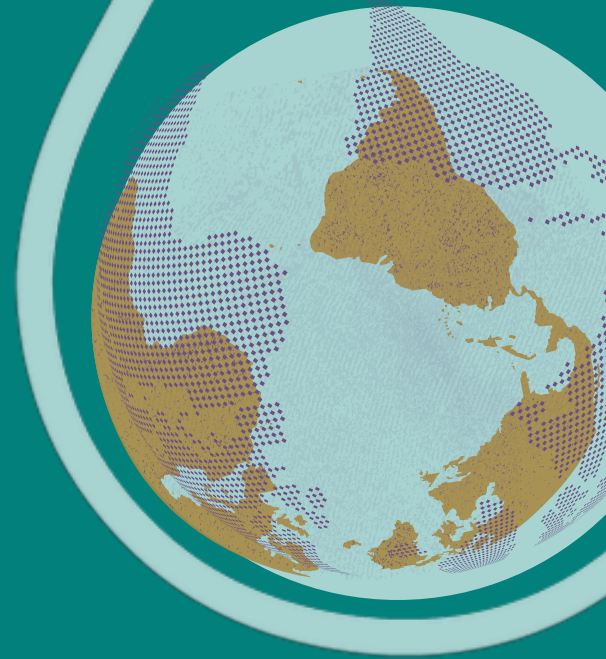


DEBATES
PÓS-COLONIAIS
E DECOLONIAIS



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO POST-COLONIAL AND DECOLONIAL STUDIES

Study Guide



8º SIMPÓSIO INTERNACIONAL DE CSA
DECOLONIZE SEU PRATO,
AMAZONIZE O MUNDO



CSA|BRASIL



URGENCI

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, colonization was imposed on numerous communities around the globe, further extending deep **European imperialism**. Appropriating a fallacious, racist and condescending narrative, the European society made it its mission to exploit native populations, forcing them to assimilate their cultural, political and ideological systems in order to facilitate European objectives. Colonialism, as Ania Loomba (1998) states, did more than extract tributes and feedstock from their colonies: it restructured a complex society, drawing a new relationship of **dependency between the colonized and the colonizer**. The fabrication of a “new” community by the colonizer also meant dismantling the community previously established. This dismantling was achieved by using techniques of domination, rooting itself deeply in the dominated societies, and restructuring the economies to make them ideal for the development of capitalism and European industry.

The ideological process of **reaffirming and demonizing the differences between cultures**, races, and societies was fundamental for placing colonized peoples as “others”. The effort perpetrated by the European narrative stripped these exploited societies of humanity, dignity, and autonomy. Classifying and stereotyping “non-Europeans” was a way of differentiating between the dominated and the dominators and ensuring that the Europeans were perceived as superior. This distinction is mainly based on the notions of **temporalization and spatialization of difference** (PINHEIRO; MOTTA, 2021).

The first term defines the universalization of the European experience in which there is a naturalization of a temporal logic of evolution, placing the “other” as “underdeveloped” and Europe as “civilized”, based on the state model of the social contract as the only path to be followed. Spatialization, on the other hand, refers to different parameters of relations between States and Peoples that operated between North and North-South countries. Demarcated by the Tropic of Cancer, this division allowed a “good coexistence” between countries in Europe, while territories outside the European scope were seen as “unoccupied” and the European dispute for its conquest was positive and encouraged (PINHEIRO; MOTTA, 2021). In this way, their atrocious acts were **justified** by perceiving the exploited peoples as “barbarians” or “savages” and not as the Human concept coined by the European Enlightenment.

To exemplify the magnitude of the colonial system, in 1930, it is estimated that colonies and former colonies comprised 85% of the Earth's surface (FIELDHOUSE 1989, p. 373 apud LOOMBA 1998, p. 3). Despite colonialism having been practiced in different forms and in different eras – as seen in the era of the Great Navigations and the division of African territories with the Berlin Conference of 1885 – it is understood that for **Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies**, it continues to be practiced in present day, yet in a more informal way. As an example, racism is still a recurrent event, but such ideology begins in a Eurocentric fallacy of its own placement at the center of the world, subjugating other cultures and, consequently, races.

Thus, Marta Fernández (2019) identifies the validity of a colonial order established as rightful by initiating the imposition of cultural values and political systems of the colonizer on colonized peoples and reproducing this pretence of European superiority over centuries. In this way, the colonizers build a **unique story** that relativizes the genocides and epistemicides practiced, compelling exploited societies to accept an inferior condition. Likewise, more than merely talking over the subjugated peoples, when Europeans evoke the colonial discourse, the objective is to distinguish themselves from the “others” and reaffirm their **level of superiority**.

