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## 4. Decoloniality, governance and development

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### INTRODUCTION

Having its origin in Latin America, decoloniality is a field of critical inquiry concerned with modern and colonial structures of power, knowledge, gender and subject formation, and accordingly proposes a turn to an epistemic or cognitive South in the reconstitution of global political societies (Lugonés 2007; Mignolo 2002; Quijano 2007).<sup>1</sup> This reconstitution is understood as a reorganization of life in common that centres on overcoming universalized but provincial Western modern pillars of politics and the political, including inter-state relations (Mignolo 2017). The notion of an epistemic South denotes the existence of multiple epistemes or ways of knowing, with the North Atlantic or Western modern being just one of them. In the insight of multiple epistemes, decoloniality is of course not alone; its specificity lies in elaborating the genealogical archive of non-colonial languages and experiences, epistemically located outside Eurocentric concepts and authors.

Meanwhile, the field of governance studies has been concerned with explaining and interpreting the phenomena of governing across different scales and arenas of power and authority. When applied to the interdisciplinary field of development studies, policy, and practice, it focuses on the countries of the so-called Global South. The introduction of the notion of governance in development studies inaugurated a plurality of critical analyses concerned with formal, informal, decentralized, polycentric and networked forms of power, control and authority in postcolonial states and markets.

Scholarship informed by neo-Gramscian perspectives, for example, mobilized the analytic of hegemony to interpret shifts, crises, and continuities in the governance of development in postcolonial societies. Meanwhile, analyses informed by post-structuralist and post-positivist understandings of power and politics generated studies of underdevelopment as a form of governmentality that unfolds through networked forms of self-control and management. Other critical development studies perspectives, including postcolonial and post-development scholarship, inspired by critical and deconstructivist social theory, contributed with interpretations on the violent impositions, peaceful acquiescence, negotiations, adaptations and mimicry of modern governance institutions and norms in colonial, postcolonial settler and non-settler contexts.

Like postcolonial and post-development approaches, decolonial scholarship is concerned with how governing unfolds through the imposition of development as a universalized narrative and project of civilization (Icaza and Vázquez 2017, 2022). Paraphrasing Walter Mignolo, development from a decolonial perspective denotes a local history that governs as a global design (Mignolo 2000).

However, decolonial scholars are concerned with something else too. They see it as their task to articulate the erasure, extraction, destitution, enclosure, and silencing that operations of governing entail. To further explain the notion of coloniality as erasure, this chapter refers to it as constitutive of Western modernity in the production of a plurality of social experiences and

as an absence from history and from contemporaneity (Santos et al. 2007; Vázquez 2021). To explore this further, the first section below delves into the experience of the counter-plantation system in Haiti as studied by Jean Casimir from a decolonial perspective (Casimir 2020).

In the rest of this chapter, elements of a decolonial (dis)engagement with governance and development are introduced. In so doing, the chapter foregrounds Latin American and to some extent Caribbean and South African anti-colonial genealogies that have inspired contemporary analyses of coloniality. The chapter is divided into seven sections that introduce basic principles of decolonial thought by focusing on the notions of coloniality of knowledge, governance, power, development and gender in relation to governance and development scholarship. Decoloniality does not only involve academic debate, but given the parameters of this exercise, it is discussed in these terms.

As an academic debate, decoloniality is plural and has been constantly evolving since Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano coined the term coloniality (Quijano 1992), Argentinian semiotician Walter D. Mignolo articulated coloniality as the dark side of the Renaissance (Mignolo 2003) and Arturo Escobar (2007) and others introduced coloniality into English-language debates on modernity and development.

By the end of the 1990s, the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) group or network (Escobar and Mignolo 2010; Mignolo and Grosfoguel 2008) had gathered a pluralistic group of scholars influenced by Marxism, philosophy of liberation, world-system analysis and post-structuralism concerned with coloniality.<sup>2</sup> A key source of what today is termed *decoloniality* is constituted by the debates of this group or network. In each of the following sections, the exposition is organized in relation to post-development and postcolonial schools of thought to highlight similarities, specificities, and tensions with decoloniality. The chapter concludes with a summary of decoloniality's main ideas and formulates a decolonial ethical question for the fields of development and governance.

## THE COUNTER-PLANTATION SYSTEM

The Haitian Revolution of 1791 and the processes that led to the establishment of the first modern Republic that resulted from a slave-led rebellion are part of accounts of decolonization of the Global South, but rarely inform contemporary theorizations of governance and development. When Haiti is referred to, this nation is overrepresented as the *poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere*, a place of destitution, disaster, chaos and failed governance and a case study holding important governance lessons for international aid practitioners and other countries of the Global South. Yet, 'for most of the 19th century, Haiti was a site of agricultural innovation, productivity and economic success' (Dubois and Jenson 2012). So, what went wrong? What can other developing countries learn from this? Advancing answers to these sorts of questions would be a relevant task within the mainstream of scholarship on governance and development.

In contrast, decolonial scholarship is concerned with something else. According to Haitian sociologist Jean Casimir, the focus should be on learning from the reconstitution of a sovereign society led by individuals from African descent brought to the Caribbean as slaves, who rejected French colonial order (Casimir 2020). However, these experiences are erased or actively reduced to be a case of failure in governance. Indeed, from a decolonial angle, what

matters is to ask how this reduction to failure connects to colonialism, imperialism, race and racialization in development and governance studies.

