TRAILS OF INCOMPLETE DECOLONISATION IN AFRICA: THE LAND QUESTION AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Horman CHITONGE
Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town

ABSTRACT   Debates on decolonisation have featured prominently, particularly in South Africa, starting from 2014. Although the concept of decolonisation encompasses a wide range of ideas, there is a general sense that decolonisation is intended to draw attention to the fact that the dominant modes of thinking and production of knowledge across Africa are defined and dominated by a Western world view. In this debate, it is often argued that this represents the failure to fully decolonise the continent, even if colonial occupation ended 60 years ago in most countries. In this article, I argue that decolonisation project in Africa has remained incomplete and there are different manifestations of this. Two examples from the land and the economy are used to illustrate the unfinished project of the decolonising Africa. By arguing that decolonisation has remained incomplete, the paper is not arguing that there has been no attempt to decolonise; but that these efforts have not been radical enough to see the project to its logical conclusion. This is partly because the project of decolonisation was narrowly framed within the nationalist project, which tended to equate decolonisation with political liberation.

Key Words: Decolonisation; Africa; Colonialism; Coloniality; Power relations; Decentring.

INTRODUCTION

Land has always played a critical role in the transformation of African societies. Sam Moyo (2007), who dedicated much of his life to the study of issues around land in Africa, argued that economic development for the continent will be difficult to achieve without resolving the land and agrarian question. In Sam Moyo's scholarship, the land question was very central to the point that he saw the land and agrarian questions as constituting a *national question*, with direct connection to economic growth and development (see Moyo & Yeros, 2011). In all this, the current state of the land and agrarian questions (the national question) and economic structural transformation in *all* African countries remains a clear reminder of an incomplete decolonial project. The incompleteness of decolonisation is partly evident in the post-colonial African states' failure to deconstruct the colonial social engineering and the subsequent power matrix (often referred to as the *coloniality of power*) which continues to shape the land and agrarian structure and as well as African economies.

Completing the decolonisation project, would require a critical engagement with the subtle trails of coloniality of power which continue to dictate not only the activities of most Africans, but also their modes of thought and being. Using

examples from the land and agrarian field, and also from the structure of African economies, this article illustrates that the decolonal project, embarked on in most African countries during the 1960s, has only partially dislodged the colonial rationality and hegemony. The importance of the land question and the structure of African economies in unsettling colonial hegemony and modes of thought cannot be over-emphasised. The decolonial discourse in this article applies to the entire continent for two specific reasons. First of all, the decolonial project was embarked on by all countries in Africa including countries which were not physically occupied by colonial powers; for example Ethiopia and Liberia. Second, the colonisation was not merely a physical process of occupying certain territories; it was much deeper than that, involving the reclassification of the human race into *us* and *them*, the civilised and uncivilised, the developed and the underdeveloped, the industrial and pre-capitalist, etc., (see Mamdani, 1996). It is indeed a dangerously superficial reading of colonialism to exclude Liberia and Ethiopia (and sometimes Morocco and Egypt) from the process of decolonisation simply because these countries were not 'fully colonised!' The colonial rationality and modes of thought applied to all countries in Africa, and as such, the process of decolonisation remains incomplete in all these countries.

This paper has five sections. In the next section, I discuss the importance of the land question in the colonial and decolonial projects. This is followed by a discussion of the concept of decolonisation and what this means in the African context today. In section three a brief discussion of African post-colonial states and the status of the decolonial project is presented. The next section illustrates the incompleteness of the decolonial project drawing from the land and the economy. The last section sums up the discussion.

LAND IN THE COLONIAL AND DECOLONIAL PROJECTS

Form the earlier encounters with imperial and colonial forces in Africa, the control over land proved to be central to the colonial project. Colonialism became a viable project only after the imperial forces secured control of the land through various means including armed invasion, ruthless dispossession of indigenous communities, signing of dubious/fraudulent treaties with the African ruling elites, and the negotiation of loose mining concessions. The introduction of colonial rule in both settler and non-settlers colonies in Africa did not only lead to the introduction of a foreign system of land tenure, but it fundamentally altered the way Africans think and relate to land as illustrated below. Most of, if not all, the policy and administrative changes introduced through colonialism were tailored to protect and advance the interests of the minority European settlers, with little or no regard to the local African people who were, directly and indirectly, turned into tenants of the imperial Crowns, on their mother's land (Okoth-Ogendo, 1989). Given the humiliation and violence to which Africans were subjected during colonialism, when most African countries became independent, there was great expectation that the nationalist leaders, who

fought for the land against foreign occupation, would not only reconstruct the agrarian structure, but also remove the distortions which colonialism introduced around land and the economy. Not surprising, the decolonisation project, which started with the liberation struggle, was rooted in the land question as far as the land defined the polity and the sovereignty of the nation-state which the nationalist aspired to (Mkandawire, 2011). But, almost six decades after most African states gained independence, the decolonisation of the land and agrarian structures, and the accompanying administrative systems remain an incomplete, if not, abandoned project. Just as the securing of control over land was central to the colonial project, the resolution of the land question in all its various dimensions across Africa remains key to a complete decolonial project.

In this paper, I illustrate the incompleteness of the nationalists' decolonisation project using two examples; one from the land question and the other from the structure of African economies. Using these two examples, the paper illustrates the continuity of the colonialilty of power, which is a reflection of the failure on the part of post-colonial African states to decolonise the land and the economic. This is not to argue that there has been no attempt to decolonise; early African nationalists recognised the need to decolonise (see Mkandawire, 1999; 2011). But their efforts were not sustained long enough to see the project to its logical conclusion. This is partly because the project of declonisation was narrowly framed within the nationalist project by equating decolonisation with political liberation (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012); focusing mainly on the physical withdraw of colonial regimes and the centralisation of power there after (Mkandawire, 1999). In other words, decolonisaion has been restricted to merely seeking the "political kingdom." But a complete decolonial project has to go beyond the imperatives of political independence to include economic, cultural, and epistemological sovereignty, for the simple reason that the colonial project was not merely a political project, it was much more that. A narrow conception of colonialism tend to equate it with the physical presence of a colonising force, such that once the colonial powers withdraw, colonialism should not be an issue, since there are no more colonisers on African soil. But the colonial hegemony and rationality is very much alive today in all parts of Africa in the education sector, in the economy, in the way knowledge is produced and validated, and indeed in the dominant modes of thinking and the sets of aspirations. In political economy literature, this unrelenting colonial hegemony is widely referred to as neo-colonialism.