The end of colonialism and the political independence of former colonies, therefore, did not automatically change this hierarchy. In other words, decolonization does not exclude the colonial condition and its legacy rooted in society. Postcolonial Studies, instituted in the second half of the 20th century, proposes to **decentralize the imposed narratives and essentialisms** in order to establish a critical epistemology of the dominant conceptions of modernity. Postcolonial scholars, particularly those in Latin America, thus attempt to recast (**The Decolonial Turn**) the relationship of the history of Latin America and the colonial power relations that still carry enormous influence.

For such scholars, cultural studies by postcolonial groups do not make enough of a clean break from European concepts and epistemologies. Decolonial Theory thus arises from the contestation of this central narrative, in contrast to colonial continuism and its **epistemicides**.

It is built on reflections on global diversity, seeking to recover the knowledge production of non-European peoples, as well as their acceptance in the construction of historical reality. Above all, the decolonial narrative explains the intrinsic relationship between **Modernity and Coloniality** – phenomena built simultaneously and inseparably – which ensures that the global system is organized by racial hierarchization proposed by the European peoples with the colonialist proposal (BALLESTRIN, 2013).

In this sense, as stated by Grosfoguel (2013), the racial element is the organizing principle of all hierarchies of this new World-System based on the colonial enterprise. The subjugation of racialized peoples is justified by **social Darwinism**. This justification is legitimized by resources claiming to be scientific, theoretical/academic, religious and cultural and continue to place the European white man at the top of the evolutionary civilizing thread. Once “the top” has been determined, all violence directed at colonized peoples is justified by the European “benevolence” of encouraging such societies to strive for civilization that mirrors that of modern Western culture.

The **continuity of colonial power** was conceptualized by Aníbal Quijano (1989) under the concept of coloniality of power. Based on the perpetuation of colonial inequalities, the author emphasizes the naturalization of notions such as central and peripheral States, which legitimizes the conditions of hierarchy between them. In this sense, the continuity of colonial power does not merely include power, but also ways of being. This includes ways of being in the world, knowledge, and the prioritization of Western epistemologies.

Such epistemologies value science and the production of knowledge only when they conform to colonial, 'central country' methods, which also exclude and marginalize, invalidate, ignore, or invisibilize knowledge produced by colonized people. The **colonial matrix of power** is, therefore, a complex structure that involves control of the economy, politics, nature, gender, sexuality, science, knowledge and subjectivities (LARANJEIRAS et al., 2021).

The function of Modernity relies on a **violent imposition** of European ideals. Such violence can and has included: war, enslavement, genocide, ethnocide, exploitation, and expropriation of resources from colonized territories.

Under the guise of a march toward 'civilization,' such a Modernity was built using these tools of violence and control. The matrix, as proposed by Quijano (2000) and Walter Mignolo (2011), succinctly illustrates this complex web of domination. Modernity is, therefore, the result of a given power asymmetry between Europe and other peoples, which structures the Modern World-System, guaranteeing the maintenance of systematic colonial privileges and violence. Questioning the violence still imposed by this system today is, therefore, questioning its roots in a profound way, rescuing the autonomy of the subjugated peoples and nations as authors of their own histories and relevant agents in world history.

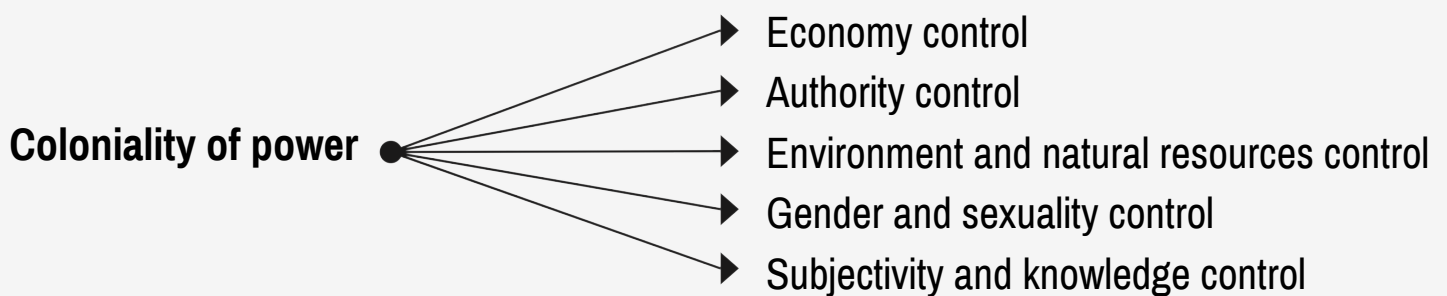


Image 01: Colonial Matrix of Power (BALLESTRIN, 2013, p. 100)

GLOSSARY

Age of Discoveries: European term that celebrates a time of great travel outside the European continent in search of new trade routes and land to explore resources. It begins in 1492 when Christopher Columbus arrives on the American continent financed by the Spanish Crown and ends at the beginning of the 17th century. It focuses on European prowess and heroicity and silences the violence perpetuated in these expeditions and its role in instituting the colonial pact.

