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Abstract

Colonialism is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by the establishment of political control, the subjugation of local populations, and economic exploitation. Even though most of today's nation states have been colonized and subordinated to others at some point, many questions about how colonial legacies influence past and contemporary polities, politics, and policies in former colonies remain unanswered. In this paper, we address colonialism as a particular kind of transnational governance and put actors, their constellations, and strategic interactions at the center of the analysis. We argue that this actor-centric approach serves as an analytical and heuristic tool to bring about a more comprehensive and specific understanding of how colonial legacies manifest. This helps us to detect differences and similarities across and within Empires and also to identify changes and continuities between the pre- and post-independence eras.

Zusammenfassung

Kolonialismus ist ein facettenreiches Phänomen, das durch die Etablierung politischer Kontrolle, die Unterdrückung der lokalen Bevölkerung und ökonomische Ausbeutung gekennzeichnet ist. Obwohl die meisten der heutigen Nationalstaaten zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt kolonialisiert und anderen untergeordnet waren, sind viele Fragen darüber unbeantwortet geblieben, wie ihr ‚koloniales Erbe' vergangene und gegenwärtige Politik in ehemaligen Kolonien beeinflusst. In diesem Papier untersuchen wir Kolonialismus als eine bestimmte Form transnationaler Governance und stellen Akteure, ihre Konstellationen und strategischen Interaktionen ins Zentrum der Analyse. Wir argumentieren, dass ein akteurzentrierter Ansatz ein geeignetes analytisches und heuristisches Instrument ist, um ein vollständigeres und spezifischeres Bild davon zu erhalten, wie sich das ‚koloniale Erbe' manifestiert. Dies hilft uns Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterscheide innerhalb von Empires und darüber hinaus zu analysieren, und außerdem Veränderungen und Kontinuitäten zwischen der prä- und postkolonialen Phase zu identifizieren.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

Colonialism is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by the establishment of political control, the subjugation of indigenous populations, and economic exploitation. Exploring the manifestation of these dimensions, a growing literature has advanced our understanding of the short- and long-term effects of colonialism. For example, studies analyze how colonial legacies have affected economic growth (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Lange, 2004; Lange et al., 2006; Mahoney, 2010), tax policy (Frankema, 2011; Frankema & Waijenburg, 2014), public investments (Huillery, 2009), and social policies (MacLean, 2002; Midgley, 2011; Schmitt, 2015).

Within most of these studies, institutions and ideas are regarded as primary vehicles of colonial legacies[1]. It is assumed that institutions and ideas, conceptualized in some cases as social fields (e.g. Steinmetz, 2008), become consequential for society at large through their effects on the behavior of actors. While institutional and ideational approaches acknowledge the reciprocal relationship between actors and institutions as well as ideas (Béland, 2016; Mahoney, 2010), the colonial legacy within these traditions is usually rooted in institutions and ideas, with a lesser focus on actors.

In this paper, we argue that these strands of literature can be enriched by a more systematic account of actor constellations in colonial empires. Putting actors, their constellations, and strategic interactions at the center of the analysis can shed light on the heterogeneous effects of colonialism. In particular, we suggest that governance in colonial contexts was transnational in nature. This means that in addition to state and governmental actors, non-state actors are key (Boli & Thomas, 1997; Nye & Keohane, 1971;

Roger & Dauvergne, 2016). Furthermore, it implies that colonial governance takes place within and between nation states and territories and is shaped by global norms and standards (Halliday & Carruthers, 2007; Meyer et al., 1997; Sassen, 2008). These governance arrangements survived the decline of colonial empires. In most cases, independence did not lead to an exclusively domestic mode of governance, and it is plausible that many elements of colonial governance models remained in place (Schmitt, 2020).