Because of the narrow conceptualisation of the decolinial project, it has been difficult to extend the reconstruction of the African thought and society beyond the political expediencies of the day, and as such, there are many aspects of African societies that still operate under the colonial grip, which has largely been invisible. But now it is gradually becoming apparent that colonialism was a much more complex phenomenon with far deeper effects on African societies beyond the physical presence of the coloniser on African soil. Thus, colonialism, in different ways, is very much alive today even in the absence of a physical coloniser on the continent. Consequently, a total

decolonisation of the continent would require much more than simply dislodging colonial regimes from the continent; it requires a radical reorientation of the African worldview to something fundamentally *African*, which ultimately entails decolonising the African mind (see Ngugi, 1986), and modes of *knowing* and *being*. Tuck & Yang (2012) refers to this as a process of "decentering" colonialism.

DECOLONISATION AND COLONIALITY

The concept of decolonisation is increasingly becoming popular in academic circles in Africa, particularly, in the last half decade or so, to the extent of becoming a cliché. But there is much more to the concept of decolonisation than what is often conveyed in popular debates. Despite the lack of clarity on the exact meaning and practical implications of this concept, there is undoubtedly a revival of the radicalism of the 1960s; perhaps, representing a going back to the roots of sorts, may be an African renaissance of the 21st century. Prior to the current revival of media and scholarly interest in the decolonial discourse, the term decolonisation was used only by a few scholars in the global South, mainly the Latin America and Asian Subaltern Studies Group of scholars (see Grosfoguel, 2007). In South Africa, the term has been lifted into the national consciousness largely by the student movements: "#Rhodes Must Fall" and later, "#Fees Must Fall," which have embarked on a specific campaign calling for the decolonisation of the higher education curriculum in South Africa (see Nyamnjoh, 2016).[1] For many scholars, the two big questions which arise when discussing decolonisation are: What does decolonisation mean? What does it entail in practical terms?

It is important, from the start, to note that, up to this point, the term decolonisation has not been sharply articulated, and as such no single definition exists. Several definitions have been offered and in some discussions, no attempts is made to define what is meant by decolonisation; there seem to be an assumption that the term is self-explanatory. But a cursory glance at the declonisation debates, reveals that the term can mean different things to different people. Depending on what meaning one adopts, decolonisation evokes a wide range of sentiments in different people. For instance, Suren Pillay (2013) reports that some esteemed professors have dismissed the term as "a dangerous call to participate in 'applied nationalism.'" For such scholars, decolonial discourse evokes anxiety about the changes that such a project may bring. Understandably, genuine decolonisation involves a radical re-orientation of entire epistemologies and systems of power which can lead to anxiety and resentment for those who fail to see the violence of colonialism. A good example of this is Bruce Gilley's (2017) article in which he argues that colonialism was not only a legitimate project, but hugely beneficial to the colonised peoples.

For some scholars, decolonisation is conceived as a critique of modernism, while for others it denotes a "critique of eurocentrism from subalternized and silenced knowledges" (see Grosfoguel, 2007). For Fanon (1963) decolonisation

is not just a critique, but a process and programme of de-centering (disordering) colonial rationality, structures, institutions, knowledge systems and world view. In the Fanonian framework, decolonization is a process of recovering oneself from the derangement which colonialism induced in the colonized; a recovery that unveils the myth that colonialism came to lighten the burden of the colonized. In that sense, we see Fanon in Wiredu (1998), who defines decolonization as simply a call for the colonized to know themselves better—as in the maxim, "African, know thyself."

For Tuck & Yang (2012) decolonization is a project of 'decentering settler perspectives' and dominant theories of social change, which are presented as the only way to explain the world everywhere. While Tuck & Yang (2012) acknowledge the importance of decolonization, they are critical of the now popular calls for decolonization which, according to them, fail to grasp the deep implications of decolonization as a project that seeks to "decenter settler perspectives," leading to perceptions of "decolonization as a metaphor" (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Decolonisation is sometimes conceptualized as something comparable to de-westernisation, meaning that "the rules of the game" are no longer set by "Western players and institutions." If decolonization is seen from that angle, it inevitably leads to a "definitive rejection of 'being told' from the epistemic privileges of the *zero point* what we [the colonized] are, what our ranking is in relation to the ideal of *humanitas* and what we have to do to be recognized as such" (Mignolo, 2009: 3, emphasis in original).

When applied to the African context, the plurality of views on what decolonisation means is apparent. For instance, while Thomas Sankara conceptualised decolonisation as a revolutionary movement that sets the restoration of the dignity of African people as its goal (Sankara, 2005), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) sees decolonization as primarily an epistemological undertaking that seeks to systematically "unpack" not only the genealogy of colonialism; but its ethical and ideological dimensions and assumptions. Similar to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012), Nyamnjoh (2012: 129) sees decolonization as a process of unveiling the hegemonic nature of the "epistemological paradigm of the conqueror." For Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1986) decolonization in an African context essentially entails a process of overcoming the *alienation* of an African from her/his-self, caused by the colonial devaluation of African culture, life, art, religion, geography, education, literature, and most importantly, languages.