Through research that prioritizes historical entanglements instead of local exceptionalisms or regional comparisons, scholars have demonstrated the connections between colonialism and slavery, the expansion of the international sugar market and a particular form of governance – the plantation – that extracted the life of the enslaved and of Earth<sup>3</sup> for the enjoyment of sweetened tea in the imperial metropolises since the sixteenth century.

By focusing on the colonality of those historical entanglements – in other words, what lies beneath these entanglements – decolonial scholarship has provided an additional set of interesting lessons. As carefully researched and documented by Casimir (2020) the *moun andeyo*, the disenfranchised Haitian rural peasantry of African descent – sustained a *counter-plantation system* as a site of resistance running along the grain of colonial institutions in the form of small plots of land inhabited by generations of extended families. Furthermore, these families counted with their own conceptualizations and perspectives of themselves and the world, some of which exist to this day. This is what the reconstitution of a sovereign society beyond modern Western modern pillars looks like.

This counter-governance system, nonetheless, has been constantly erased and disregarded by traditional and contemporary Haitian historiography and was rendered non-existent in the more recent diagnosis of Haiti's current governance and development challenges by international development agencies (e.g., Oxfam Novib 2012). The problem with this erasure and disregard is that important lessons about life-sustainability, autonomy and self-reliance under colonial violence and slavery in the past, and under conditions of global climate change today, are muted. The concern of decolonial scholarship has been to find ways to de-silence these sorts of social experiences to transform both contemporary disciplinary frameworks and common understandings of the world and world society (e.g., Bhabra 2016; Boatcă 2020; Casimir 2020). De-silencing is a term coined by Olivia Rutazibwa (2018) to articulate her 'three-legs strategy' to decolonize international development studies. The term is in consonance with the literature concerned with subaltern voices (Spivak 1988), epistemologies of the South (Santos et al. 2007) and decolonial listening and healing (Vázquez 2021; Walsh 2007, 2013).

Following Walter Mignolo's (2011) elaboration on Spivak's famous question 'Can the subaltern speak', the decolonial perspective on de-silencing means that subaltern experiences, such as the counter-plantation system, have always been articulating messages, or speaking, but that the terms of the conversation set by modern Western epistemology result in an incapacity to listen. Therefore, de-silencing should not be confused with 'giving voice' or 'speak for'. The latter two verbs imply that certain non-normative experiences are *silent* rather than *silenced* by colonality.

## COLONIALISM, DECOLONIZATION, COLONIALITY AND DECOLONIALITY

Decolonization has had different meanings across times and temporalities. For example, during the second part of the twentieth century, decolonization was mainly associated with national liberation struggles that ended formal colonial rule by European imperial powers. Lately, as decolonization seems to be just another term to speak about any process and experience dealing with diversity and inclusion, First Nations scholars Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang

(2012) have insisted that decolonization is not a metaphor but an ongoing struggle for land restitution, autonomy and self-determination (Tuck and Yang 2012). In other words, decolonization is a political, economic and cultural transformation.

Decolonization has also been associated with the processes of acknowledgement and reparation of material, economic, epistemic, aesthetic, and affective legacies of colonialism that to this day shape the structures, institutions, and social practices of both former empires and colonized societies. These legacies can take subtle forms such as everyday micro-racist aggressions in public and virtual fora in the form of comments about the intelligence of a person of colour based on their race/ethnicity (Nadal et al. 2014; Wing Sue et al. 2007). Colonial legacies can also manifest as naturalized celebrations of openly racist but ‘innocent’ characters such as *Zwarte Piet* in the Netherlands. This folkloric figure is the companion of the Dutch Santa Claus and every year is performed by ethnically white people with black faces as a silly man or woman, thereby perpetuating the stereotype of black people. As noted by Wekker (2016: 28) in her analysis of the Dutch cultural colonial archive, the aggressive reactions from the white Dutch public to the rejection of *Zwarte Piet* as a racist tradition display ‘entitlement racism’. Amid Black Lives Matter mobilizations in the Netherlands and thanks to decades of Dutch anti-racist activism, the future of *Zwarte Piet* is finally being openly discussed even by Prime Minister Mark Rutte.<sup>4</sup> This is something that was perhaps unthinkable some years ago.

In education, colonial legacies manifest through the exclusion of the oeuvres of people of colour from school curricula and the physical segregation of schools for different populations. In processes of nation-state building, colonial legacies are expressed in the official commemoration of violent colonizers, in assimilationist practices related to the emphasis of one official national language, and in exclusionary social, housing, health and employment policies for certain sectors of society based on race/ethnicity, migratory status, and so forth. Nowadays, these legacies are manifested in racial profiling of communities of colour and immigrants, xenophobia, and neo-fascist calls to attack racialized members of society.

As indicated above, decolonial scholars like postcolonial scholars are concerned with how governing unfolds through the imposition of development as a universalized narrative and project of civilization. But decolonial scholars are concerned about something else too: articulating the erasure, extraction, destitution, enclosure and silencing that entail such operations of governing. Belonging to a different geo-genealogy<sup>5</sup> than postcolonial studies (Bhambra 2014), decoloniality enters academic debates with a perspective on *modernity as coloniality*, articulated in its basic proposition that *there is no modernity without coloniality* (Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2000; Vázquez 2014; Walsh 2012).