Focusing on actors, their constellations, and interactions allows us to detect differences and similarities across and within Empires and also to identify changes and continuities between the pre- and post-independence eras. This is essential; even though most scholars agree that colonialism matters, how exactly colonial legacies manifest, to what extent colonial influences matter, and whether or not their role is exaggerated, particularly with regard to developmental outcomes, remains highly controversial (Acemoglu et al., 2002; Lange et al., 2006). Our approach is meant to serve as an analytical and heuristic tool to bring about a more comprehensive understanding of colonial legacies without claiming to have explanatory power in itself. We aim to support theory building that goes beyond general references to colonial powers (e.g. British, French, and German among others) and their approaches to colonial governance (e.g. direct and indirect rule) as well as to facilitate resolving tensions and competing approaches within existing literature. How particular actor constellations affect political processes and outcomes in concrete terms both pre- and post-independence must be empirically determined in concrete cases.

The paper proceeds as follows. Next, in the second section, we outline concepts and definitions that are central to our approach, in particular actors and colonialism. The third section introduces our actor constellation framework, highlighting important actors operating in the political, economic,

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1 Please see De Juan & Pierskalla (2017) for a review of research on colonial legacies in the institutionalist tradition.

and societal sectors. The fourth section discusses how actor constellations and the different dimensions of colonialism constitute the broader phenomenon of colonialism. A final section concludes.

2. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Before introducing our actor-centric approach, it is necessary to discuss what constitutes an actor. International relations and comparative politics scholarship often treat countries or nation states as actors. The logic underlying this approach is that the interests of citizens are (or can become) sufficiently aligned so that the country or nation state can be treated as a unitary, purposive actor (e.g. Wendt, 2004). This so-called methodological nationalism has, however, fallen into disrepute as it often fails to capture the complexity of how countries interact and reinforces notions of the nation state (Slaughter, 2004). On the other hand, one can find methodological individualism, as commonly practiced in economics, where individuals become the primary actors and aggregate dynamics are solely the result of their interaction. While this approach is generally regarded as ontologically more sound (Wendt, 2004), it has proven limited in its ability to enlighten dynamics at higher levels of aggregation, such as communities or global markets.

We take a mid-range approach in which actors are collectives of individuals who share an interest in and an ability to act together toward a common end (Pontusson, 1995; Huber & Stephens, 2010). This common end does not have to be the same as the individual interests, but it sufficiently aligns the actions of individuals so as to treat the collective as an actor itself.

Actors do not exist in a vacuum, and their behavior is conditioned by historical context, in particular the institutional and ideational landscape in which they operate.[2] Broadly defined, "institutions (1) consist of formal or informal rules, (2) offer a guide to behavior, and (3) are consciously or unconsciously known by individuals in a given population" (Mahoney, 2010, p 15). Ideational scholarship emphasizes the beliefs and values that actors hold, actively shape, and use to influence others (Béland, 2005, 2016). At the same time, actors seek to influence dominant institutions and ideas, and thus to alter the context in which they operate. This also applies to colonialism, which is a product of the interplay of actors, ideas, and institutions in colonial empires (Steinmetz, 2014).

Colonialism can be thought of as a mode of trans-territorial governance that manifests from a nation-state's broader imperial strategy. It can be defined as "the conquest of a foreign people followed by the creation of an organization controlled by members of the conquering polity and suited to rule over the conquered territory's indigenous population" (Steinmetz, 2014, pp. 79-80). Colonial governance and policy making processes were inherently transnational, involving both public and private actors, taking place between distinct territories, and affected by norms and standards operating across Empires. Colonial governance was distinguished by political control with the aim of economic exploitation (Abernethy, 2000; Kohn & Reddy, 2017). Moreover, common to most definitions of colonialism is the assumption of the inferiority of indigenous populations compared to the societies in the imperial centers (i.e. colonizers originating from the metropole) (Olsson, 2009; Osterhammel, 1997; Steinmetz, 2014).

Based on existing definitions, three main components of colonialism can be identified:

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2   The actor-centered institutionalism (Mayntz & Scharpf 1995; Scharpf 1997) has some parallels to the approach proposed in this paper. However, actor-centered institutionalism is more directed towards policy making processes in Western countries and the European Union and is applicable primarily within qualitative studies.

