**GEOG 500 Discussion Readings**

**Thabo Sebobi**

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| Article Title | Decolonizing geographic knowledge |
| Author (s) | Sarah A Radcliffe – Professor - Department of Geography  University of Cambridge |
| Purpose of the paper | In this paper, Radcliffe introduces the idea of “decolonizing geographical knowledge.” She explains why geography needs to take seriously the continuing influence of colonialism on how knowledge is produced, taught, and practiced. The aim of the paper is essentially to show how decolonial thinking can go further than postcolonial critiques and reshape geography today.  **Main points:**   * **Decolonization goes beyond postcolonialism.** The paper states that postcolonial studies seek to expose the legacies of empire, but decolonial scholars want to rethink knowledge itself. Decolonial scholar challenge the Eurocentric “universal truths” and value ideas from Indigenous, Black, feminist, queer, and Southern perspectives. * **Modernity and colonialism are linked.** What we call modern progress (modernity) was built together with colonial power (coloniality). This means that Western knowledge is not neutral it carries colonial assumptions. * **Border or Southern thinking.** Knowledge also comes from spaces outside Euro-American traditions. These include indigenous practices, South–South exchanges, activist movements. * **Race and knowledge.** Decolonial work highlights how white supremacy and racial hierarchies continue to shape geography as a mostly white discipline. * **Challenges in practice.** Decolonizing geography means changing curricula, teaching, hiring, and research priorities. But this is not easy in institutions shaped by whiteness and neoliberal pressures. * **Ethical and political task.** Decolonization is not only about theory but also about justice acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty, anti-Black racism, and material costs of colonialism. |

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| Article Title | Globalization and the “Spatial Fix” |
| Author (s) | David Harvey - is a Distinguished Professor of [Anthropology](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/anthropology/) & [Geography](https://www.gc.cuny.edu/earth-and-environmental-sciences/specializations/geography) at the [Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY)](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/), the Director of Research at the [Center for Place, Culture and Politics](http://pcp.gc.cuny.edu/), and the author of numerous [books](https://davidharvey.org/books/). He has been teaching Karl Marx’s *Capital* for over 50 years. |
| Purpose of the paper | In this paper, Harvey explains globalization from a geographical perspective. He argues that globalization is not something entirely new, but part of capitalism’s ongoing need to solve its crises by expanding into new spaces a process he calls the **spatial fix.**  **Main points:**   * **Spatial fix meaning.** The term “fix” has different meanings: to secure something in place, to solve a problem, or to get a temporary “fix” like an addict. Harvey uses it to describe how capitalism temporarily “fixes” its crises by expanding geographically. * **Capitalism’s addiction.** Just like it relies on technological progress, capitalism constantly seeks new places, resources, markets, and labor to keep profits flowing. This is why globalization feels endless it’s part of capitalism’s survival strategy. * **Contradiction of fixity and movement.** Capital needs both mobility (moving goods, capital, and people quickly) and fixed investments (factories, infrastructure, cities). But these fixed structures can later become barriers when capital shifts elsewhere. * **Uneven development.** Globalization produces winners and losers: some regions grow rich while others are left behind, creating new inequalities and monopolies. * **Role of institutions.** Modern globalization involves powerful organizations like the IMF, WTO, and EU that manage this global restructuring. |

**Article Connections**

 **Both critique Eurocentric/Western dominance** - Harvey through capitalism’s restructuring of space, and Radcliffe through colonialism’s hold on knowledge.

 **Both stress unevenness -** Harvey stresses on uneven geographical development under capitalism, and Radcliffe on unequal recognition of knowledges.

 **Both call for alternatives:** Harvey points to the need for resistance and rethinking globalization while Radcliffe to decolonial approaches that pluralize knowledge.

**Discussion Questions**

1. In your opinion, **what does it mean to “decolonize” geographical knowledge, and why do you think this important for the discipline of geography today?**
2. H**ow do you think including Indigenous, Black, feminist, and Southern perspectives change the way we teach and practice geography?**

**Maria Mehrin**

**Massey, D. 2012 (1993). Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place. *In Mapping the Futures,* pp. 60-7. Routledge.**

**Doreen Massey** was an Emeritus Professor of Geography at The Open University, who believed it allowed her to be an intellectual, teacher, and researcher in ways a traditional university could not. She is considered one of the major figures in twentieth-century geography, whose work reached into different fields of geography, including economic geography, Marxist geography, feminist geography, and cultural geography. In particular, her advanced economic geography and Marxist-informed research from the 1970s played a key role in the radicalization of human geography.

