

Struggles, strategies and analysis of anticolonial and postcolonial social movements

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As a political idea and a philosophical concept, postcolonialism has gained some level of popularity, particularly in academic circles. However, many grassroots activists and social movements from countries with colonial histories have not incorporated the concept in their vocabulary or political toolbox. Yet besides the knowledge and analysis that they are producing in their own struggles, activists in some of these movements are paying renewed attention to the ideas of anti-colonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral, whose work calls into question the conceptual accuracy and appropriateness of the terms 'postcolonialism' and 'postcolonial' to describe the nature of the world today and the limits of liberation achieved. Theory building and critique is also coming from Indigenous scholars and activists (L.T. Smith, 1999; Venne, 2004; Jackson, 2004, 2007; Coulthard, 2011; Watson, 2007; A.Smith, 2005) and critical race feminists (Thobani, 2007) based in settler-colonial states such as Australia, Canada, Aotearoa/New Zealand and the USA.

There may be many reasons for a less-than-enthusiastic embrace of the term 'postcolonial' by such social movements. One reason is that postcolonial theorists tend to use opaque academic jargon to discuss what some may consider to be commonplace concerns. Another may be, according to Dirlik (1994: 329), that the popularity of the concept 'postcolonial' has

less to do with its rigorousness as a concept or with the new vistas it has opened up for critical inquiry than it does with the increased visibility of academic intellectuals of Third World origin as pacesetters in cultural criticism.

An example is that according to Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1991: 457), "Frantz Fanon has now been reinstated as a global theorist." This is partly because postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha have made Fanon fashionable in global academic circles. Yet unlike those postcolonial critics who use Fanon to give their writings an element of authenticity and radicalism, many social movements are engaging with thinkers like Fanon and Cabral to search for liberating theory.

Notwithstanding the insistence by some scholars that postcolonialism is not a temporal concept the term postcolonial remains, in part, a problematic concept because colonialism still exists, something which many movements are all too aware of. Indian journalist and activist Chakravarthi Raghavan (1990), for example, described economic globalization through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT - now the World Trade Organization (WTO)) as 'recolonization' of the nominally independent states of the Third World. This frame is quite common in both scholarly literature and activist networks in the

Third World (Shiva, 1997; Bagchi, 2005; D'Souza, 2006) – although some, such as the late Eqbal Ahmed (interviewed in Barsamian, 2000) ask whether it is accurate to talk of recolonization when they question if there was ever 'decolonization' in any real sense of the word.

'Neo-colonialism' is also used to describe 21st century colonialism. According to Pan-Africanist and Ghanaian independence movement leader Kwame Nkrumah (1965), neo-colonialism occurs when a country's economic system and political policy is directed by outside forces. Although this direction can take various shapes, neo-colonialist control tends to be exercised through economic means. Radha D'Souza (2006) (see elsewhere in this issue) argues that the 'development project' is a post-war project of the elites, serving to reconstitute relations between the colonies and imperial powers and consolidate monopoly-finance capitalism, while also containing and undermining struggles against capitalism and imperialism.

In much of Africa, Latin America and Asia, neo-colonialism has manifested itself in the form of World Bank and International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programmes during the past thirty years. At a macro-economic level, under neoliberalism, Faraclas (2001) sees the debt-driven model of colonialism imposed on the South through structural adjustment connected to the "repauperization of the North" (p.70). Eqbal Ahmad (2000) contended that for the most part, the structure of capitalism has not changed fundamentally, but that "its intensity and scope have" (p.113). Ahmad argues that globalization has changed neither the political nor economic reality of many Third World countries since the days of formal colonial rule. Rather, it is another phase of colonialism and imperialism. Ngati Kahungunu (Maori) lawyer Moana Jackson (1999 and 2007) argues that for Indigenous Peoples, in the global North and South, globalization is not a new phenomenon. As he (1999) puts it, "we are faced with a two-fold challenge, to struggle as best we can to deal with the immediate consequences of globalization. Secondly, and more difficult, to contextualize those problems within the 500-year-and-more history of the culture of colonization" (p. 105). Kelsey (1999) observes that conflicts between transnational corporations and Indigenous Peoples are rooted in colonization, with the former being new actors in an older, ongoing struggle for self-determination. "Yet", she argues, "power is also being transferred from the colonial state, which can be challenged at the very least on moral grounds..., to more remote international corporations whose sole responsibility is to their shareholders (p. 167).