Coloniality as an underside of modernity is not colonialism but a geo-historical and epistemic location from which reality is understood and sensed. As such, coloniality is what remained after colonial rule or colonialism was formally over and what to this day is manifested in politics, knowledge, production, being, gender norms and institutions. These manifestations are like the colonial legacies discussed above.

A decolonial perspective understands modernity as being three centuries older than its commonly accepted historiography suggests. The study of modernity is displaced from the nineteenth to the fifteenth and sixteenth century: the time of the conquest of the Americas (1492) and the control of the Atlantic. In this sense, Western modernity is not solely a product of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution but of colonization and genocide. Modernity as a phenomenon that is three centuries older reveals the moment in

which Europe as a civilizational project claimed universality for itself, producing all other cultures as particular, other, subaltern, backward, etc. (Mignolo 2000, 2002).

Meanwhile, decoloniality has been defined as a liberating praxis that emerged from First Nations' communities and Afro-descendant peoples in Abya Yala (the Americas) and their struggles for political autonomy and land restitution (Escobar 2004, 2007; Icaza 2018b; Walsh 2010, 2011). Decoloniality has also been defined as an onto-epistemic option, in other words as one possibility among many others for ways of being and knowing; within academia, this is oriented towards an ethics in knowledge cultivation (Icaza and de Jong 2018; Mignolo 2011; Palermo 2013). For still some others, decoloniality is a political imperative of transformation towards decolonization as the undoing of coloniality (of power, knowledge, gender, being) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012, 2020; Rutazibwa 2018).

Nonetheless, Zulma Palermo (2013) and Madina Tlostanova (2019) argue for understanding decoloniality as an option, in contrast to a paradigm or grand theory because it is 'consciously chosen as a political, ethical, and epistemic positionality and an entry point into agency' (Tlostanova 2019: 166). In a nutshell, decoloniality points at the complexity of *desprendimiento*, of delinking and healing from coloniality (Mignolo 2011; Vázquez 2021).

As an option, *la opción decolonial*, decoloniality is not associated with or taking sides with a particular group of peoples – the racialized, minoritized, othered ones. Decoloniality is not identity politics, nor is it a politics of representation. Nonetheless, the analysis and praxis of delinking, undoing, and healing from coloniality (of power, knowledge, being, gender, development) is done from specific, although dynamic and differentiated positionalities in the geopolitics of knowledge and across colonial and imperial differences (Mignolo 2002). For example, in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, Snyman (2015: 269) reminds us that undertaking decoloniality requires a 'hermeneutic of vulnerability of the self', which means that there are those selves occupying positions of privilege and used to enunciating from an imperial locus and subjectivity of normativity, as perpetrating agents, but there are also those selves 'who still bear the brunt of the aftermath of' coloniality (2015: 269).

In this regard, coloniality is a short way to speak about the 'matriz moderna colonial de poder' (the modern/colonial matrix of power), a term coined by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano in the late 1990s (Mignolo 2013; Quijano 2000). For Quijano, this matrix operates as a structure of management by controlling the economy, authority (government and politics), knowledge and subjectivities, gender, and sexuality (Quijano 2000).

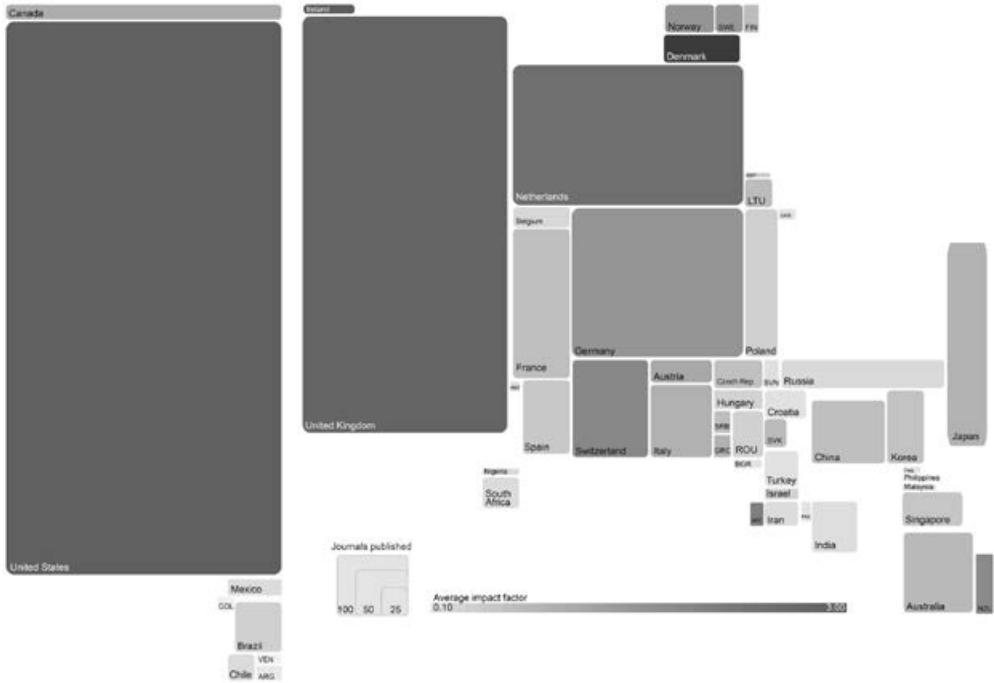
However, more recent contributions to decolonial scholarship and debate propose the idea of modernity/coloniality as two different geo-historical movements or forms of relationship to what is real (Vázquez 2014). In this way, modernity is seen as the historical movement of power naming and representing reality. It is a movement of appropriating worlds of meaning. For example, non-Europeans were named 'Indians', 'uncivilized' or 'not humans' in the colonial encounters, while more recently a group of countries are named 'under-developed' or 'lacking development' as they do not conform to the modern norm. On the other hand, coloniality is the geo-historical movement in which the erasure takes place of knowledge systems outside or in the margins of what was considered as human rationality (Vázquez 2011). Once more, the counter-plantation system in Haiti can be mentioned here to illustrate coloniality as erasure.

