Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Colonialism = The extension of a nation-state’s sovereignty over territory beyond its borders through the creation of either settler colonies or administrative dependencies, in which indigenous populations are ruled directly or displaced.

Discourse = Social practices through which the world is made meaningful and intelligible, including narratives, concepts, ideologies, and signifying practices.

Hybridity = One of the most disputed terms in postcolonial studies. In relation to postcolonialism, it can be defined as the creation of new transcultural forms (cultural, political, and linguistic) within zones of contact produced by colonialism.

Neocolonialism = New forms of economic and political control, in contrast to direct rule, of the powerful states of developed economies over the former colonies, which appear to be independent but in reality are not.

Orientalism = Western constructions of the East as an opposite, working ideologically through a series of binary oppositions and underpinning imperialism.

Othering = A way of defining and securing one’s own positive identity through the stigmatization of an other; the self-identity of the colonizer and its culture is defined as superior through the identification of an inferior, opposite, colonized other.

Colonialism

‘The physical occupation of one place by peoples associated with another place. Colonialism involves not just the removal of resources and wealth from the new land, but actually occupying the territory, building settlements, and often also agriculture, and industry’ (Sharp, 2009: 3).

Materiality of colonialism is grounded in dispossessions and repossessions of land (Harris, 2004: 167) – the actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about (Said, 1994: 78)

- complexity is dispossessions and repossessions – required geographic and cartographic knowledge
  - George Grey, geographer, used cartography to plot homesteads of all Swazi royalties and chiefs and drew reserves around them to minimise backlash (Crush, 1994)
  - British Colombia represented 1500 small reservations = 0.3% of land (Wolfe, 1999)
- The power to dispose
    - Sets the theatrical stage – all a performance prior to colonisation – colonialism as prewritten and prescripted prior to performance – fantastical projection of an autonomous will to power (Barnett, 2006)
    - Orientalism as discourse that stages its own performance – latent to manifest
  - Violence – ostentatious displays and military action
  - Imperial state – created framework for the ordered development of a settler society
  - Culture – assumptions about the colonized other, creation of binaries constructed an altruistic vision of help – old pervasive ideas of labour and value of land (Locke, 1690 Labour Land Theory) – only acquired value as labour was expended on it, nature had no value [even more pronounced with industrial revolution]
    - ‘White man’s burden’ (Kipling, 1899)
    - Doctrine of terra nullius’, which held that lands occupied by backward people were essentially vacant (Clark, 1999).
  - Technology/space-time compression: Travel times to British Columbia were 6-7 months from London (1830) and 3 weeks (1890), messages 3 days

Assumptions
- Temporality
  - Popular assumption focuses on colonial institutions and colonialists as constituted in a faraway past
  - Colonies still exist – e.g. Britain and France still have scattered territories, such as Bermuda
  - Neo-colonialism – the exploitative relations that characterised colonialism are still; France and Britain and its former colonies (e.g. the Francophone states & the Commonwealth countries) Many people argue that most of the states that are supposed to be post-colonialism are actually neo-colonialism, as the exploitative nature is enduring
  - francophone states meet one a year and are guided or politically advised by France
- Spatiality
  - Another popular assumption is that colonialism occurs in ‘distant places’ - marginal to the metropole - in Africa, Latin America and Asia
  - Assumption of distinct self-contained communities;
  - Ignores internal colonialism – Ireland (the first colony); northern territories of Canada
  - We tend to see colonisation as ‘over there’, we live in spatially contained places and should not impact us – common assumption
- there are a lot of connection still e.g. Migration
- ignores internal colonialism e.g. Ireland (the first colony) – scotland and wales, far closer to home

- Variability
  - Popular view of colonialism as singular in form. However, there are multiple colonialisms:
    - Formal colonies
    - Breakaway settler colonialism
    - Those subject to imperial power but not formal colonies e.g. Diego Garcia

Colonialism – Present forms

De-colonisation of previously European colonies can clearly be seen following WWII (powerful position of US regarding debt) – planning the ‘post-war map of the world’, now from a central power rather than a race

- Dissolving empires was encouraged by the US as a tactic to open up the Third World to trade and exploitation through the market rather than politics (Godlewska and Smith, 1994)
- US geographers heavily involved in creating this geographically displaced form of empire – Pax Americana organised around economic control
- Bowman and Stettinius in constructing a global arrangement that would make Pax Americana a reality – central power to deal with inter war period, demolition of important aspects of trade relations (Smith, 1994)
    - Bowman argued that ‘an impoverished Europe will fight desperately for trade outlets... it would be almost as disastrous to have a complete trade invasion as to have armed invasion’ – Armed Colonialist invasion now similar to trade invasion
    - Post-war Atlantic Charter – ‘the minor children among the peoples of the war would be placed under trusteeship of adult nation to further their advancement and back into the spirit of good conduct
      - Dependent nations – ‘small peoples are onlookers in a world struggle, their place in the world will be secondary ‘(Bowman, 1942)
      - Colonialism became intensely political post war – US had to keep Britain happy as was necessary for Pax Americana and control Soviet propaganda in trusteeed areas
- Economic colonialism – ‘fruition of American empire after 1945 represented a very different experience’ (Godlewska and Smith, 1994: 268) – declines after 1970 with economic challenge from Germany and Japan

Complexity of colonialism – presents itself in many forms and varieties of ‘internal colonialism’ – Wales, Tibet or even US