As Jackson (1999 and 2007) and others (L. T. Smith, 1999; Venne, 2001; McNally, 2002; Bargh, 2007) have argued, key elements of modern-day neoliberalism – the commodification of peoples, of nature, and of social relations, the favouring of individual over collective rights, and indeed the forebears of some of its major beneficiaries, transnational corporations (in the form of charter colonizing companies such as the East India Company) are not new (Kelsey, 1999; McNally, 2002; D'Souza, 2006; M. Jackson, 2007).

These dynamics play out in different forms across the world (McEwan 2001). In some contexts, neo-colonialism can be seen as an “arrested decolonization in the post-independence period” (Jeyifo 2007: 125). According to Edward Said (1989), poverty, underdevelopment, and various pathologies of power and corruption are some of the colonial legacies that characterise post-independent societies. “This mix of characteristics designated the colonized people who had freed themselves on one level but who remained victims of their past on another” (Said 1989: 207). Writing many years before, in the context of the liberation struggle against French colonial rule in Algeria, Fanon (1963) warned against the dangers and false liberation posed to newly independent territories by a bourgeois anticolonial nationalist elite describing its mission as being ‘the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism (152)

From land to water, to the corporate enclosure of nature through biotechnology and bioprospecting, Indigenous and other colonized peoples are at the forefront of both analysis of, and mobilizations against neoliberal capitalism which emphasize the way in which it commodifies everything, is fundamentally predicated on exploitation of people and nature, and embodies a colonial mindset. Richard Lee (2006) argues that the current prominence of indigenous social movements indicates a new global acceptance of Indigenous Peoples and the legitimacy of their claims. Lee (2006) adds that Indigenous Peoples use this global acceptance of their struggle to engage in ‘the politics of embarrassment.’

Land invasions, road blocks and guerrilla theatre, such as setting up an aboriginal tent camp on the lawn of the Australian parliament, send messages that official spin doctors find difficult to counter, the most eloquent of these being the ongoing Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas. (Lee 2006: 470)

The 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, and its subsequent articulation, transmitted worldwide via the Internet and other media, as an Indigenous Peoples’ struggle rooted in resistance to centuries of colonial injustice now confronting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)¹ and other neoliberal instruments also drew attention to the relationship between contemporary and older forms of imperialism (Gedicks, 2001; McNally, 2002; Flusty, 2004). Importantly, however, progressive organizations and movements, and the left in general have not always been inherently sympathetic or supportive of Indigenous Peoples’ struggles for self-determination (Bedford and Irving, 2001; Churchill, 1983).

Indigenous Peoples’ movements, in the global South and North, often express their resistance to this post-independence paradox, or assertions of sovereignty over their lands and lives by liberal social democracies, through struggles for

¹ Free trade and investment agreement signed between Mexico, USA and Canada, which took effect on 1 January 1994.

decolonization and self-determination or autonomy. The politics and the struggles of the Zapatistas are a well-documented example of how indigenous movements are grappling with these challenges in the 21st century. The Zapatistas' statements resonate with many Indigenous Peoples around the world when they argue that "more than 500 years of exploitation and persecution have not been able to exterminate us" (Subcomandante Marcos 2001: 75). Indigenous Peoples from diverse places like Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Southern Africa and throughout the Americas can identify with that observation. Indigenous Peoples have in many cases been resisting corporate power, social and environmental destruction and militarization predicted as the scenario for the rest of the world under neoliberalism, for many years. For example, Dip Kapoor's work on Dalit and Adivasi struggles against mining and forestry 'development' in Orissa, India, and the knowledge produced within these movements is featured in this issue and elsewhere (Kapoor, 2013). To overlook, or underestimate the value of Indigenous Peoples' analyses and strategies of resistance in relation to capitalist globalization is to seriously constrain analysis and action to meaningfully transform the dominant economic, political and social order, locally and internationally.

Maori scholar Linda Smith (1999) highlights the way in which international indigenous networks with a colonial analysis of 'development' can offer and share alternatives to the dominant model. "The sharing of resources and information may assist groups and communities to collaborate with each other and to protect each other. The development of international protocols and strategic alliances can provide a more sustained critique of the practices of states and corporations." (p. 105). Burgmann and Ure (2004) suggest that in the context of the struggle for opponents of neoliberalism to theorize a convincing alternative, the contributions of Indigenous Peoples' struggles for self-determination are very useful. They assert that the practical critique of neoliberalism embodied in indigenous people's resistance to their incorporation into the global market is one informed by an often acute recognition of not only the global dimensions of such resistance but also an acknowledgement of anti-imperialist struggles stretching back over many hundreds of years (p. 57).