There are several other ways in which decolonization has been defined and approached, and it is not my intention here to exhaust the list of such definitions. My main aim in discussing the different meanings assigned to the term is to highlight the point that there are different views on what decolonization means, and that the meaning is contested. However, while decolonization is viewed from different perspectives by different scholars, as shown above, most of these views point to two fundamental aspects. The first is that colonialism was built on the assumption that there was only one valid way of *knowing*, one authentic way of *being*; one valid history, language, system of education, culture, etc; and that authentic way, was (and still is) that of the colonizing powers'. Whether

we take decolonization as decentering settler perspectives or overcoming the alienation of the colonized, the underlying point which these views bring out is that the colonizing powers devalued and dishonored other ways of *knowing* and *being*; other histories, other lives, cultures, languages, religions, etc. What this essentially means is that colonialism was a project infused with ontological, and as a consequence, epistemological violence. The physical violence, which is frequently associated with colonialism such as land dispossession, slavery, forced labour, unequal exchange of material goods and ideas, is underpinned by the ontological and the epistemological brutality it embodies. Thus, a decolonial project, by virtue of being a counter discourse, seeks to expose the violence by showing the disregard of other forms of *knowing* and *being* that colonial epistemologies constitute. In this sense, decolonization is a radical discourse that has the enlightenment of both the colonized as well as the colonizer as its objective (Mignolo, 2009).

The second fundamental feature that the different views on decolonisations discussed above bring out, albeit implicitly in some, is that colonialism is ultimately about power relations. It is the seemingly powerful (coloniser) who imposes his or her cosmology, epistemology, culture, language, and being, as 'the' world view, 'the' culture, 'the' knowledge, etc. This hegemonic posturing by the colonizer has evolved into what has been called the *coloniality of power* after the end of formal colinisation. Coloniality of power signifies the "Eurocentrification of the new world power" leading to "a new social classification of the world population on a global scale" (Quijano, 2007: 171). This power matrix, on the side of the colonizer, was not only constructed through the barrel and gun powder, but through a systematic narrative that entrenches ontological and epistemological violence. Although often overlooked in the popular discussions of colonialism, the latter form of violence is much more harmful than the barrel and gun powder, and gives more power to the aggressor, in that it enables the colonizing powers to control how the colonized think, not just about the world, but also about themselves. As Lukes (1974) argues, the most powerful way of exercising power is by controlling people's perceptions, system of values, wants, aspirations, views, beliefs, shared meaning and choices. It is this form of exercising power which is more subtle and often deeply entrenched in processes that apparently seem to be done in the interest of the powerless.

Colonisation was justified on exactly such grounds as evident in the civilising mission (Pax Britanica, and now Pax Americana) narrative; and Christianisation (saving the infidels/pagans from going to hell), as a favour to the colonised. Such sentiments are not buried with the end of colonial occupation, they are still being entertained, for example, in a recent article that argues for the replication of colonialism through the good governance agenda and the recolonization of weak states in the former colonised world (see Gilley, 2017). Through such views the colonisers continues to amass power in subtle ways that enables them to continue influencing what the colonised want, think and aspire for—holding the coloniser as the ideal, the ultimate example of a perfect

humanity, civilisation, culture, development, economy, education, system of land tenure, etc. This has been the most enduring dimension of colonialism which still has a lot of sway in the minds, actions and dreams of the colonised even after physical occupation of colonies ended. Thus, decolonisation at this level requires much more thinking in order to unmask the subtle power which enables the colonialists to continue controlling the colonised's minds and actions.

Understanding these two core elements of colonialism (the ontological and epistemological violence, and the power to control what the colonised want) is very central to understanding the decolonisation project, and the different forms in which coloniality[2] survives today (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Seen from this perspective, decolonisation is not about reversing what colonialism has done so far; that would be not only an impossible, but also an unnecessary mission. A reversal of colonialism would imply going back to the static moment of encounter with the coloniser (see Nyamnjoh, 2012). For instance, decolonising the land tenure system in Africa does not mean that we go back to where African land tenure systems were before the colonial/imperial encounter; that would validate a static view of Africa, which in the end reinforces the colonial narrative.

However, this does not mean that decolonisation is an impossible undertaking; it means that a decolonial project undertakes to understand and expose the distortions, the violence and the power imbalances at play, and to find ways to re-orient the thinking, aspirations, perceptions, knowledges and the being of the colonised. It entails the unmasking and overcoming of the "widespread and stubborn misrepresentation of African cultures as static, bounded and primitive, and Africa as needing the benevolence and enlightenment of colonialism and Cartesian rationalism or their residue to come alive" (Nyamnjoh, 2012: 136). It involves, for example, unmasking the violence and power play entrenched in privileging statutory tenure over customary tenure; it requires rejecting the privileging of colonial epistemologies over endogenous systems of knowledge (Nabudere, 2006; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Mkandawire (1997) frames this as the "demand to be heard" in a world where knowledge about Africa has not been produced to improve the welfare of Africans, but to better control them.

From this perspective, decolonisation is a call to a critical awareness of the fact that knowing is influenced by the location of both the *known* and the *knower*. Once this awareness is realised, it is inevitable that the locus of decolonisation should be on the 'terms of the conversation,' and not just the 'content' (Mignolo, 2009). Paying attention to the location of the knower brings out what Mignolo (2009: 4) has referred to as the 'geo-politics of knowledge,' which makes clear the main task of decolonial thinking as the "unveiling of the epistemic silences of western epistemology and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued."

When the colonised are at this level of engagement, instead of prematurely celebrating the withdraw of the colonial regimes from colonised territories as the real moment of decolonisation, the focus shifts to the surviving influence of the *coloniality of power* that shapes not only the power relations, but also the way the colonised think, the way knowledge is produced, and what is

validated as "*the*" knowledge. This is a more radical way of breaking ranks with colonial hegemony and rationality. A decolonial thinking therefore embraces a broader view of colonialism beyond the physical imposition of a foreign rule, to include the reality of ontological and epistemological violence which entrenches a deeper form of control among the conlonised. It embraces the broader vision which creates room for a diversity of epistemologies and cultures beyond the western paradigms (Grosfoguel, 2007; Nyamnjoh, 2012).

