ethical threats and emotional unintelligence in the tech industry (p. 314). Springer Nature.