This has "enabled non-indigenous groups and movements to root their critique in an anti-capitalist perspective that emanates from non-Western sources" (p. 57). The authors argue that the desire for self-determination in the face of neoliberalism "often finds its most intense expression in indigenous struggles and that, as such, the role of indigenous peoples in struggles against neoliberalism has been crucially significant to its spread to other sectors of global society" (pp. 56-57).

As new generations launch mobilizations with anti-colonial elements such as the Idle No More campaign in Canada, ongoing struggles for immigration justice in Europe as well as popular resistance movements in South Africa have illuminated the ongoing legacy of colonial injustice in different ways, the ideas of anti-colonial writers and activists such as Fanon and Cabral remain relevant. Younger movement activists and students – especially racialized people - are

discovering their lives, works and struggles, sometimes for the first time in such work.

The current issue of *Interface* includes a number of articles that engage postcolonial scholarship and anticolonial critique to discuss various struggles happening in different parts of the world. Dip Kapoor's article explores the politics and the struggles of the Lok Adhikar Manch (LAM), a trans-local rural solidarity network of 15 social movements which include Adivasi (original dweller) and Dalit ("untouchable" out-castes) marginal and landless peasants, nomads, pastoralists, horticulturalists and fisherfolk, in Orissa, India. According to Kapoor, LAM is primarily located outside and against 'the state-market-civil society nexus'. LAM participants regard NGOs as subordinate partners in the state-corporate nexus. Kapoor points out that this nexus undermines anticolonial movements by constructing and deploying laws and institutions to 'legalise' and normalise displacement and dispossession. Simply put, "this article advances an anticolonial critique of post-colonial capitalist colonizations... exercised through a state-market-civil society nexus predominantly committed to the reproduction of a colonial capitalist-modernity/development."

In their article 'Fair Trade, neocolonial developmentalism, and racialized power relations', Ian Hussey and Joe Curnow explore ways in which North American fair traders reinforce racialized, neocolonial power relations between the between the Global South producers and Global North consumers. The authors argue that as Global North fair traders strive to "help" Global South producers, they re-entrench neocolonial narratives of white supremacy. Additionally, the article highlights the relationship between Fair Trade, commodity fetishism, and the developmentalist conception of space/time propagated by Fair Trade advocates.

It is important to note that the article does not suggest that "people involved in Fair Trade are intentionally racist or have bad intentions or that shopping for non-labeled products would be a better way of engaging in the world." Rather, the point is to highlight ways in which historical-geographical-material conditions shape the interaction between Global South producers and Global North consumers. as far as the authors are concerned, they "believe that the better we understand the ways the Fair Trade system and movement are shaped by and reproduce racialized, neocolonial power relations, the better able we can become to acknowledge and address them, so that we can strive toward anti-colonial relationships rooted in solidarity rather than help, charity, or developmentalism."

Julia Cantzler examines the neocolonial narratives of white supremacy in her article, which is called 'The Translation of Indigenous Agency and Innovation into Political and Cultural Power: The Case of Indigenous Fishing Rights in Australia.' This article underscores structural constraints that shape Indigenous-state relations in Australia. It does this by investigating the historical and contemporary conflict over Indigenous fishing rights in Australia. Further, the article argues that despite constraining legal and political obstacles,

Indigenous Australians have been able to employ innovative strategies to achieve greater control over traditional aquatic resources on terms that are consistent with the values of Indigenous traditional laws and customs. By highlighting the discriminatory colonial legacies that continue to marginalise Indigenous Peoples and their aspirations within mainstream regulatory frameworks, this article “shines a light on these barriers and provides ammunition for those on both sides of the debate who seek to move beyond the past in order to construct more equal and bicultural blueprints for citizenship and governance in Australia.”