THE POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN STATES AND THE DECOLONIAL PROJECT

A close look at decolonisation from the ontological and epistemological point of view violence makes it clear that the post-colonial African states are sitting on an incomplete project. One does not have to go far to realise that the decolonial project in Africa so far has been restricted to the physical withdraw of the colonialist. But as illustrated above, this is only one dimension of a genuine decolonial project, and perhaps the easiest to accomplish. Any celebration of this dimension of decolonisation as the end game of the liberation struggle, "obscures the continuing operations of coloniality of power and hides the myths of decolonisation and illusion of freedom in Africa" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012: 71). It is such narrow conceptualisation of the decolonial project that explains the incompleteness of the project on the African continent and in other colonised countries. Colonialism as elaborated above, was not just about the imposition of foreign rule; it also encompassed the denial of the humanity of the colonised by degrading them to primitive people needing civilisation, and humanisation. Linda Thuwai Smith, speaking from the experience of the indigenous people of New Zealand, captures the degrading effects of colonialism succinctly when she argues that:

> One of the supposed characteristics of primitive peoples was that we could not use our minds or intellects. We could not invent things, we could not create institutions or history, we could not imagine, we could not produce anything of value, we did not know how to use land and other resources from the natural world, we did not practice the 'arts' of civilisation. By lacking such values, we disqualified ourselves, not just from civilisation but from humanity itself. In other words, we were not "fully human;" some of us were not even considered partially human. Ideas about what counted as human in association with the power to define people as human or not human were already encoded in the imperial discourses prior to the period of imperialism… (cited in Mignolo, 2009: 13–14).

From what Smith is saying, there is no doubt that colonialism is much deeper than just an act of physical occupation of foreign territories; it involves a complex process of inferiorising and dehumanising other people. Inferiorising others

created power for the colonisers to decide not only who is to be counted as human, but what is good for the colonised, whether they know something or not, and more importantly that their knowing was second-rate. This power configuration (see Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012), continues in a subtle way (often branded as neo-colonialism), to influence not only the production of knowledge in the colonised societies, but also the modes of thought and the manner in which knowledge is validated.

The implication of this is that although the withdrawal of colonial regimes from African soil was accomplished during the 1960s, that did not mark the end of colonial influence; it was the first step on the long road to complete decolonisation. In Africa, decolonial thinking of the nationalists has, so far, not gone beyond this first step, to deconstruct the power structures of coloniality which perpetuate subservient and dependent relations with Africans, not only in matters of trade, but also culture, art, language, education and more importantly, the way knowledge is produced and validated. While post-colonial African states have been content and bent on wrestling the political kingdom from the colonialist (Fanon, 1963), they have forgotten that the real power lies in the colonial designs that control not only the way the colonised think, but what they want and the agenda they set for the future. Seemingly, this part of the decolonial project was assumed to follow naturally after achieving political decolonisation. But today, it has become quite clear that without unveiling and challenging the ontological and epistemological violence and the power matrix of colonialism, political independence actually means very little (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). Moyo & Yeros (2011) frame this as the return of the national question in which nations begin to assert their autonomy, seeking to extricate themselves from the hegemonic structures of neo-colonnialism. In trying to undo the colonial structures of power and influence, the revival of the national question is a manifestation of the search for alternatives to colonialism, which is popularly being framed as decolonisation—the need to overturn the coloniality of power.

With the colonial matrix of power remaining intact, Africa still remains "a product of active operations of colonial matrices of power" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015: 15). Without critically engaging the power matrix of colonialism, the biased ontological and epistemological dualism which puts the colonised in an inferior, less rational, less civilised, less developed, less objective, less human, less modern, under-developed, position, will continue.

In this way, the colonisers will continue to put themselves up as,

> …the mirror of the future of all societies and cultures, as the advanced form of the history of the entire [human] species. What does not cease to surprise, however, is that Europe succeeded in imposing that 'mirage' upon the practical totality of the cultures that it colonised; and, much more, that this chimera is still so attractive to so many (Quijano, 2007: 176).

A complete project of decolonisation would not ignore the mirage and leave it masked as the universal truth, the only truth; it would lay bare its geo-political

positionality, and seek to broaden the epistemological scope that allows for a genuine interchange of experiences and knowledges. Such a decolonial project will not be content with achieving a "mere modicum of juridical freedom… which has been mistakenly conflated with achievement of popular freedom for the ex-colonised African peoples" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012: 72–73).

To be fair, the nationalist project in Africa, through which the decolonial project was articulated, showed some commitment to decolonisation, and succeeded in achieving political decolonisation. Mkandawire (1999) observes that the nationalists in Africa allocated themselves five key tasks: 'complete decolonisation,' economic and social development, nation-building, democratisation, and regional cooperation. Out of these five, "only the first one—decolonization—has been completed, now that South Africa has at last won its arduous battle for non-colonial status" (Mkandawire, 1999: 75). From this, it is apparent that decolonisation has been restricted to the dislodgement of foreign rule from African soil, and this is one of the reasons why it makes perfect sense for the nationalist to assume that the achievement of political independence implied that colonialism was history; there was nothing more to fight against. This narrow approach to decolonisation explains why the project has remained largely incomplete, if not, totally abandoned today.

However, even if one takes the nationalists on their own terms, it is apparent that the self-allocated tasks remain incomplete to a large extent. While issues of economic and social development have remained on the radar (often thrust on the agenda by the former colonial powers), it is not clear if nation-building, democratisation and regional cooperation are still projects under construction today (Mkandawire, 2011). Soon after independence, the nationalist ideology itself became problematic as the project was reduced to that of nation-building, and eventually state-building, focusing on narrowly defined goals aimed at concentrating power and control in a few big men. This has become a pre-occupation of most of Africa's political elite. At the moment, there are no indications that African leaders are even thinking about decolonisation in the broader sense discussed above. It is students demands, particularly in South Africa, for a declolonised curriculum, which have inadvertently reminded them about the incompleteness of the decolonisation project on the continent. It is not surprising that decolonisation as a process of disrupting colonial rationality; the re-orientation of African societies to alternative modes of being, knowing and relating with the world, has remained an unfinished business in many respects. In this sense, even the notions of a nation-state as an autonomous social and political formation has been largely hollowed out as most African states continue to operate under the coloniality of power, which dictate in subtle ways, what institutions to establish and how to run them. That dream of establishing genuine African systems and institutions built on the African world view and values has largely faded away. It is the colonial value system in all sectors of life which has been prioritised, giving rise to a situation where the African systems and values are viewed as negative forces. To illustrate this, I use two examples from the land and the economy.

