

# What does an (South) African economics look like?

Seán Mfundza Muller, School of Economics, University of Johannesburg

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# Five dimensions of decolonisation in relation to curricula

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# Fundamental issues raised by 'decolonisation' for curricula

## CONTENT



Minimum wage example

Historical origins of modern problems (slavery, colonialism, apartheid)

Racial discrimination in the job market

Etc.

## FRAMING



How do we interpret African countries' low GDP/capita?

Recipient of min wage as isolated individual?

Slavery and colonialism as fair/beneficial??

[Beware: content alone is not enough]

## CONTEXTUALISATION



Is unemployment discussed without considering migrant labour system?

I.e. are local factors and perspectives reflected in theory and empirical work?

## RELEVANCE



Does this help students understand their world(s)?

Is it relevant to current affairs *and* our country's history?

[And: are we okay with students going into real institutions with this foundation?]

## ACCESS(IBILITY)



Demographic composition of faculty

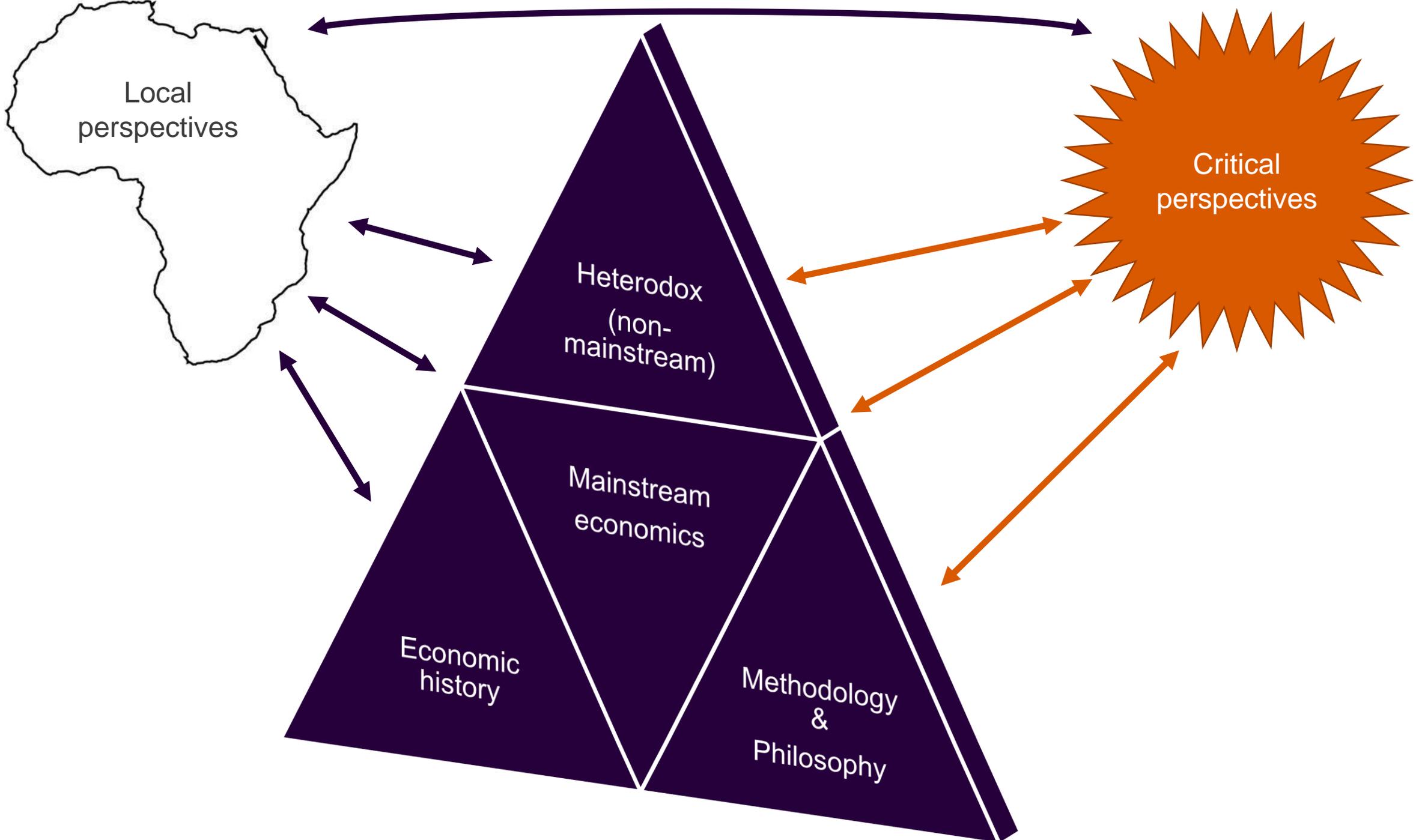
Pedagogical approaches

[All 4 other factors contribute to this]



# Sketch of an ideal curriculum (and what it is not)

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# The realities of (South) African economics

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# Confronting the harsh realities of the 'local academy'

- Awkward reality: majority of South African and African economists not well-placed to produce or deliver this kind of curriculum. Problems/limitations:
  - **Curriculum:** macroeconomics, microeconomics mostly imitative of 'Western neoclassical' curriculum but *more* conservative/homogenous
  - **Composition of faculty:** demographics not representative but *ideological outlook* and quality of training (e.g quantitative methods) is also a problem
  - **Research:** the gulf between RSA and the 'core' (Luiz, 2003, 2009; Yu, Kasongo&Moses, 2017)



# Envisioning feasible decolonization

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# Where to from here...?

## 1. Understand what it is we're doing

- Engage with calls for decolonisation and interpret for our discipline [this paper's objective]

## 2. Reach some consensus on an ideal alternative curriculum

- The broader the consensus the better, but shouldn't be limited by this...

## 3. Consider constraints and identify feasible changes that can be made: I suggest that certain topics and references can be added quite easily

- Will vary across institutions and level of study
- Necessarily involves staged approach, which shouldn't be mistaken for/mixed with efforts to engage in window dressing ('maintain the status quo')

*Note: changing disciplinary content and orientation will take generations...no shortcuts!*



# Most economics students never see this

- Anyone know who this is? Guesses??
- Sir Arthur Lewis, joint winner of 1979 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics... for work on development and growth
- First black winner of economics Nobel, from St Lucia in the Caribbean



**Questions, comments, suggestions welcome!**

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seanm@uj.ac.za