Barbarians vs. Savages: Antithetical pairs of civilizations that have different meanings, depending on the interest of those who evoke the term Civilization. For Postcolonial Studies, it refers to the western designation of people that are “behind” in the evolutionary line of progress. The distinction is a European interpretation of the capacity for conversion: the barbarians have already come into contact with Civilization and reject it, while the savages are unaware of it and are able to evolve.

Berlin Conference: Major Western powers meeting to discuss free traffic in the Congo River Basin. Peak of the race for the demarcation of colonial possessions on the African continent in a context of power imbalance between superpowers.

Civilization: Ideal social organization translated into values, customs, religion and good manners. Barbarism/savagery antithetical conceptual pair. In the colonial imagination, civilization corresponds to leaving the State of Nature and embracing the Social Contract.

Coloniality of power: racial/ethnic hierarchical imposition as the main tool of the pattern of power, which acts in the most diverse spheres of day-to-day social existence.

Coloniality of knowledge: mode of domination through knowledge, to rank and place at the top a specific form of knowledge while disqualifying other forms of knowledge and knowledge production. As an example, not obtaining proper academic knowledge without translating the study material into English.

Coloniality of being: a reality that makes people inferior, while a specific type, such as the European, becomes the correct model.

Colonialism: A relationship of domination established between two nations, in which one subjugates and undermines the other's own condition of existence, destroying the culture, the way of life of others and replacing it with its own, thus gaining political, economic and social power over the territory and the colonized people.

Decoloniality: Theoretical proposal from Latin America to Latin America that criticizes the eurocentrism of the post-colonial debate and seeks to be free from current colonial dominations. It denounces that coloniality is the other face of modernity, which operates in the dark and allows the maintenance of dominant world powers.

Enslavement: Originating from the term “Slavic,” but part of world history with varied expressions. It is the process of transforming one’s humanity into a commodity, a “thing,”

used for private purposes, and erasing history, agency and freedom of this “other” for the exploration of their body and soul.

Epistemicide: The annihilation of the wisdom of non-western groups. It's a political project that seeks to destroy knowledge, experiences, knowledge and culture of subjugated people by imposing cultural whitening.

Genocide: Extermination project, being partial or total, of a community, ethnic, racial or religious group. It has a restricted definition in International Law that makes the experience of the Holocaust exceptional and overshadows other genocides (for example: indigenous genocide).

Enlightenment: A European cultural movement of the 17th and 18th century that sought to generate practical changes in European society, focusing on scientism, rationalism and anthropocentrism.

Modernity: Historical time that points to the emergence of a new conception of space and time for humanity that detaches itself from the religious centrality of the Middle Ages. For the “Decolonial Turn,” Modernity cannot be understood only as a moment of European progress because these political and technological advances are directly linked to the exploitation of other nations by colonialism.

Post-colonialism: Plural theoretical strand that seeks to draw attention to the permanence of colonial power relations even after the independence of colonized countries.

Unique Story: creation of stereotyped narratives, mainly by hegemonic societies, about peoples subjugated by them. By creating a veil of pseudo-reality, these unilaterally created “unique stories” to prevent these people from being considered with similarity, empathy and truth, serving the colonial purpose.

Social Contract: Narrative that seeks to point out an “origin” for the formation of civil society as a rational and profitable decision and, consequently, justify the social organization around the Modern State. Whether due to the insecurity of the State of Nature or the desire to guarantee private property, these people voluntarily renounce part of this freedom to delegate to a sovereign the task of guaranteeing their life, liberty and the fulfilment of agreements.

Social Darwinism: Appropriation of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, popular in the 19th and 20th centuries, used for social analysis that sought to legitimize “scientifically” the exploitation and hierarchies of the colonial and capitalist system, determining the superiority of Europeans over other peoples.

State of nature: fictional moment in the narrative to mark a historical time prior to the Social Contract in which individuals were not linked to a higher authority and could live in a world without restrictive social rules. Recognizing that this earlier stage has never existed in history, one of the problems for Postcolonial Studies is that this concept is inspired by accounts of the first European travellers to the American continent in the age of discoveries.

World-System: Post-Marxist concept that understands the international system as the segregation of the world between central and peripheral countries, as well as its reflection in the international division of labor, that deepens the inequalities between them, and strengthens the dominance of central countries.

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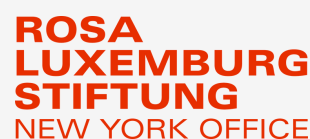
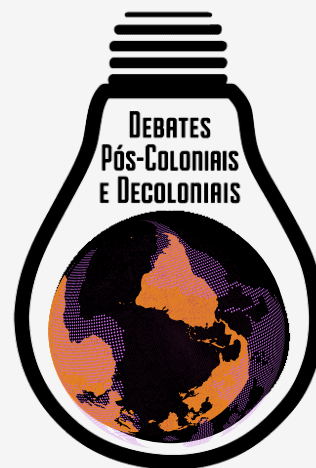
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