DECOLONISATION AND THE LAND QUESTION IN AFRICA

Like many other aspects of African life, the colonial encounter drastically changed not only the relations around land, but the way Africans think about land. There are several ways in which the colonial encounter significantly altered land relations and tenure arrangements in Africa. One of the most fundamental changes is the introduction of an entirely foreign land tenure system, based on European conception of land, and property in general. The large body of literature on land and land tenure in Africa is almost unanimous on the view that the dominant conception and approaches to land tenure and management in Africa today are largely a product of colonial construction (Okoth-Ogendo, 1989; Bassett, 1993; Agbosu, 2000; Akuffo, 2009). In the context of decolonial thinking, it is important to note that this change has always been portrayed as a positive change (for the better), since customary land tenure systems in Africa were seen as the ones responsible for blocking progress to more productive use of land (see Bassett, 1993; Peters, 2009). This is one area where the coloniality of power is quite evident.

The introduction of a completely foreign way of thinking about land has not just led to tenure dualism (customary and statutory tenure); it has also been a source of tension between the two systems, and this sometimes has given rise to conflict over land. Sam Moyo (2007; 2008) in is work, consistently wrote about this as a sign of an incomplete process of decolonnisation; a failure to address the colonial imprints on the land and agrarian question in Africa. Agbosu (2000: 13–14) captures the tension that ensues when the two systems exist side by side, leading to "an ideological struggle reflecting the ideas of the two deferring systems of production in which the dominant capitalist ideas held sway over the traditional. The most significant areas in which these conflicts become manifest can be found in the transfer of interests in land." Since the introduction of the European tenure system in Africa by the colonial governments, customary land systems have had an uneasy co-existence with the European system. In this disquiet cohabitation, customary land tenure has always been seen, by both the colonial and post-colonial African policymakers, as something backward, inferior, unproductive, inefficient, insecure, old-fashioned, and a barrier to investment and economic growth (see Peters, 2009; Bassett, 1993).

This should not be surprising, in the context of the discussion above, that the colonial discourse has always operated on a binary logic that inferiorises the experiences of the colonised. Colonisation by its nature is a direct confirmation of this binarism, which justifies the imposition of a foreign world view on another, on the pretext that one is better, more effective, more civilised than the other. It is this logic that does violence to the *being* and the *knowing* of the other. In this logic, statutory tenure is seen as more superior, more secure, with great potential to promote investment, increase productivity and contribute positively to economic growth and development. Here we have an example of a colonial experience presented as the ideal to which the colonised should aspire. The entire system is built around a biased dualism in which anything indigenous

is seen as inferior, backward and inefficient (see Mamdani, 1996). With specific reference to land tenure, the "early colonial and missionary attitude toward what they saw as "communal" forms of landholding was deeply entrenched in longstanding cultural preconceptions that set individual, private ownership as superior to communal or collective forms of tenure" (Peters, 2009: 1317). The continuation of these preconceptions in post-colonial Africa is a reflection of the reality of the coloniality of power and the incompleteness of the decolonial project.

DISTORTED CONCEPTION OF LAND

   To understand the coloniality of power around land relations in Africa, it is important to identify the drastic changes or distortions that colonialism introduced in the African land systems. The first and most important distortion was around the conception of land itself. From a European perspective, land was largely conceptualised as a property like any other properties (Agbosu, 2000). As a property, all land had to have an "owner," with absolute ownership (property) rights, such that land tenure was conceived as a set of clearly delineated rights and claims that one holds in the land. On the other hand, in the traditional African tenure system land was never thought of as a property that someone can exclusively own. As Akuffo (2009) explains, the concept of land in traditional African society was deeply embedded in the complex social relations which defined access to land and the exercise of power over land. In this regard, a clear distinction was made between the *soil* (*solum*) and the things that grow on it; "there was a clear separation in African thought and law between the *solum* and any *manifestation*, such as crops, trees and buildings which symbolises human interaction with it" (Okoth-Ogendo, 1989: 8). This separation was not present in the Dutch-Roman conception of land where the solum was fused together "with water and air in a compact, recording the claims of individuals rather than social labour upon it" (Okoth-Ogendo, 1989).
   What this difference in the conception of land highlights is that land in the two systems mean different things. While in the European system it was the norm for the individual to have exclusive rights to land, in the traditional African system, ownership of the soil was only a reserve of the collective; only the things attached to the soil could be owned individually. The collective (which is often referred to as communal'ownership) was understood broadly to include the past (ancestors), those living at the time, and those yet to come (future generation). This intergenerational conception of land in Africa, transcends the immediate imperatives of individual ownership of the *solum*, at any particular moment since the land was intricately connected to the past and the future, not just the present. This is why it was only the collective (community in the broader sense) that could own the land; no single individual, not even the chief had ownership rights to the *solum* (Okoth-Ogendo, 1989; Mamdani, 1996; Agbosu, 2000). Thus, when the concept of ownership is transported from its European

context to the African context, it creates not only confusion, but tension and conflict as well:

> the transposition of Western (Roman-Dutch/civil law and Anglo-American) property concepts and terminology in the analyses of African processes is a veritable source of confusion. The characterisation of property concepts and legal relationships using Western analogies and paradigms is perhaps understandable but has nevertheless, led to an unnecessary degree of confusion with wholly negative practical consequences such as destructive litigation over land titles and land alienation (Akuffo, 2009: 62).

Earlier on, Meek (1946) issued a warning on the dangers of applying the European terms to understand land relations in Africa:

> [A] frequent source of error has been a presupposition that native conceptions of ownership must be basically the same as those of Europeans. English terms such as 'rent,' or 'lease' have been employed to denote practices which bear only a superficial resemblance to those denoted by these terms. The gift given to chiefs as administrators of land have been assumed to be 'rent', and the chiefs to be 'landlords' (Meek, 1946: 11).

