Posthuman Glossary

Edited by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova

Bloomsbury Press, pp. 279-281.

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Neocolonial

The neocolonial indicates conditions that resuscitate, or re-enact, colonial dynamics. Therefore the term 'neocolonial' is clearly connected to the notion of postcolonialism. But rather than marking the overcoming of colonial dominations (through decolonization, independence and cultural autonomy), it indicates an ongoing persistence of colonial traces as well as new hegemonic formations. These are not necessarily related to territorial domination; rather they are linked to more diffuse forms of economic, military, financial, environmental, cultural and technological supremacies (PLANETARY).

It could be argued that the term 'postcolonialism' has emerged not only to contest past imperial legacies but also to account for current neocolonial formations, which continue modes of imperialist actions and ideologies in contemporary global contexts (Huggan, 1997). This implies that the colonial era is not over but also that colonial 'remains' (Stoler, 2008; Amin, 2010; Young, 2012) have impacted beyond civilizational terms and are intrinsic to the combined and uneven developmental logic of the modern world system (Spivak, 1991, 1999; Dirlik, 1994; Wallerstein 2004; Lazarus, 2011). The term 'neocolonial' also dismantles simple centre-periphery divides - north and south, First World and Third World - rearticulating power structures within flows and nodes that can be either local or global (Appadurai, 1996; Castells, 2007). Neocolonialism obfuscates and complicates clear-cut divides, producing more oblique and insidious structures of transnational dependency. Issues of nation, gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion and sexual orientations are reorganized, not only in relation to the colonial but also to neoliberal formations, in which the 'economization of everything' corrodes public institutions, social justice and democracy itself (Brown, 2015).

The issue of capitalism is central to the debates on neocolonialism (CAPITALOCENE), as the investment of foreign capital is seen to be used not for the purpose of the development of former colonies, or underdeveloped countries, but as a new form of domination, control and subjection. The economic and financial power of more advanced countries is seen as protracting the impoverishment of less developed countries, or of promoting biased notions of development and progress.

There are many instances of humanitarian aid (Chouliaraki, 2014; Grewal, 2014), development interventions (Enloe, 1989) and peacemaking missions (Henry, 2015) that support the export and imposition of neocolonial models of economic growth and political democracy, and that thwart the efficacy of grassroots organizations and movements. This contributes to a renewed form of control and influence under the guise of solidarity, charity campaigns and human rights activism, contributing to a protracted representation of victimhood and backwardness versus the homogenous and universal proposition of a common humanity and happiness (Mohanty, 2003; Benhabib 2002; Berlant, 2011).

However, the traditional alignment between the developed world and the underdeveloped world has shifted and new powers have emerged, such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), who control new regions of the world, at times overlapping with former Western colonies or the Third World but also new areas. There is also a 'new' neocolonialism going on. For example, China has authorized loans to African governments in exchange for access to natural resources in order to support its skyrocketing economic growth. China is now Africa's largest trading partner, but it is not the local African economies that benefit from this. The benefits are for the Chinese enterprises that systematically import cheap Chinese labour to staff their construction projects, offering very little opportunity for development in the African unskilled labour force. This is a new form of neocolonialism that creates African dependence upon Chinese investments without leading to sustainability and development (Tiffen, 2014).

These new forms of neocolonialism can involve multinational corporations continuing to exploit the (natural) resources of former colonies (material resources or indigenous know-how), or new areas of influence, the implications for labour and refugee migrations, the policies of international funding agencies such as the IMF and World Bank, the outsourcing of labour forces, the chain of love in the care sector (Parrena, 2003), technological surveillance and environmental imperialism (ANTHROPOCENE).

The continuing histories of ecological imperialism, for example, are linked to the nagging persistence of environmental racism in the context of contemporary climate change. Political and environmental justice contests neocolonial takes by suggesting that new contemporary environmental problems must be reframed, not just in global terms but also in planetary terms (Heise 2008) requiring a 'more integrated and conceptually sensitive approach to environmental issues' than has often been the case to date (Rose 2012). Environmental disasters are not always obvious or visible, or capable of being spectacularized by the media; they can also be part of a continuing, slow violence, imperceptible and unmitigated, that threatens the livelihood of minorities and indigenous groups (Nixon, 2011).

Equally, neocolonialism impacts on forms of securitization in unequal ways, using systems of surveillance and control of the 'other' (migrant, refugee, alien) as a potential threat to Western democracy and therefore monitored through databases (Frontex, Eurosur) and biometrics (Dennis Broeders, 2009) in order to link national security to migration and international terrorism. Therefore the digital revolution did

not do away with unequal power relations, in the name of the democratization of information and access to technological advancement. Not only is the quesion of the digital divide a matter of urgency in relation to issues of use, access and literacies (Graham et al. 2012) but the internet itself is menu-driven according to standardized, default identities, as Nakamura theorizes with her notion of cybertypes (2002), in a way that reconfirms the structure of inequality and racism online. Furthermore, neo-colonial patterns are present in the way digital communications are structured online, which, despite the mantra of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), exploits free digital labour, uses profiles gathered via social networks for commercial and marketing aims, and repurposes the internet for capitalistic gains that lead to digital neocolonialism. As Stuart Hall said in an interview "The whole internet, the whole digital world, is currently financed by using this information as a commodity. […] This information is operationalizing knowledge about what the popular is, making it more empirically precise, giving it demographic location, giving it place, situation, etc." (Jay, 2013, p. 23).

While new digital applications consume vast amounts of energy and produce CO_2 to safeguard digital storage and maintenance, there is also the issue of labour outsourcing for the digital assembly lines, the role of remote call centres and e-waste, the waste disposal of obsolete technologies in non-Western countries (OBSOLETE TECHNOLOGIES) that are harmful and toxic because of the metals and chemicals that, once released, lead to long-term illnesses and impairments. Greening the media is therefore a plea made by scholars such as Maxwell and Miller in order to unveil the environmental practices and impacts of electronic media corporations, countering the idea of information and communication technology as clean and ecologically benign (Maxwell and Miller, 2012).

To conclude, even though the term 'neocolonialism' can become too flexible and all-purpose, it still connotes in its essence new, unequal distributions of human, financial, environmental and cultural resources that put countries, peoples and subjects into positions of subalternity and protracted dependence.

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