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political control, subjugation of indigenous populations, and economic exploitation. These components shape both the institutional and ideational framework in which the actors in (former) colonies operate. Colonizers established *political control* by taking over the internal and external affairs of territories. To do this, metropolitan governments dispatched various actors to annex the territory, install and operate facilities, such as governmental offices, trade posts, and military camps, and to subjugate or cooperate with local populations. Aware of principal-agent problems and concerned about effectiveness, how much autonomy to grant to local actors was a central question of metropolitan governments. While less autonomy could imply greater control for the metropole, it could also undermine the ability of colonial actors to respond to local conditions and set up effective operations (Lee & Schultz, 2012; Schmitt, 2015). The same question emerged within colonies, where colonial administrations had to decide how much autonomy to grant other actors within colonies, including the integration and cooptation of local elites (Gerring et al., 2011; Iyer, 2010).

The second component refers to the *subjugation* of indigenous populations by constructing them as inferior to the colonizers. Colonized people typically did not have the same rights and duties as citizens of the metropole. Across Empires, indigenous populations had limited social, economic, cultural, civil, and political rights. One example that illustrates this dimension of colonialism is the *Code de l'Indigénat* in French African colonies. The Code was a set of rules and decrees that defined colonial subjects, comprised mostly of indigenous populations, as inferior to French citizens. It included regulations stipulating that colonial subjects did not have freedom of expression or the freedom to associate and that colonial subjects were not entitled to French civil and social rights.

The last dimension refers to the *economic exploitation* of colonized territories. Colonial powers typically aimed to expand capitalism to their dependent territories and to realize their economic interests by exploiting resources, including land and labor. Colonial empires are often regarded as extractive enterprises that emerged from economic pressures in the metropole and economic opportunities overseas (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Jahn, 2018). Extraction was not limited to capital resources, such as raw materials and manufactured goods, but also concerned labor resources, including—often forced—recruitment for commercial and military purposes (Costello, 2016; Koller, 2008).

In sum, we identify three key components of colonialism: political control, subjugation, and economic exploitation. As stated above, colonialism and its three components are the product of the interplay of actors, institutions, and ideas. In the next section, we lay out how these three components shape, and are shaped by, colonialism.

3. An actor-centric approach to the study of colonial empires and their legacies

In this section, we identify the main actors involved in shaping colonialism and place them within the broader institutional framework of colonial empires. The ideational dimension is brought in through the interests, values, and beliefs that different actors hold and promote. A central institutional feature of colonial empires is their hierarchical structure, with a metropole at the center and colonies at the periphery. While these relations were hierarchical, the relationship between metropolitan governments and colonial administrations was mutually constitutive. Besides colonial administrations, which assumed a central role in colonies, private actors, such as firms and missionaries, were also key actors in colonial contexts emphasizing the transnational nature of colonial governance arrangements, particularly as territories became self-governing. We argue

that colonial as well as contemporary polities, politics, and policies in (former) colonies cannot be understood by focusing solely on the domestic realm, without accounting for this transnational dimension. Our approach aims to open the door to exploring in what ways and to what extent contemporary political institutions, actors, and processes as well as policies are rooted in colonial times.

Even a coarse reading of the historical literature on colonialism illustrates the broad range of actors that can be found in colonial empires including trading companies, militaries, missionaries, and colonial administrators. The analytical framework we propose draws from Abernethy's theory of colonialism. First, Abernethy (2000) distinguishes actors in three sectors—public, for-profit, and religious—and elaborates their interplay to explain the rise and fall of European colonial empires. Second, Abernethy emphasizes the hierarchical structure of colonial empires and the interlinkages within that structure. Despite strong ties between a metropole and its colonies within a given empire, he argues that colonial actors in different territorial locations are too different to be lumped together. Instead, the strong ties between colonial actors in the metropole and colony constitute the transnational nature of colonial empires. Despite its appeal, Abernethy's approach is too limiting for the purpose of understanding colonial legacies. While all of his three sectors shape colonial legacies, more recent actors, such as international organizations and interest groups, are sidelined.