Mexican-Argentinian philosopher Enrique Dussel has written extensively about modernity, in particular modern rationality as founded on two principles: the principle of domination of 'others' outside the European core, and the principle of denial of the violence of that

domination (Dussel 1993, 1995). An illustration to explain these two principles is how the violence and genocide of colonialism was covered up by the ‘civilizing mission’ justification. More recently, the ‘democratization’ of Panama (1989) and Iraq (2003) through US military invasion works to deny its violence. From a decolonial perspective, this violence and its denial is an ontological and epistemic operation – a way of being and knowing – with deep socio-political, economic, ecological, and aesthetic implications that to this day organize interactions in the production, consumption, and distribution of academic knowledge. This is addressed in the next section.

## WHOSE KNOWLEDGE? ON THE COLONIALITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation or cartogram called ‘The Location of Academic Knowledge’ (Graham et al. 2011: 15). The cartogram visualizes the locations of academic journals listed in Thompson Reuters’ Web of Knowledge and its findings are relevant in illustrating the coloniality of knowledge.



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Figure 4.1 *The location of academic knowledge*

Graham et al.’s (2011) research findings suggest a staggering amount of inequality in the geography of the production of academic knowledge, including that:

the United States and the United Kingdom publish more indexed journals than the rest of the world combined; Western Europe, in particular Germany and the Netherlands, also scores relatively well; most of the rest of the world then scarcely shows up in these rankings; one of the starkest contrasts is that Switzerland is represented at more than three times the size of the entire continent of Africa; the non-Western world is not only under-represented in these rankings, but also ranks poorly on average citation score measures; despite the large number and diversity of journals in the United States and United Kingdom, those countries manage to maintain higher average impact scores than almost all other countries. (Graham et al. 2011: 15)

A more recent study of 2015 conducted by the same authors focused on the submissions to SAGE journals. This study took into consideration the geographical location of the authors submitting articles and their disciplines. Graham (2015) describes some interesting patterns including the following ones:

more academic content comes from the Global North than from the Global South. Africa in particular is notable for its absence. Most countries on the continent fail to register even a single journal article submission ... there were only two countries that register a consistently large number of submissions in every category: the UK and the US ... A handful of Asian countries (i.e. China, India, and Iran) register a high number of submissions only in STEM subjects. (Graham 2015)

Critical approaches in the field of development studies have long recognized that power inequalities are embedded in the process of academic knowledge generation (Apfel Marglin and Marglin 1990; Cornwall and Fujita 2012; Escobar 2007). Access to resources means that academic knowledge continues to be mainly produced, distributed, and consumed by universities and research centres geographically located in the so-called Global North, with only a few exceptions in the Global South.

Given these ongoing patterns of inequality and exclusion in knowledge production, who counts in the analysis of governance and development? Where do we begin to tell the story of the phenomena of governance and development? Who has been telling that story and who has been listening? These questions, which paraphrase Olivia Rutazibwa's challenges to the coloniality of international development, aim to capture key decolonial scholarship concerns (Rutazibwa 2018: 165).

Interestingly, answers to these questions often take the form of calls for the inclusion of a more diverse representation of the world to account for the complexity of contemporary governance challenges in the Global South. This is often expressed as an openness to contributors based or originally from Global South countries. In this case, diversity is understood mainly as a demographic and nationality-based characteristic. The call for inclusivity has also been understood as involving diverse disciplinary backgrounds and theoretical perspectives to interpret and analyse the phenomena of governance. From a decolonial perspective, nonetheless, these responses are important but insufficient if the task is the undoing of the coloniality of knowledge. To undo coloniality means nurturing a critical awareness about what is erased by a form of knowledge that claims universality and objectivity despite its partiality as the example of the unequal political economy of knowledge production, consumption and distribution illustrated via the cartogram.

Decolonial scholarship is interested in the positionality of all knowledges, which means that knowledges are understood to be generated in places, by bodies and that they are local. Sometimes we only see the expression of such knowledges in global designs or universalized categories (e.g., 'governance and development'). Understanding knowledges as local

doesn't mean that these are 'better' or 'purer' knowledges or that these are disconnected from international spheres or global interactions. It means that all knowledges have a specific geo-historical and body-political origins, or in other words, that all knowledges are generated in concrete places and ecologies and by concrete bodies (Icaza 2018b). It also means that all our knowledges are partial.