Meek's caution above is critically important in highlighting the violence that a colonial imposition of a European experience, meaning and knowledge does to the colonised. However, instead of looking at these as misunderstandings of the local context, the assumption that the terms should mean the same reflects the coloniality of power where the experience of the colonised must be monotonically mapped onto the experience of the coloniser, since the later represents the ideal, the real, the rational, the advanced, the standard against which everything else should be measured. Anything that does not fit unto the European norm is dismissed as primitive, traditional, uncivilised, and barbaric. When seen from this perspective, the violence of colonialism becomes more palpable, and the incompleteness of the decolonial project becomes conspicuously evident.

The implications of the conceptual distortion of land is that land then becomes a commodity which can be sold and bought like anything else. In an African setting, this creates numerous conceptual and practical challenges which led to three basic distortions: that land should have an owner; that only members of a given tribe should own land in a particular community, and that the person responsible for the administration of land is effectively the land owner (see Mamdani, 1996). By presenting the European system as superior to the African, the colonialists created an imbalanced power relation where their system becomes the sought after, and the traditional system is something that had to be abandoned. This has continued even today when statutory tenure is not only preferred, but is emphatically endorsed by many African governments, with the aim of replacing customary tenure.

As illustrated later, most African political elite still believe that customary tenure has no place in modern Africa, and at various times, frantic efforts have been made to do away with customary tenure. Here again we have an example of how coloniality of power continues to shape not just the way the colonised think, but also what they aspire for. There is nothing more powerful than having the power to control what someone thinks and wants, as Lukes (1974) argues. By affirming the colonial claim that customary land represents backwardness and a barrier to progress, the colonised have forfeited power to the coloniser who then has an advantage because his or her ideas become dominant, become the leading ideas. This has resulted not only in the distortion of the African experience, but has also stifled the efforts to understand land relations in Africa after the colonial encounter, as Bassett (1993: 5) observes: "The tendency of colonial apologists to project their own (European models and concepts onto African societies has hindered our understanding of development and change in this area. …ethnocentric and ideological biases and their attendant political agenda distort much of the literature."

COLONIAL DNA ON AFRICA'S LAND

Privileging colonial ideas is also evident in the structure and institutions surrounding land administration in Africa's urban and rural areas. As Home (2012: 62) argues, the "legacy of colonialism is still etched on the landscape and practices of Sub-Saharan African Towns and cities." Many post-colonial African governments, immediately after independence, formulated laws and policies to respond to the challenges of land tenure and agrarian reforms introduced by colonial regimes (Adams & Turner, 2005). But most of these laws and institutions simply inherited and tinkered with the colonial social engineering to the extent that continuity has been the norm rather than the exception (Bassett, 1993). Continuity in these reforms is evident in three aspects: the first is that "many post-colonial governments simply retained or revised colonial land rules." The second is that many of the African governments have continued to perceive customary tenure as something that hinders development and therefore inferior; and thirdly, the colonial idea that by merely reforming land tenure arrangements, the complex agrarian transformation issues will be resolved, has continued to define the official approach to land reform in post-colonial Africa, where land tenure reform is broadly seen as a panacea for everything (Bassett, 1993: 9; Moyo, 2007). Apart from these three, there have been continuities in the land administration institutions with only cosmetic changes introduced (Adams, 2003). For example, the centralisation of land administration is something introduced by the colonial governments prior to the 1960s, and yet in many countries these same structures have remained intact, with land administration concentrated in the capital cities, as was the case in colonial times.

This is a clear sign of the failure to deconstruct the colonial structure in the

post-colonial context. If we start from the view that colonial institutions and legal systems around land were introduced to serve colonial interests (often without any due regard to the colonised), it would be expected that the post-colonial African states, because of their opposition to the colonial project as a whole, would re-orient and radically transform these institutions and laws to serve the interest of the African people. But so far, little has happened in that regard (Metcalfe & Kepe, 2008). To achieve this, a radical re-orientation of the colonial system is needed. This is more so because of the centrality of land in the liberation struggle, but also in the lives of many Africans today. Despite land being the key motive for the liberation struggle across Africa (Havnevik, 1997), the land and agrarian questions remain aspects of post-colonial African societies where decolonisation is poignantly incomplete (Moyo, 2007).

As noted above, we have seen many African governments privileging statutory tenure over customary tenure in no uncertain terms. For instance the 2006 draft land policy in Zambia does not hide the fact that customary land tenure is not a suitable form of land tenure, in a manner that sounds like a rehearsal of the colonial narrative:

> Free access to resources provided by customary tenure has the disadvantage that the individual has no incentive to invest in common resources such as pasture improvement. This has the effect of encouraging overuse and can result in severe degradation of the environment. Rights derived from customary tenure are not registered and difficult to define. Private credit institutions do not recognise such rights as collateral. Furthermore, rights to land derived from customary tenure are subject to local practices and beliefs (The Republic of Zambia, 2006: 13).

Similar views can be found in the national land policies in Tanzania, Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, Malawi and Liberia, where the drive to formalise customary land through some form of statutory instrument has been promoted as a way to attract foreign investment in land. While in many countries this is not stated so clearly, it is evident that policy makers have fallen prey to the colonial chimera that everything non-European is retrogressive and not desirable; they have surrendered their power to think independently, thereby losing control to determine their thinking and system of wants.

The other example of the failure to decolonise the land tenure in African lies is the maintenance of the colonial land ownership structures, especially in the former settler colonies where large portions of land were alienated from local communities by European settlers. Sam Moyo (2007) identifies the failure to redistribute land after independence as one example of incomplete decolonisation. He frames the debate broadly around reparation for "colonial land loses" which many African governments have not addressed. A decolonial thinking around land would follow the logic that the mass dispossession of indigenous people during colonial rule merits a massive land redistribution to re-orient the colonially

designed land and agrarian structure.