In her article ‘Starting from the Amazon: communication, knowledge and politics of place in the World Social Forum’, Hilde Stephansen explores ways in which communication activists in Belém, Brazil, engaged with the 2009 World Social Forum and sought to make use of it for their own purposes. The logic that underpins the argument of the article is that although the WSF “has been conceived as an important site for the elaboration of alternative knowledge projects that can challenge dominant modes of thought, [it] is also criss-crossed by various axes of exclusion”. Suggesting that one such axis relates to the role and status of place-based movements and their knowledges, and emphasising the centrality of place to the construction of alternative epistemological imaginaries that can contribute to decolonisation of knowledge, Stephansen analyses efforts of communication activists to facilitate autonomous knowledge production among movements in the Amazon. The article demonstrates that strengthening the capacity of “local” grassroots movements to communicate on their own terms is not simply a matter of enabling their inclusion within the “global” space of the WSF; rather, it is a matter of facilitating “the proliferation of alternative knowledge projects at different scales, within and beyond the social forum process”.

The last article in the themed section of this issue of *Interface* comprises four short pieces discussing the legacy of Frantz Fanon for theory, education and action. A collaboration between Aziz Choudry, David Austin, Radha D’Souza, and Sunera Thobani, the article brings together personal, political and intellectual reflections on a series of themes and issues raised by or in relation to Fanon’s writing. Each contributor was asked, “In what context did you first encounter Fanon and how did it impact you?” In addition to thinking together about these questions, each contributor also provides her/his own analysis of Fanon’s writing and its legacy.

In addition to the themed section, this issue includes a number of articles that highlight the drawbacks and roadblocks to movement success. Cynthia Cockburn article, “A movement stalled: outcomes of women’s campaigns for equalities and inclusion in the Northern Ireland peace process,” revisits feminist activists in Northern Ireland who contributed to the peace process in the 1990s by developing a framework that envisioned a transformed society, one rid of the inequities of a colonial past and sought to address the poverty, disadvantage and exclusion afflicting the working class of both Catholic and Protestant communities. Twenty years later, her interviews reveal that these activists are

deeply disappointed with the progress towards their earlier vision, and explores how policy work and institution building did not achieve intended goals. M. Dawn King's article, "The Role of Societal Attitudes and Activists' Perceptions on Effective Judicial Access for the LGBT Movement in Chile" explores by LGBT activists don't make greater access of the judicial system and finds that perceptions of widespread homophobia by these activists helps to explain their strategy. King argues that understanding the role of culture in movement strategy can allow us to transcend our understandings of legal opportunity.

Paul Sneed's piece "Infotainment and encounter in the pacification of Rocinha favela" uses anthropological analysis of 'dark tourism', concepts of relational philosophy, and auto-ethnography to show how 'infotainment' based approaches to learning that are intended to support movements, can inflict further violence by turning people and their suffering into objects, in contrast to "encounter"-based learning, in which people meet in dialogue, mutuality, reciprocity, and community.

Mark Stoddart and Howard Ramos' piece "Going local: Calls for local democracy and environmental governance at Jumbo Pass and the Tobeatic Wilderness Area," also highlights the role of perception on movement strategy, showing that Canadian environmentalists highlighted the 'local' aspects of their campaign because of the scale of the environmental problem, a perceived exclusion from environmental governance, and the potential for successful mobilization in the local context. We're also delighted to include a roundtable on radical publishing by Anna Feigenbaum and Stephen Shukaitis.

Tomás Mac Sheoin's lengthy but satisfying special contribution on media framing of the anti-globalization movement will be an invaluable resource for those interested in the patterns and research surrounding this question. He reviews and consolidates the empirical evidence presented in the literature, showing the ways that the media dismiss and marginalize the anti-globalization movement and the implications of this framing for mobilization.

This issue includes reviews of the following books: Raúl Zibechi's *Territories in resistance: a cartography of Latin American social movements* (Colleen Hackett); Peter Dwyer and Leo Zeilig's *African struggles today: social movements since independence* (Jonny Keyworth); Roderick Bush's *The end of white supremacy: Black internationalism and the problem of the color line: from monocultural mestizaje to multiculturalism* (Hleziphi Naomie Nyanungo); Jean Muteba Rahier's (ed.), *Black social movements in Latin America* (Mandisi Majavu); and Christian Scholl's *Two sides of a barricade: (dis)order and summit protest in Europe* (Ana Margarida Esteves) and Alice Te Punga Somerville's *Once were Pacific: Māori connections to Oceania* (Ella Henry).

Finally, we draw your attention to the call for contributions to the May 2014 issue of *Interface* on the theme *The Pedagogical Practices of Social Movements*. The editors of this special issue will be Sara C Motta and Ana Margarida Esteves. The call for papers follows this editorial.

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