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| Title of the abstract | NESs promoting a just transition |
| Conference session  | □ Stream A. Responsive National Evaluation Systems **X□ Stream B. Inclusive National Evaluation Systems**□ Stream C. Future Driven Systems and Approaches  |
| Name(s), title(s) and institutional affiliation(s) of all other authors/contributors (if applicable) | Thokozile Molaiwa, Chief Director, Evaluation, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South AfricaEdoe Djimitri Agbodjan, Director, CLEAR Francophone Africa |
| Preferred format:  | **X□ Formal presentation (maximum 10 minutes)**□ Participation in a panel discussion where the experience can be shared□ Participation in an interactive session where the example can be shared, without a formal presentation□ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  |
| I will need to apply for bursary support, if selected. | □ **Yes** □ No |
| Language to be used for presentation | □ **English** □ French □ Spanish □ Chinese |

**NEC Abstract Text (max. 500 words)**

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| **Background**The world is facing increasing crises as a result of unsustainable economic systems, with wealth accumulating in the hands of the few, and declining health of the planet. The 2023/24 Human Development Report highlights uneven development progress and intensified inequality. Evaluation has the potential for a significant role in learning from the past and helping to guide a regenerative future, but for this, the approach to evaluation must take on decolonised and more holistic approaches to society and the planet, which address issues of power. The ‘patterns of organization of machine-based and ecology-based systems’, are offered as ways of framing a decolonised approach to evaluation. Contemporary neo-colonial, functionalist bureaucratic systems have characteristics of machine-based systems, e.g. hierarchical structures with top-down control; layers of nested hierarchical units, relatively closed boundaries, grounding in rules focused on homogeneity, a stabilising resilience, predictability, linearity, and control. Ecological systems present a transformative perspective and offers in terms of structure: the principles or organising are distributed controls; a nested web-like network; flexible, relatively open boundaries; emergence of complex features; self-organising with context (Parsons & Winters 2023: 30). Agility will be needed in responding to emerging social-ecological crises. **Objectives of the presentation**To share examples of African national evaluation systems (NESs) from South Africa and Benin, how they struggle to moving away from machine-based bureaucracy to apply elements of a decolonised social-ecological models, and how to strengthen them to improve just transition outcomes. This will draw on an existing paper and work being led by the International Evaluation Academy to explore these issues and apply them, initially in an African context.**Conclusions**State-led national evaluation systems currently operate within a hybridity of colonial and post-colonial systems, with structures, norms and standards that lean towards machine-based modalities, while being affected by group norms which may subvert routine functioning. This is to be understood, owing to the significant influence of colonial systems on the countries in these case-studies, and most others across the African continent, as well as the weakness of many government institutions.The weak inclusion of citizens in government evaluations is an area that creates a leaning towards machine-based systems, where citizens are barely considered in any bureaucratic affairs, and to predefined outcomes set by outsiders, rather than those perceived and desired by those affected by interventions. The system balances between the rule-focused, machine-based systems, and more open, ecology-based systems. The balancing of these institution-shaping paradigms is one of the most important concerns for national evaluation systems today.We argue for: (1) allowing NESs to break from historical forms of bureaucratic functioning; (2) developing a systems-based approach as the basis for new thinking around NESs, strengthening their ecological aspects; (3) embracing the learning approaches we see in both countries; (4) embracing principles of participatory democracy and co-production by strengthening the voice of non-state actors, particularly citizens, in the formation and running of NESs, as well as increasing the power of communities/users affected in individual evaluations. |