That all knowledges are partial does not mean that anything goes, or that decolonial scholarship is against expertise or for anti-intellectual work, which is a deeply problematic characteristic of our turbulent 'fake truth' times. The understanding of knowledges as partial emphasizes an awareness of the limits of each of our perspectives and promotes an open approach to knowledge. An open approach to knowledge and expertise is an approach that nurtures geo-historically positioned forms of expertise and aims to encourage curiosity, reciprocity, dialogue, and collaboration (Icaza and Vázquez 2018).

Let's bring in once more Olivia Rutazibwa's seminal article on the coloniality of international development to illustrate what a geo-historical, positioned approach to knowledge looks like in relation to academic disciplines and fields of knowledge. Rutazibwa argues that 'International Development Studies is constitutively defined by colonial amnesia [and although it] is not the only discipline to suffer from this ... these recurrent blind spots and institutionalized erasures are all the more remarkable and unacceptable' (Rutazibwa 2018: 165). For example, what is now called anthropology and ethnology provided valuable knowledge for colonial governing and domination and what today is called international relations originated from the field of race relations studies that served the purpose of justifying hierarchies (Shilliam 2010; Rutazibwa 2020). Equally, Pailey (2021) and Kothari (2006) have explored the role of whiteness and race in the field and practice of development. A geo-historically positioned approach to knowledge is attentive to these historical legacies and to how these are expressed in contemporary exclusions and inequalities as illustrated by the cartogram. From a decolonial perspective, promoting awareness of the colonial origins of modern Western disciplinary thinking is one of the multiple pathways to undo the coloniality of knowledge.

## COLONIALITY OF GOVERNANCE

Feminist decolonial thinker Breny Mendoza defines coloniality as:

long-standing patterns of power that emerge in the context of colonialism, which redefine culture, labor, intersubjective relations, aspirations of the self, common sense, and knowledge production in ways that accredit the superiority of the colonizer. Surviving long after colonialism has been overthrown, coloniality permeates consciousness and social relations in contemporary life. (Mendoza 2016: 114)

From this perspective, coloniality is not colonialism, but

denotes a historical movement of erasure, of the negation of other worlds of meaning and the occlusion of the plurality of the world, for example the systematic destruction of worlds of meaning through the extinction of languages and the dignity of other world of sense. (Icaza and Vázquez 2022; see also Vázquez 2011)



This means that erasure and the sense of loss caused by that erasure constitute a geo-historical and body-political positionality from where the phenomena of governance and development can be interpreted and analysed.

As geo-historical movement, the erasure, silencing and disregard of coloniality unfolds as a *structure of management* that operates by *controlling* the economy, authority (government and politics), knowledge and subjectivities, and gender and sexuality (Quijano 2000). Accordingly, the task of decolonial scholarship is to explain the coloniality of governance, or in other words, the underside of the phenomenon of governing as operating throughout and in all the previously mentioned intermeshed dimensions: economy, authority, knowledge, being, gender and sexuality.

In consequence, from a decolonial perspective, governance cannot be thought, sensed and experienced without its underside – coloniality – nor without the geo-historical movement of control by erasure that accompanies it (Vázquez 2011). To explain how the coloniality of governance manifests itself, let's focus here on the example of informal mechanisms of litigation called Popular or Peoples' Tribunals (Icaza 2018a) promoted by transnational civil society networks.

Byrnes and Simm (2018) have noted that informal mechanisms of popular justice by remaining autonomous from state-sanctioned judicial systems and by working through the language of international human rights can contribute to more transparent, fairer, accountable, and, overall, more democratic forms of governance. This has been the case of the Peoples' Tribunals against European multinationals in Latin America, which have over the years conducted public hearings on cases of systematic state violence, femicide, and continuous land and water grabs against First Nations and Afro-descendant peoples' territories. Often these sorts of cases have been dismissed by local and national courts and even by the inter-American legal system.

Despite holding an important potential that contributes to fairer forms of governance, popular tribunals are not necessarily exempt from reproducing coloniality. As these tribunals interpret social grievances in legal terms through the lenses of international law, it has been documented how their interpretations, often unintentionally, work in some cases as 'translation' of incommensurable notions of injustice, violence or incursions on well-being. This translation bears the potential of erasing and making invisible what doesn't fit or seems problematic to attach to a particular international law or convention (Icaza 2018a). Attempts to eradicate First Nations peoples' systems of justice, knowledge, production, and governance in the Americas as central to colonial domination have been well documented (Casimir 2020; Leon Portilla 1959; Vázquez 2011). Therefore, decolonial scholarship foregrounds the coloniality of international law as a tension present even in mechanisms promoting fairer forms of governance instead of denying it.

Coloniality as a geo-historical movement of erasure of what remains outside or in the margins of what is considered as 'human rationality' has rendered First Nations peoples' ways of relating to Earth and Earth-beings in Abya Yala (the Americas) as non-existent (Vázquez 2011, 2017). The late Berta Cáceres, an indigenous woman and environmental activist, articulated well what land entails for Lenca peoples in what today is known as Honduras. She indicated that 'Land doesn't belong to us; we belong to land'. Decolonial scholarship is attentive to these ways of relating, in this case to land, and to how these are articulated in processes of collective resistance against land and water grabs (Icaza 2018b; Walsh 2010, 2011).

