Working Together (Virtually) as a Research Team to Develop an Indigenous Paradigmatic Approach to Co-Explore (in-Person) with Participants their Mobilization against Irresponsible Practices of Foreign-Owned Companies in Nwoya District, Uganda

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Some key considerations guiding this presentation

- What was the topic (as detailed in our article)?

- Why did we select this topic? Why was it of concern?

- How did we cater for the community benefitting from the research process, as well as wider audiences?

For detail see: Adyanga, F.A., & Romm, N.R.A. (2022) Reflections upon our way of invoking an indigenous paradigm to co-explore community mobilization against irresponsible practices of foreign-owned companies in Nwoya District, Uganda. *The Qualitative Report*, 27, 7: Art. 13

Topic of concern for participants

Background:

- At a virtual conference (*Society for the Advancement of Science in Africa - SASA*) Francis mentioned in passing to Norma that he had met members of a particular community in Northern Uganda who expressed grave concern about the destructive consequences of irresponsible foreign business practices.

- They indicated to him they had managed to organize some collective action in this regard. And that their collective action had yielded some positive outcome.

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An Indigenous paradigm (why this paradigm?)

- The need to organize research *with participants around an issue of concern.*

- We realized that we could suggest to community members that we could offer our research skills to facilitate focus group (FG) sessions in various surrounding villages.

- The aim of the FG sessions was to create a platform where participants could share their experiences resisting social and environmental injustices exacted on their communities

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Purpose of the research (conceived through Francis's initial contact)

- Via email messages, we considered that the purpose of the research (to be mooted with potential participants) would be to generate discussion in regard to how they considered they had built up a community protest against the operations of two enterprises who had been operational in the community.

- This would be an opportunity for them to consider how they had worked towards collective action, and to learn lessons for themselves and others about what this involved (as reflected upon during the dialogues). Upon securing their agreement (40 participants) Norma and Francis designed questions to stimulate FG discussion.

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Consent

- We decided (via email) that consent could be **oral,** given that most of the people in the community had not undergone formal education and may not be able to write. (We had prepared a written consent form but did not produce this for participants.)

- Our suggested purpose of the research and the ethical issues in the "consent form" were orally explained. Francis indicated that if someone who volunteered to attend a FG session decided **not** to attend the session as arranged, he would appreciate it if they would give some notice of this, so that another participant could be sought in their place. (All were keen to join.)

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Respect for Indigenous epistemology

- According to an Indigenous paradigm, professional researchers with others must recognize that knowing is a process of people (with professional researchers as part of the process) defining "realities" together – also in terms of import for action leading to increased wellbeing.

- Professional researchers are part of the web of relations (human and more-than-human) and are accountable to trying to ensure that their involvement will lead to increased overall wellbeing .

- The participants (during the FG meetings) strengthened their understanding of the way in which the foreign enterprises had operated non-relationally having been invited into the community, They offered many insights that expressed a relational perspective.

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Indigenous Knowledge Systems and ways of knowing

- African Indigenous approaches to science/research do not separate out different domains of existence – knowing is seen in relation to "good" ways of living, where people's connectivity to one another and to "all that exists" is stressed (Chilisa, 2020, p. 24). A pragmatic (and dialogical) approach to knowing.

(For a discussion of African roots of democracy see Bernal (2006).)

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Ndlovu-Gatsheni : a caring economy concerned with people and planet (2020).

Focus in conventional economics: business is designed for creating profit (a profit-oriented economy)

The Ugandan participants managed (after much struggle) to bring into the arena the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) – the FG members discussed the importance of this. (They had also involved the local radio.)

Altogether their actions meant the offensive factory operations were shut down and another enterprise was forced to create a borehole for clean water.)

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Some expressions of relational existence

Now I know that if care is not exercised and investors are allowed in the community without proper laws guiding them, they end up abusing the community generosity. They should be accountable to the people and their waters, trees, land, soil, religion and culture. (female participant) .

"You see everything you find in our society living or nonliving depends on each other to able to regenerate. So, when the Indians pour waste into the river, they are disrupting the web of life". (male participant) [the factory was Indian-owned]

... you see in our culture everything is treated with respect, you treat the rivers with respect because that is the source of life to humans, animals, plants, trees and future generation, you treat women with respect and you don't use young ladies or take advantage of them because of jobs –

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One of the participants said (when we asked what other people/audiences can learn from their collective reflections about protesting against injustice):

They can learn that injustice exists in all society and that is becoming normal since there are people who normalize the injustices. They should know that there are challenges when confronting injustices, but they must not be discouraged by the challenge. No challenge is greater than the power of the oppressed poor who have come together …

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Practitioner theorizing

This wisdom of this participant (speaking on behalf of others too) springs from what could be called "practitioner" theorizing (Wulff & St. George, 2020, p. 69). This person (a woman) was expressing the idea that injustice seems normal (in today's societies) . But she insisted that it is not and that (collective) action against it is possible. After she spoke there was clapping and people re-iterating that "Yes this is true."

Conclusively, we tried to ensure that our reporting would resonate with what the participants expressed was important for us to emphasize and important to share with different audiences globally. It was in the interest of participants that their perspectives reigns supreme in reporting deliberations from the FG sessions.

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