Our analytical framework broadens each sector, taking a more inclusive approach to identifying the actors that shape, and are shaped by, colonialism. In addition to territorial differentiation between metropole and colony, our framework situates actors according to the institutional sector—political, economic, or societal—in which they primarily operate.[3] The political sector includes national governments, colonial administrations, subordinate ministries and public agencies as well as intergovernmental organizations. The economic sector is composed of companies and other private for-profit entities, such as commercial banks. The societal sector consists of collectives, such as Churches, labor unions, and charities, which are organized around public goals. This typology locates actors within their predominant institutional context. As such, this typology is broad enough to include all relevant actors, while each sector is specific enough to ensure that actors are understood in context.

A visual summary of our framework is presented in Figure 1. It acknowledges that actors differ by sector as well as territorial location. The bottom domestic block refers to colonies, while the top block refers to the non-domestic level, i.e. actors located beyond the territorial bounds of colonies, usually in the metropole. More specifically, the 'L-nodes' refer to local actors within colonies themselves, while the other nodes refer to external actors (the 'E-' and 'e-nodes'). We distinguish external actors that operate on the international level with an 'E' and their counterparts on the domestic level, i.e. their agents or representatives, with an 'e'. This approach has three goals. First, it situates different actors within the institutional framework of colonial empires. Second, it emphasizes their transnational links by disassembling external actors into a transnational (the 'E' actors) and a domestic component (the 'e' actors). Third, it makes explicit the centralized institutional structure of empires, which is essential to illuminating the

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3   We understand that few actors fit neatly into one of these sectors. Moreover, some actors operate across one or more sectors, depending on the positions that they hold within a colony, both in a cross-section of time and overtime. Equally, we appreciate that such simplification can serve as a heuristic device that facilitates meaningful comparison and generalization across time and space, which might otherwise be impeded (Trigilia, 2002; Huber & Stephens, 2010).

Figure 1. Colonial actor constellations
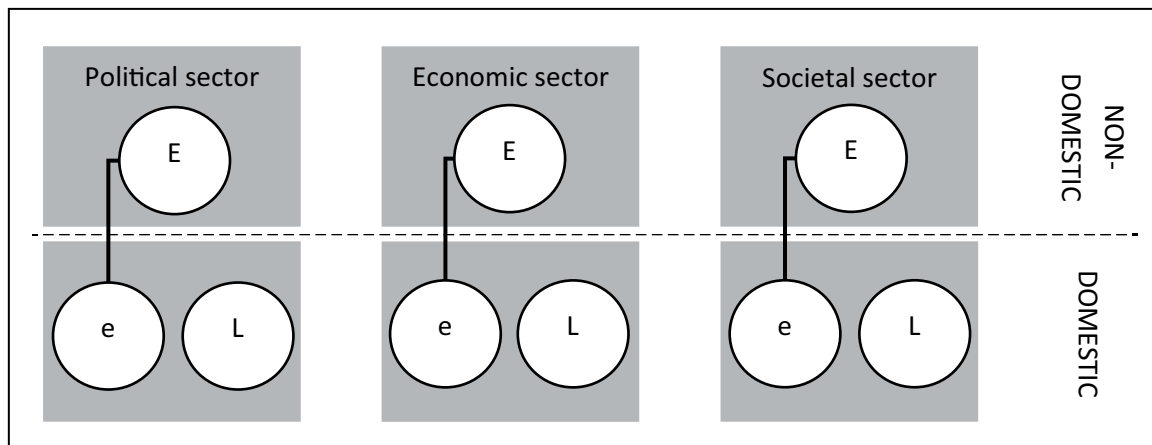
Source: own presentation

power dynamics and asymmetries between metropoles and colonies. Finally, it illustrates the range of actors located within colonies, with implications for the variety of ways that colonialism manifested within colonies, even within the same empire.

An important advantage of this approach is that it can also accommodate analysis over time. Independence is frequently equated with the end of colonial empires. While this might be true from a legal standpoint, colonial legacies continue to shape the trajectories of affected countries (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2017). The transnational nature of policymaking in former colonies is but one example. By recognizing the trans-territorial dimension of the actors, institutions, and ideas comprising colonialism across these sectors, colonial actor constellations enable analysis of changes and continuities in governance arrangements within former colonies both before and after independence. By enabling comparisons between actor constellations pre- and post-independence, transnational actor constellations shed light on which actors appeared and disappeared in conjunction with independence and on how their interests, resources, and ideas changed, realigned, or transformed. Ultimately, this should enable a better understanding of how colonial legacies manifest in continuities or changes today.