## COLONIALITY OF POWER

Central to decolonial analyses of governance and development is the notion of power. Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (1992) coined the term *colonialidad del poder* (coloniality of power) to explain how during the colonial encounter ‘otherness’ was defined in terms of ‘race’ at the onset of the Euro-imperial adventure in the seventeenth century to justify the colonization of the Americas.

The coloniality of power, according to Quijano, granted European colonizers superiority and a justification for the appropriation of lands and peoples (see Quijano 2000). As a non-Eurocentric understanding of domination, coloniality of power foregrounds the role that ‘the basic and universal social classification of the population of the planet in terms of the idea of “race”’, introduced for the first time during the conquest of the Americas (Lugonés 2007: 186), plays in the constitution of the so-called Western civilization and the so-called modern world.

Interpreting and analysing what is ordered under configurations of governance is what post-colonial scholarship has contributed to these fields of inquiry. The task of decolonial scholarship is to denounce what is erased by such ordering while creating the material-epistemic conditions for de-silencing what lies underneath such ordering. This task is conceptualized as de-mythologizing, de-silencing and decolonizing (Rutazibwa 2018).

The understanding of power as a relational, negative, creative, decentralized or ordering force has been an important contribution of critical social theory. Decoloniality contributes with an understanding of power from the perspective of its coloniality (Vázquez 2011). This means an interest in explaining what power erases, silences, and disregards, and how it does this. Thus, decolonial scholars mobilize the notion of coloniality of power (as well as gender, knowledge, being and production) to name what is not intelligible, what doesn’t make sense to the dominant rationalities of heteronormativity, Western science, gender, and capital.

As a consequence, the task of decolonial scholars in observing manifestations of governance is to articulate how ordering cannot exist without erasure and how that erasure is actively denied by the same institutions, rationalities and forces that enact them. In short, force and ordering imply erasing. This brings us to the notion of the coloniality of development.

## COLONIALITY OF DEVELOPMENT

Through the work of Gurminder Bhambra (2014), Manuela Boatcă (2013), and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012, 2020) it is possible to grasp the lineages of decoloniality from world-systems, dependency and underdevelopment theories, which to this day shape its (dis)engagement with the field of development studies. Indeed, as noted by sociologist Manuela Boatcă (2013), Quijano and Wallerstein’s (1992) seminal article, ‘Americanness as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System’ elaborated on the idea that a capitalist world-economy wouldn’t have been possible without the Americas. This is of course a well-known thesis of world-systems and dependency theories that foregrounds the linkages between the so-called core and periphery countries. However, Quijano and Wallerstein argued for the centrality of coloniality that understands the Americas as a geo-social construct born in the sixteenth century as a new world, defines original populations in terms of ‘race’, and justifies the destruction of their worlds of meaning, the exploitation of their labour and the

grabbing of their lands as the 'model for the entire world-system' (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992: 550). From this perspective, the organizational principle of the world-system to date has been not only capitalist exploitation, but also material, epistemic, and subjective domination through coloniality.

Although this foundational thesis of decolonial scholarship was elaborated in 1992, coinciding with the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Cristobal Colon in the Americas, it entered the English-speaking debates on development studies via post-development scholarship in the work of Arturo Escobar (2007), who introduced the notion of modernity as coloniality or modernity as co-constituted by coloniality.<sup>6</sup>

In the early 2000s, the perspective of modernity as coloniality was at odds with other positions in the field of critical development studies as these were focusing on the impact of globalization and hybrid forms of development, economic transition of post-socialist regimes, and the reassertion of (neo)liberal intellectual agendas on poverty, governance, decentralization and participatory approaches to development.

Escobar (2007: 183) contrasts his perspective of modernity, not as a totality but a totalizing project, with that of two highly influential scholars: US political scientist Francis Fukuyama and British sociologist Anthony Giddens. At the end of the 1980s, Fukuyama had coined the idea of the 'end of history' to mark the victory of liberal democracy and market economics, while Giddens argued that globalization was the radicalization and totalization of modernity. Escobar sought to contest these ideas by arguing for the possibility of an outside to modernity:

The question of whether there is an 'exteriority' to the modern/colonial world system is ... easily misunderstood ... In no way should this exteriority be thought about as a pure outside, untouched by the modern. The notion of exteriority does not entail an ontological outside; it refers to an outside that is precisely constituted as difference by a hegemonic discourse ... (Escobar 2007: 186)

Furthermore, Escobar introduced notions of Eurocentrism, colonial difference and border thinking as three important elements of decolonial thinking that today delineate its (dis) engagement with the field of development studies:

This [the exteriority to modern/colonial world system] is precisely what most European and Euro-American theorists seem unwilling to consider: that it is impossible to think about transcending or overcoming modernity without approaching it from the perspective of the colonial difference ... the various eurocentered critiques of eurocentrism in short, these continue to be thought about from within eurocentric categories (of, say, liberalism, Marxism, poststructuralism), not from the border thinking enabled by the colonial difference. Critiques of modernity, in short, are blind to the (epistemic and cultural) colonial difference that becomes the focus of modernity/coloniality. (Escobar 2007: 186)

Escobar's contestation of modernity as a totality of what is real or possible, challenges Eurocentrism but also distinguishes decolonial thinking from other critical perspectives exploring modern development. This is the case, for example, for postcolonial scholarship in development studies.