As observed above, although many African countries gained independence 60 years ago, restructuring colonial land tenure policy and institutions is one area where decolonisation has remarkably failed, with most governments maintaining the colonial land administrative policies and institutions (Adams, 2003; Obeng-Odoom, 2012). As a result, the inability to expose the violence of colonialism and therefore the need to decolonise to create an environment where justice can be restored, is evident. Instead, just as the "colonial government found ruling the indigenous hinterland easier by co-opting traditional governance system, rather than deconstructing them… post-colonial, independent, African governments have more or less adopted the same approach" (Metcalfe & Kepe, 2008: 238).

Even in countries where some relatively radical reforms were undertaken by means of nationalising land and the abolishment of freehold title in Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia and Guinea, there has been widespread failure to reconstruct the colonial agrarian landscape. For instance, in Zambia, despite the seemingly radical steps introduced by the Kaunda government (to nationalise land in 1975 by abolishing freehold tenure), land throughout the post-colonial period retained the original colonial tri-modal structure of *crown land* (which was simply renamed *state* land at independence), and *native reserves* and *trust land*. Native and Trust lands comprised lands that were reserved for the native populations and were therefore administered by traditional authorities using local customary norms and traditional practices. It was only in 1995 when *native reserves* and *trust lands* were consolidated into one category—*customary land*. This consolidation of the two categories into customary land was merely cosmetic and did not in any way alter people's rights to customary land. Thus, even after the reforms introduced in 1995 in Zambia, land tenure dualism (customary and statutory) has persisted, with customary land tenure widely perceived as something retrogressive that needs to be done away with. As a result, customary tenure continues to awkwardly coexist with statutory tenure as evident in the practice of converting customary land into leasehold tenure which is promoted by the state (Chitonge et al., 2017). Land tenure dualism is so prevalent across Africa that it defines the continent's agrarian land scape. It is here where the failure to grasp the ontological and epistemological violence and the power matrix inherent in the colonial design becomes more obvious. A genuine decolonial project should aim to reconstruct and re-orient the colonial land and agrarian structure.

DECOLONISATION AND THE AFRICAN ECONOMIES

The other example I would like to use to illustrate the incompleteness of the decolonial project is the structures of African economies. The economic sphere presents another interesting example of how the colonial logic continues to operate today, conceptually and theoretically, to shape the economic and development agenda. A quick glance at the structure of most African economies

today makes this very clear. Almost 60 years after colonial occupation ended, most African economies still have the same economic structure that was left by the colonialists; most of them are still predominantly extractive mono-economies. As Table 1 shows, most of the countries are involved in the extraction of raw materials as was the case during colonialism. In many countries, only a few commodities account for the entire export earning; meaning that the economies have drastically failed to diversify the production and export base (see Chitonge, 2015).

In countries such as Angola, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Nigeria, only one commodity accounts for more than 75 percent of total exports (Table 1). Most importantly, even in countries with more than one major exports, these exports are predominantly raw materials, sent to Europe and other developed countries, unprocessed. In the colonial economic logic, defined by the international division of labour, the African economies were set up to dig out minerals from the ground and grow agricultural products to feed the industries in Europe and America. This set up puts African economies at a great disadvantage in that the activities to which they are assigned add low value, leading to the situation where these economies only capture a tiny fraction of the value chains in which they participate (Chitonge, 2015). Walter Rodney, in his famous book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, captures the colonial design well when he observes that in the colonial division of labour, "Africans were to dig minerals out of the subsoil, grow agricultural crops, collect natural products, and perform a number of other odds and ends such as bicycle repairing. Inside Europe, North America, and Japan, workers would refine the minerals and the raw materials and make the bicycles" (Rodney, 1974: 177).

The platinum that is mined in South Africa and Zimbabwe is exported "raw" to Germany (and now China) where it is processed into metal alloy which is used in the manufacturing of cars and other heavy metal equipment. South Africa and Zimbabwe only captures 15–25 percent of the platinum value chain. Of course this serves the colonialists interests well, and the expectation was that in post-colonial Africa, all African economies will be re-oriented to serve the interest of the African people. Yet, most economies in Africa have maintained the same economic structure; resulting in serious economic leakage to the former colonial powers.

The broader context to this is that African economies were immersed into the colonial global economy in an extroverted manner, such that African economies would produce raw materials which were exported for processing in developed countries and brought back for the consumption of a small elite population which is now growing if we take the stories about the rise of Africa's middle class seriously (see Melber, 2016).

Hountondji (1997) and Nabudere (2006) draw interesting parallels between the structures of commodity and knowledge production, arguing that in both cases, Africa is geared to produce raw materials for processing in Europe into finished products, which are then returned for the consumption of a few. The production of knowledge and commodities is structured in such as a way that

Table 1. Top three exports and share in total export (2010) for selected African countries

Country	1st	Share (%)	2nd	Share (%)	3rd	Share (%)	Number of export products adding up to 75 of total export
Angola	Petroleum	97.3					1
Botswana	Diamonds Raw	43.7	Nickel Mattes	21.9	Diamond	8.9	4
Burundi	Coffee unroasted	70.2	Black tea	13.1			2
Chad	Petroleum	80.6	Petroleum oils	8.6			1
Cameroon	Petroleum	42.1	Cocoa bean	15.8	Wood	7.2	6
Congo	Petroleum	85.1					1
Ethiopia	Coffee unroasted	42.1	Sesame Seed	22.5	Cotton Shirts	8.6	19
Gabon	Petroleum	75.8	Manganese Oil	12.3	Cut flowers	10.7	3
Kenya	Black tea	18.6	Cut flower	13.1	Coffee not roasted	6.1	48
Malawi	Tobacco	53.0	Black tea	6.9	Uranium	6.5	5
Mali	Cotton	35.6	Petroleum oils	29.1	Sesame Seed	7.8	4
Mauritius	Tuna	11.3	Shirts	11.0	Cane beet	6.8	43
Namibia	Uranium	26.8	Diamond	16.1	Zinc	13.4	6
Nigeria	Petroleum	85.9	Natural Gas	6.9			1
Rwanda	Coffee unroasted	30.4	Vanadium Ores	24.8	Black tea	13.8	4
Senegal	Petroleum	26.4	Cement	10.5	Phosphoric acid	9.8	18
South Africa	Platinum	7.6	Gold	6.9			92
Tanzania	Precious metal	14.5	Tobacco	8.7	Coffee not roasted	6.4	24
Togo	Cocoa Bean	26.7	Gold	12.8	Cement	10.1	8
Uganda	Coffee unroasted	32.8	Tobacco	9.9	Fish fillet	9.3	13
Zambia	Copper Cathodes	48.0	Copper anodes	26.7	Cobalt	11.2	3
Zimbabwe	Tabacco	20.5	Chromium	15.3	Nickel	7.1	17