This actor-centric approach also has limitations. First, it is meant to serve as an analytic and heuristic tool that illuminates the actors and interactions that had formative effects on polities, politics, and policies in former colonies without claiming to hold explanatory power in itself. We do not wish to make statements about the effects of particular actors in a given colony nor do we wish to make assertions about developmental outcomes or legacies of particular actor constellations overtime. Instead, this approach is meant to facilitate theory building that goes beyond general references to colonial powers (e.g. British, French, and German among others) and their approaches to colonial governance (e.g. direct and indirect rule). By focusing our analysis at the atomic level of actors, this framework illuminates the component parts of colonialism to achieve a more specific and dynamic understanding of how institutions and ideas were produced during colonialism and then reproduced and changed overtime. While there may well be patterns to the behavior of actors in a colonial context and to the outcomes of particular actor constellations both pre- and post-independence, these must be empirically determined with regard to specific cases.

In the following sub-sections, we discuss, by sector, the colonial actors included in our framework, how they are positioned relative

to each other, and their responses to independence.

Political sector. We do not regard national governments or states as monolithic actors but rather as constituted by multiple governmental actors. Furthermore, we also include intergovernmental organizations that operate on behalf of multiple national actors in this category. Each of these actors has a mandate from a central political authority (or several, in the case of intergovernmental organizations) from which they can draw protection and other support.[4] Mandates are usually derived from the central authority's interest in maintaining, and potentially expanding, its control over territories and populations. Resources required for the operation of political actors are usually not acquired through productive activities but through extraction, e.g. taxation, licensing, or expropriation. Despite these commonalities, relationships between different political actors, even within national bounds, can be defined by conflict more than cooperation. Conflict may arise when mandates do not neatly align. Conflict can also arise from principal-agent problems, where the individuals that make up the collective state actor have shared interests that lead them to deviate from or to reinterpret mandates. Such problems are particularly pronounced where costs of oversight are high, for example, due to long distances within colonial empires.

In the early phases of a colony, *militaries* played a key role in annexing territories and establishing first facilities, including hospitals (Wesseling, 2004). After annexation, *colonial administrations* were established, usually in port cities or other economic centers, from which to manage and coordinate colonial operations in cooperation with relevant actors in the metropole. Various other political actors, including *political parties, ministries* of defense and treasury and *agencies*, such as foreign and various colonial and overseas offices, were also heavily involved. While colonial expansion was facilitated by new marine technologies, communication and coordination between actors in the metropole and the colonies remained a challenge. This gave state actors in the colony considerable leeway and leverage in conducting their operations (Abernethy, 2000; Wesseling, 2004).

Colonies were rarely established in places without pre-existing institutions and actors. Therefore, colonial administrations adopted a variety of techniques for working with *local governments* and indigenous political elites. Two approaches are typically distinguished within the literature: direct rule, focused on the incorporation and cultural assimilation of indigenous populations into colonial societies and the simultaneous dismantling of pre-existing collective and cultural arrangements. Alternatively, indirect rule relied on establishing mutually beneficial partnerships, backed by severe and credible threats, between local elites and colonizers. These relationships also contributed to maintaining, and at times even strengthening, pre-existing indigenous governance arrangements considered conducive to the colonizers' objectives (Lange, 2004; Iyer, 2010; Gerring et al., 2011). While colonizers were easily outnumbered by local populations, the ability of colonial actors to call on the metropole for resources and support was an important aspect of the power imbalance between colonial and indigenous actors, who often operated in isolation or at least without equally strong alliances.