Postcolonial approaches in development studies have been firmly inspired by, and take issue with, Western philosophical thinking about the postcolonial material, socio-economic and cultural condition and in so doing have expanded interpretations of modern development through notions such as negotiation, hybridity, multiplicity, subalterity and cultural geographies (Noxolo 2016).

Consistent with Escobar, decolonial scholarship's acknowledgement of an exteriority to modernity denotes ways of being, knowing and sensing the world that are non-modern and non-Western (Vázquez 2014: 173). However, this plurality is reduced to being non-modern, named 'different' or the 'other' by modern/colonial frameworks of understanding. Here, the Lenca notion of human beings as belonging to Earth and the counter-plantation system in Haiti can both illustrate what existed and exists at the exteriority or at the borders of the modern/colonial rationalities of the extraction of life of the enslaved and of Earth (Vázquez 2017). In short, they shed light on the exteriority to modernity/coloniality and help us to mark what lies beyond the interpretive analytic of development.

Furthermore, Escobar argues that colonial difference enables the practice of border thinking, which has been undertaken by decolonial scholarship as an epistemology, and embodied consciousness following the work of Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa (Icaza 2021; Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006). Border thinking as a *gnosis*, a way of knowing, marks the limits of Eurocentred epistemologies that are characteristically disembodied and anthropocentric. Such limits become clear especially when Eurocentred knowledge is confronted with *sentipensar* – which translates into 'thinking-sensing' – as this involves a realization of what it is to belong to the Earth or participate in the reconstitution of a sovereign society beyond modern Western modern pillars such as the counter-plantation system.

Recently, there have been important efforts to question the politics of knowledge that constantly emphasizes tensions instead of overlaps and dialogues between postcolonial and decolonial thinking. This is certainly a relevant task and informs recent conceptualizations of development from a decolonial angle (Bhambra 2014; Ramamurthy and Tambe 2017). But despite the confluences, there are important tensions too (Icaza and Vázquez 2017, 2022).

From a decolonial perspective, development has been conceptualized as representation and articulation of colonial difference or, in other words, of the division between the human and the savage, between civilization and nature (Icaza and Vázquez 2017, 2022). Its function has been described as articulating the separation between the consumer and the lives of the peoples and Earth that are being incorporated, dispossessed, extracted, and consumed. The loss of the plurality of worlds of meanings and forms of life is the coloniality of development (Icaza and Vázquez 2017: 47). Decolonial theory argues that development works as a mediation between those who consume and those who are consumed.

From this perspective, development comes to mean the loss of worlds of meaning ('worldlessness'), the loss of the relation with the Earth ('earthlessness') and the loss of the capacity for contextual and enfolded knowing ('enfleshlessness'). These losses are called the coloniality of development (Icaza and Vázquez 2017; Vázquez 2017). By framing the losses in this way, they aim to counter ideas of progress, growth, frugal innovations, betterment, positive change, and so on.

To close this section, it becomes relevant to mention that as decoloniality entered development studies via Arturo Escobar, one of the most renowned post-development scholars, decoloniality and post-development have often been conflated or assumed to be addressing the same concerns in almost similar ways. However, this is far from reality.

Post-development approaches to development certainly paved the way for the decolonial (dis)engagement with development, but there is a constant although productive tension between the two perspectives. The recent compilation *Beyond the Master's Tools?*, by postcolonial scholars Bendix, Müller and Ziai (2020), can help us to illustrate the tension as follows: whereas post-development scholarship is still questioning the feasibility of going beyond the

master's tools, decolonial scholarship refuses to live in the master's house and use the master's tools as these are implicated in the consumption of the life of others and of Earth (Aguilar and Icaza 2021; Sheik 2020; Icaza and Sheik forthcoming; Motta 2018). In a nutshell, the decolonial option responds to the post-development critique with an onto-epistemic disobedience as a precondition for plural liberations (Mignolo 2007a, 2007b, 2011; Motta 2018). To illustrate this point further, the next section discusses the notion of coloniality of gender.

## COLONIALITY OF GENDER

Argentinian philosopher and popular educator Maria Lugonés coined the term coloniality of gender to analyse racialized capitalist gender oppression when researching why people are so indifferent to violence against black women and women of colour (Lugonés 2007, 2008, 2010). Lugonés wondered in what ways colonization and the dehumanization of indigenous and black bodies were part of the explanation of this contemporary phenomenon.

Lugonés introduced the notion of coloniality of gender to theorize class and race, but also gender, as social categories imposed in the colonial encounter through different technologies of dehumanization and genocide, such as the systematic rape of colonized woman (Lugonés 2007, 2008, 2010). In consequence, categories of 'gender' and 'race' are seen as universal notions and, as such, silence and even erase the feminized racialized othered (Icaza 2018b; Motta 2018).

Lugonés' (2008, 2010) notion of coloniality of gender extends an exploration of gender as a socialized sexual difference anchored to the history of colonialism. In this sense, Lugonés thinks of gender as a mechanism of colonial domination over non-Western racialized bodies. And it is in this sense that Lugonés helps us to understand the historical moment in which this specific system (sex/gender) became a form of subjugation, in a concrete mechanism of transformation and government of all life forms through control of the bodies and subjectivities of the people who had been colonized (Icaza and Vázquez 2017).