**Key Points**

* Massey addressed the issue of ‘power-geometry’ in response to her critique of Harvey’s time-space compression. It is known that people and groups are unevenly positioned within global networks of movement and connection. Power-geometry highlights that globalization and mobility are not neutral, as people experience and control them very differently depending on their social position.
* Similarly, Massey criticized how some writers treat place as static in the context of globalization and time-space compression. She proposed that place should be understood as a dynamic intersection of wider social relations. Four points were highlighted by which a progressive concept of place might be considered.

i. Places are made through ongoing social relations and constantly changing.

ii. Places do not have to be understood through bounded enclosures.

iii. Places do not have one single, unified identity. Instead, they are inherently diverse and contested.

iv. The specificity of a place does not come from a fixed, internalized history; instead, it emerges from the unique mix of local and global relations, their interactions, and the layers of accumulated histories that continually shape it.

**Importance:** Understanding time-space compression as socially differentiated opens up the possibility of a **politics of mobility and access.** By recognizing that different groups have unequal control over movement and resources, the work provides a framework to address social inequalities, rethink access to opportunities, and develop more just and inclusive policies.

**Connection:** Peet’s “Inequality and poverty” highlighted that an individual’s income and opportunities are shaped by the size, density, and quality of their social and economic environment. Access to these resources depends on mobility, which itself is unevenly distributed. This concept can be connected with Massey’s power-geometry, which shows that different groups have unequal control over flows of people, information, and opportunities.

**Question:** How does understanding place as the product of dynamic local and global interactions, rather than a fixed historical identity, change the way we approach issues of human geography?

**Whatmore, S. 2006. Materialist Returns: Practising cultural geography in and for a more-than-human world. Cultural Geographies 13(4): 600-609**.

**Sarah Whatmore**, a British Geographer, is a Professor of Environment and Public Policy at the University of Oxford, who is also an elected fellow of the British Academy, the Academy of Social Sciences, and the Royal Geographical Society. Her works synthesize human and environmental perspectives, analyzing how people conceptualize and engage with nature not only in everyday life but also through the domains of science, governance, and politics.

**Key Points**

* *“Cultural geographers have found their way (back) to the material in very different ways that variously resonate with what I take to be amongst the most enduring of geographical concerns the vital connections between the geo (earth) and the bio (life).”* - The key point of the writeup is addressing renewed focus on materialism in cultural geography by meaningfully connecting earth and life.
* Cultural geography’s materialist practices form **“more-than-human” approaches**, which recognize that humans, nonhumans, and the environment are interconnected, rather than treating humans as separate from the world. Cultural geography is shifting from studying material things “out there” to studying how the material world is **lived, felt, and experienced by humans**, integrating the human “in here” with the external world.
* The author identifies **four key shifts** in recent materialist approaches in cultural geography:

***i. Shift from Discourse to Practice:*** The focus moves from what people **say or think** to what they **do and enact**, emphasizing how people **act through their bodies** and treat discourse itself as a kind of practice.

***ii. Shift from Meaning to Affect:*** Instead of focusing only on what things **mean**, attention is paid to what things **do**, their **affective impact**, including the visceral, relational, and sensory forces that shape experience and interaction.

***iii. Towards More-Than-Human Enquiry:*** Socio-material change is not caused exclusively due to human. Nonhuman actors, animals, technologies, objects, play roles as **agents** in shaping social and material worlds. This approach considers the senses,

**Importance:** According to the author, the return of **materiality matters because of the complex interactions between science, society, technology, and democracy, where multiple actors, scientists, policymakers, activists, and citizens, engage and clash over public issues. Controversies over issues like genetic engineering, vaccines, and stem cells illustrate how these debates involve both everyday life and advanced scientific innovation. Rethinking materiality, cultural geographers can contribute to solving the challenges associated with the emerging field of bio-geographies.**

**Connection:** A connection can be drawn to Sauer’s “Morphology of Landscape”, which laid the foundation of classical cultural geography by examining how humans shape the physical landscape and how, in turn, the physical landscape shapes culture. Building on this basis, and in response to emerging technological issues, Whatmore broadened the concept of materialism to cultural geography to emphasize the interconnected interactions between humans, nonhumans, and the living earth.

**Question:** The author is highlighting **the key challenge of “more-than-human” research approaches** in cultural geography: the emphasis on **experimentation, expanding research methods.** How can researchers expand traditional methods to incorporate sensory, bodily, and affective dimensions while maintaining rigor and reliability?