Colonial administrations drew their legitimacy from the metropole and rarely showed accountability toward indigenous populations. This often did not result simply from a lack of awareness within the metropole. For

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4   However, it is important to note that, in many cases, the Weberian assumption that the state has a monopoly on violence simply does not hold in a colonial context and even today in some countries in the Global South. Even when it does, such a monopoly may provide little protection for states vis-à-vis powerful external aggressors and equally little relief for individuals seeking protection from a governmental entity.

example, the debate on what government intervention in social affairs might look like in the dependent territories of the British Empire intensified after the Beveridge Report (1942). The report was discussed throughout the Empire and led to the formation of commissions in several colonial territories. However, it failed to lead to any systemic implementation of social protection measures (Schmitt, 2015). To the extent that social protection was made available by the state, it was usually limited to European settlers (Wesseling, 2004). It was only towards the end of colonialism that broader efforts were made to regulate and mitigate the exploitative, and particularly brutal, forms of capitalism that had taken hold in many colonies. France, for example, introduced the *Code du Travail* in 1952, setting standards for social protection throughout its colonies. While some interpret this as evidence of increased accountability, many attribute the introduction of social protection schemes and other ameliorative measures to egoistic motives, such as the fear of social unrest and an eagerness to maintain power and influence in the light of looming independence movements (Abernethy, 2000).

Independence forced colonial actors to cede political authority to local elites. *Post-independence governments* are now usually a blend of former colonial administrations and indigenous institutions, with colonial administrations representing the more 'modern' and 'formal' institutions recognized as legitimate by powerful players within the international order. The vacuum between externally influenced and locally developed institutions that came about with independence was filled by old and newly emerged local actors, including *political parties*, competing for power. Blending colonial and indigenous institutions, including inherited territorial boundaries, often resulted in a mismatch between populations and governing institutions. Because of this, post-independence political actors faced governance challenges that were arguably more complex than those faced by colonial administrations.

What's more, despite the withdrawal of metropolitan political actors, the transnational actors that emerged during colonialism continued to play a role in the governance of former colonies. *Intergovernmental organizations* and *development agencies*, often spearheaded by former colonial powers, became dominant actors in policymaking around the world. They attempt to influence policymaking because of their interest in economic, social, and political advances in developing countries. As our discussion of the other two sectors shows, such realignments in response to independence are not limited to the political sector.

Economic sector. States provided institutional framework that enabled the expansion of markets and economic exchange. This is not to say that economic institutions did not exist before the establishment of modern states; however, they did not exist on the same scale. Property rights, commodification, competitive pressures, and the frequent separation between management and ownership lead economic actors to be primarily profit-seeking. At the same time, economic actors have different extractive capacities than governments who are able to tax, license, and expropriate and therefore to base profit-making on productive activities. In turn, economic actors also have an interest in the maintenance and development of the territory in which they operate, including aspects such as security, infrastructure, and welfare. Thus, despite different primary motivations, economic and political actors have overlapping interests. Naturally, neither of them is eager to cover related costs. The political and economic sectors are therefore not only complementary, but interdependent, and this has important strategic implications.

Given the close relationship between colonialism and the expansionary tendencies of capitalism, political and economic actors worked together closely in the colonial project. In colonies, economic activities were

often concessionary, and companies were often granted monopolistic positions within them (Mamdani, 1996). In earlier stages of colonialism, private *companies* often led expansionary efforts, with their own private security forces, with the state stepping in only at later stages, often when the project became untenable in the absence of additional support (Abernethy, 2000; Wesseling, 2004; Lewis, 2011). Companies, such as the Dutch and British East India Companies, were essentially the first transnational corporations. These international firms were usually granted monopoly powers related to trade, and they became major sources of public finance in their respective metropoles (McLean, 2004). Economic actors often relied on colonial administrations to provide necessary security and to address the labor shortages they faced. As such, militaries would become active not only in the case of social unrest but also in the "recruitment" of forced labor. When this was not possible, firms were often granted military and policing powers. Larger trading companies also worked with *local collectives and companies* within colonies, and their profits were derived largely from their function as a broker.

Furthermore, companies called on governments to provide financing for infrastructure development, especially roads and railways that enabled extractive industries to take hold and trading companies to operate (Constantine, 1984). Besides government treasuries, *banks* were an important source of such financing (Carruthers, 1996). They provided capital for both private companies and colonial administrations to invest and also secured payments, which further enabled economic exchange.