In the middle of the silence and erasure of coloniality of gender, decolonial feminists are asking the following questions: What plurality of forms of sociability that were not deeply rooted in a sexualized dimorphic representation of male-female opposites of bodies, sexuality and spirituality were buried in the categories 'patriarchy', 'gender', 'women', 'men'? If patriarchy/gender/women are not universal or common to all cultures, if these did not exist before, how do we show their analytical and theoretical limits without denying their current concrete existence and violence? (Icaza 2018b).

Let's bring here an illustration of how post-development and decolonial feminist scholarship have produced contrasting contributions to the field of development. Feminist post-development scholarship, inspired by anti-essentialist critical deconstructive and social theory, has contributed to the unsettling of gender binaries in development interventions, for example, on sexual and reproductive health. This scholarship has developed a perspective of power in and of development institutions and norms as historically situated in modernity, and even in British Victorian sexual norms (Ahmed 2017; Lind 2010). Contrastingly, decolonial feminisms have contributed to unveil forms of social organization based on fluid sexual dualities already existing 500 years before the term fluid sexualities entered feminist anti-essentialist lingo (Lugonés 2020; Marcos 2006). So, where do we start to tell the story of non-binary sexualities in development studies and for what purposes?

In many feminisms gender, sometimes intersected with class, is a given point of departure and this is precisely a stark difference with decolonial feminism for whom coloniality instead of gender is the starting point. Lugonés' concept of coloniality of gender interprets the historical movement as the imposition of a Western, modern, global, Eurocentred, capitalist and heterosexual order that today is still in place (Lugonés 2007).

Therefore, the task of decolonial feminism is distinct and independent from established anti-essentialist critical feminist theories influenced by post-structuralism, post-humanism and neo-materialism. Decolonial feminism's priority is not the analysis of impositions or dominant representations of subalterity but that of exploring reciprocal and collaborative ways of de-silencing ways of being, knowing and sensing, which are made absent by the heterosexual colonial/modern gender system (De Jong et al. 2018; Icaza 2018b; Icaza and Leyva 2019). In his reading of Lugonés, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020: 21) notes that

Lugonés (2008) posits that it is necessary to 'understand differential gender arrangements along "racial" lines so as to highlight the two sides of the "modern/colonial gender system"'. The 'light' side represents oppression, along the lines of gender privileging white bourgeois men over their white bourgeois women but without reducing them to the status of non-beings (Lugonés 2008). The 'under-side' or 'darker side' represents dehumanization and animalization, to the extent that the colonized men and women are subjects not of 'genderization' but of mere crude 'sexualization' into female and male non-beings (Lugonés 2010).

Recent feminist decolonial scholarship foregrounds the silence of coloniality (Lugonés 2020) and the erasure of the feminized othered, which includes the racialized majorities of the world but also Earth and earth-beings reduced to 'nature' and as such a resource that can be owned (Motta 2018; Vázquez 2011, 2017). Accordingly, decolonial feminists offer interpretations of the contemporary governance of development as a violent operation: 'In that operation the majorities of the world are reduced to sub-alterity, the plurality of their life affirming projects and world views are reduced to mean "(under)development"; and Earth and earth-beings are reduced to mean environment and/or resources' (Icaza and Vázquez 2022; Vázquez 2017).

## CONCLUSION WITH AN OPEN QUESTION

This chapter has presented some elements of a decolonial (dis)engagement with governance and development while displaying its plurality as an academic debate. In six sections that explain the meaning of coloniality of knowledge, governance, power, development, and gender in relation to governance and development, decoloniality has been discussed as an academic debate, a political imperative for decolonization and an onto-epistemic option.

Furthermore, the chapter identified the confluence of decoloniality and post-development and postcolonial scholarship, but also noted the productive tensions between the two approaches. In so doing, examples were provided to explain the analytical specificity and purchase of decoloniality in the fields of governance and development. It is within the realms of these fields that decolonial scholarship in the Global North has been exploring decoloniality as an ethical orientation in knowledge generation guided by the following question: Can development studies, policy and practice respond to the possibility of an ethical life that is not structurally implicated with the consumption of life of earth and others?

## NOTES

1. For a more general genealogy of decolonial thinking or the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality intellectual agenda see Escobar and Mignolo (2010) and Mignolo and Grosfoguel (2008).
2. Participants in the MCD network-group included Anibal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Arturo Escobar, Edgardo Lander, Ramon Grosfoguel, Agustin Lao-Montes, Zulma Palermo, Catherine Walsh, Fernando Coronil, Javier Sanjines, Santiago Castro-Gómez, Maria Lugonés, Nelson Maldonado Torres, and Immanuel Wallerstein. To grasp the different strands of decolonial thinking a key source is Leyva Solano (2011).
3. The use of term Earth with a capital E aims to emphasize our relation to her instead of decentring her in representations as an object (see Vázquez 2017).
4. In June 2020, then Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told Dutch MPs that he had ‘changed his views’ on *Zwarte Piet* and this character’s racist connotations. See DutchNews.nl (2020).
5. Vázquez’s notion of geo-genealogies stresses the site of enunciation and situated origin of the genealogies that inform our understanding of the world (Vázquez 2014: 178).
6. As mentioned by Escobar in this article, he had articulated this argument six years earlier, in 2002, as part of his keynote for the Conference of the Consejo Europeo de Investigaciones sobre America Latina that took place in Amsterdam.

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