Source: Author based on data from African Development Indicators 2012/13 (World Bank, 2013).
Note: Countries are selected randomly. For a full list of countries, see World Bank (2013: 72–73).

raw materials and *raw data* are extracted from Africa, processed elsewhere and exported back to Africa for consumption, but only for a few in both cases. The copper that is dug out of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is processed in China just as the data collected in Mali or Kenya is processed in France and Britain respectively, and then the copper products and the findings (and theories constructed) are then exported back to Africa. This again exposes the violence of the colonial design and social engineering to the extent that it becomes a social justice issue. Here decolonisation is not just a critique but reveals the injustice of the entire system.

The other way in which decolonisation has remained incomplete in the economic sector is around the enclave nature of African economies (Moyo, 2008). Enclavity is a concept that captures well the colonial logic where economic activities in Africa were set up without any regard for the local population; the driving motive was to serve particular colonial interests (Mhone, 2001). It is common to find, even today, that a mine develops in an area where a lot of people are not connected to the activities of a mine in any significant way (and were they are, it is through the negative impact of the mine such as water pollution and land degradation). During colonial times, such activities did not take into account the plight of the people around the mine; the interest was only to dig the minerals out of the soil. As a result, pockets of modern infrastructure and economic activities developed in the sea of poverty and misery—hence the enclave nature of these activities. Kamarck (1967) gives an example of roads or railway lines which were constructed by the colonial governments in Africa as an example. He argues that these were meant specifically to transport the minerals form the mine to the point of export, with no due regard given to the local people living along the road or railway line. Most of these projects have continued today, characterised by new forms of enclavity, mimicking the colonial design. A decolonised economy is expected to re-orient the logic of these projects in ways that recognise and value the humanity of the people around. But because the dominant logic operative even today is still entrenched in the colonial matrix of power, the process of decolonisation has not translated into anything tangible in this respect. Enclavity is still a dominant characteristic that defines most African economies in one way or another, to such an extent that in some cases we have continued to use the same roads that were constructed during colonial rule.

The other area where decolonisation has not gone far is around the use of economic growth models. It is common within the economic mainstream scholarship to employ economic models developed in the advanced economies and expect these to explain and shed more light on the challenges of economic growth in Africa and other developing areas (see Chitonge, 2015). The problem with importing economic models was observed earlier by the pioneers of development economics such as Albert Hirschman who argued that these models developed to understand economic problems in advanced economies have little relevance in developing countries. Hirschman (1958) in particular argued that these models because they were constructed to understand economic challenges in advanced economies, they "will have minimum relevance in any radically different environment." He goes further to advise that the "economics of development [developing economies] dare to borrow too extensively from the economics of growth [advanced economies], like the underdeveloped countries themselves, it must learn to walk on its own feet, which means that it must work out its own abstractions" (Hirschman, 1958: 33). But in the colonial framework, valid knowledge is only that which is produced in the coloniser; the rest of the world produce wisdom and culture (Mignolo, 2009); and as such they rest of the world should rely on theories and models from the dominant

economies. Use of such models in Africa and other colonised places only reflect the failure to decolonise the knowledge production system which continues to operate on a biased and violent epistemic structure.

CONCLUSION

There are other ways in which decolonisation can be demonstrated to be incomplete in Africa. In this paper, I have focused on the land and the economy as examples and the discussion above has presented a number of ways in which the colonial logic and design continues to influence the thought and practice in colonised areas. From the discussion above, it is apparent that genuine decolonisation is not a simple project, it requires developing a critical decolonial thinking that unmasks the violence and lop-sidedness of colonialism. The first step to a decolonial thinking is a full understanding of the coloniality of power and what this entails for a process of decolonisation. A failure to grasp the deep rootedness of colonialism and its power can lead to premature celebration of an incomplete decolonisation as was the case in Africa where the dislodgment of colonial regimes from the continent was celebrated as if it as the ultimate goal.

It is also clear that a decolonial project does not entail reversing colonialis, but rather unveiling its violence, injustice and insensitivity and then re-orienting the societies of the colonised. This, as noted earlier is not a mean task; it calls for a radical engagement and commitment to changing the power matrix between the colonised and the coloniser.

This paper has shown that although colonial occupation ended during the 1960s in most countries, the effects of colonialism are still very much alive today and manifest in different forms. In the case of land, the tenure dualism, with an outright preference of the statutory tenure system over customary tenure demonstrate the coloniality of power where the colonised is made to believe the coloniser's knowledge, systems of law, education, cultures, languages is more superior and therefore desirable. In the economic sphere, the failure to transform the extroverted structure of African economies, set up during colonialism, into diversified production and export bases also highlight the incomplete nature of the decolonisation project. The repeated calls from students to transform the curriculum in African universities is an indication that there is need to engage with the colonial realities in Africa, not just around education, but in other aspects of life including the economy.

NOTES

(1)   It is not clear if similar calls have been made in institutions of higher learning in other countries. But the sentiments of having an Africa-centred knowledge system are strong across the continent not just today (see Nabudere, 2006).

(2)   Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243) distinguishes colonialism as a political and economic relations between the colonised and the colonised, while coloniality refers to the "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations."

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Author's Name and Address: Horman CHITONGE, *Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, Cape Town 7701, SOUTH AFRICA*.

E-mail: horman.chitonge [at] uct.ac.za