While independence disrupted economic actors, it was also marked by important continuities in markets more generally. With the end of colonialism, the external determination of monopolistic privileges for colonial companies faded. Expropriation, nationalization, and the transformation into and emergence of domestically-owned *local companies* was commonplace. Colonial companies had to adapt to these new circumstances or go out of business. Adaption sometimes entailed entry into markets elsewhere or competing with new actors in the now independent countries. However, many of these corporate structures proved surprisingly stable, and the economies of former colonies often bear a strong resemblance to those imposed before independence. Moreover, many of the dominant companies determining colonial economies did not cease to exist with independence, and some of them remain active today. However, the influence such *multinational companies* are able to exert on domestic politics and development is quite different. While their ability to control is much more limited compared to monopolistic colonial companies, their multinational portfolio provides them with great leverage in negotiations with local actors.

Societal sector. Under this sector, we broadly subsume societal collectives that are not predominantly economic or political actors. Societal actors generally pursue collective interests of groups or society at large for which public funding or markets are inexistent or insufficient. Economic and political actors might therefore strategically divest from certain public goods when they expect societal actors to provide substitutes. While societal actors promote a wide variety of goods and services, social welfare and poverty alleviation have been a traditional priority. At the same time, societal actors, like economic actors, heavily depend on the institutional framework governments provide. When it comes to financing their activities, societal actors lack the extractive capacities of governments, and unlike economic actors, they do not offer marketable private goods. Therefore, societal actors rely largely on voluntary contributions. Such contributions can come from actors in the other sectors as well as individuals. Their reliance on voluntary contributions makes them vulnerable to instrumentalization by other actors. The varied interests and many interdependencies of ac-

tors in the social sector illustrates the need for analyzing actor constellations rather than individual actors alone.

Religious actors played an important role in promoting colonialism in the metropole as well as in colonial territories. The activities of *missionaries* in territories that later became colonies (centrally coordinated by *Churches* in Europe) often preceded the arrival of state and economic actors. Although their primary interest was religious conversion, they often paved the way for colonial expansion by promoting Western values, literacy, and medicine (Wesseling, 2004; Lankina & Getachew, 2012; Woodberry, 2012). Missionaries also often spoke out against the widespread practice of slavery within and between former colonies. Colonial administrations were acutely aware of the many social functions religious actors fulfilled, and they supported, and at times curtailed, them as needed (Abernethy, 2000; Midgley, 2011). *Indigenous religious leaders* played a key and long-standing role in transmitting beliefs and culture overtime and some also practiced traditional medicine.

Other actors that were increasingly involved in policymaking were *charities* and *labor unions*. Such initiatives were often pioneered by settlers (Midgley, 2011), but at times, labor unions rose from within indig-

enous populations. The potential for mobilization was most pronounced in urban centers and in cash crop economies, which "produced higher levels of labor militancy for ending racial inequality and were driven by the logic of industrialism's need for a stable labor force" (Mkandawire, 2016, p. 7). However, in some colonies, labor unions were not allowed until the eve of World War II. Therefore, charities and labor unions grew in strength, especially post-World War II, when they also received greater support from international and philanthropic organizations.

Although independence did not put societal actors under the same stress as state and economic actors, the sector was not unaffected either. Societal actors were generally perceived as a less essential element of colonial enterprises and as better adjusted to the local context. Thus, their continued presence was less of a concern to new political elites and reformers. As already mentioned, intergovernmental organizations and charities had already become more supportive of initiatives within the societal sector before independence, and the opportunities independence promised might have further aroused their interest. Furthermore, former colonial powers sought ways to maintain their sphere of influence (Maizels & Nissan-

Table 1. Main actors pre- and post-independence

	Pre-independence			Post-independence		
	Political	Economic	Societal	Political	Economic	Societal
NON-DOMESTIC	» Government ministries » Political parties » Interngovernmental organizations (IGOs)	» Imperial companies » Banks	» Churches » Labor unions » International non-governmental organizations (INGOs)	» Government ministries of former colonial power » Political parties » IGOs	» Multinational corporations (MNCs) » Banks	» Churches » Labor unions » INGOs
DOMESTIC	» Colonial administrations » Military » Indigenous leaders and government	» Imperial companies » Local collectives and companies	» Missionaries » Local labor unions » Charities » Indigenous religious leaders	» National government » Political parties » IGO national offices » Embassies and development agencies	» MNC national offices » Local companies	» Missionaries » Local labor unions » NGOs » Indigenous religious leaders

Source: own presentation

ke, 1984; Berthélemy & Tichit, 2004; Fuchs et al., 2014). One way they did this was by providing foreign aid and development assistance, which can be used to support and contract societal actors. Another way they did this was by promoting the activities of societal actors and establishing new ones, such as cultural centers and other local, as well as international, *non-governmental organizations*. These actors were usually welcome in former colonies, especially those with limited financial resources, but their influence on domestic matters and the degree to which these organizations can speak for the needs of local and indigenous populations as civil society representatives remains controversial (Viterna et al., 2015).

Different actors were more or less directly involved in colonial policymaking. Most of these actors did not simply disappear with independence, but often changed and transformed in important ways. Based on our previous discussion of the sectors, Table 1 provides a simplified snapshot of actor constellations before and after independence. It shows that the transnational governance mode to which colonies were exposed was not replaced by an exclusively domestic mode of governance. This highlights again that systematically integrating external actors is necessary in order to understand colonialism as well as its legacies. Notwithstanding such general patterns, the shape and implications of transnational actor constellations are marked by heterogeneity across, as well as within, colonial empires.

4. ACTOR CONSTELLATIONS AND THE MAKING OF COLONIALISM

The previous section identified the main actors within colonial empires. In this section, we discuss how these actors come together to constitute the broader phenomenon of colonialism. It is important to reiterate that analyzing actors in isolation is disadvantageous when seeking to understand the dynamics of colonial policymaking and its legacies. The activities of actors and their interests are entangled in important ways. Therefore, we elaborate each actors' involvement in the three core components of colonialism: political control, economic exploitation, and subjugation (see Section II).

Political control over the internal and external affairs of colonized territories was achieved mainly through cooperative agreements with indigenous actors, brute force, or a combination of the two. At the height of colonial empires, such as before and after the Berlin Conference, political actors spearheaded this process. In earlier phases, economic actors assumed a prominent role, when colonization focused on the establishment of trading posts and the control of small, mostly coastal, territories. Economic actors were effective in this task, often acting on their own or on behalf of metropolitan governments. For example, in the French African colonies, the *Banque d'Afrique Occidentale*, the most important private bank, was granted the privilege of being an issuing house for all countries of Black Africa under French domination. However, territorial expansion necessitated the involvement of political actors such that colonial administrations and militaries became primary vehicles of control.

Though often not directly involved in the establishment of control, societal actors played a facilitating role. Christian missions, for example, were engaged more directly with local populations, which ameliorated some of the concerns regarding the increased control exerted by external economic and political actors. On the other hand, Christian missions indoctrinated local populations with Western values and transferred skills desired by economic and political actors. As such, they facilitated the development of a labor force that made it easier for economic and political actors to expand their control over colonized territories.

Moreover, colonialism entailed the subjugation of indigenous populations. The idea that these populations were inferior to colonizers pervaded all three sectors. This was, for example, reflected in organizational hierarchies, where indigenous populations were relegated to lower ranks and menial tasks with limited, if any, opportunities for advancement. This also applied to the military. Most Empires relied heavily on indigenous soldiers to realize their military and expansionary objectives across the globe. However, indigenous soldiers typically served as rank-and-file soldiers without having the possibility to improve their hierarchical position. This was not limited to economic and political actors but also affected societal actors. Christian missionaries, for example, were hesitant to grant priesthood even to the most ambitious of their new followers. The subjugation of indigenous populations was also key to various exploitative practices. Among others, it justified the practice of slavery as well as the expropriation of land owned by local communities. Despite their own racialized internal hierarchies, the Churches and missionaries in the colonies were among the first to raise their voice against such practices. They were later joined by other societal actors, in particular international organizations and trade unions, which promoted labor and human rights.

Finally, the economic exploitation of colonized territories affected both capital and labor resources. The extraction of capital resources, in particular raw materials and manufactured goods, was undertaken mainly by economic actors. These economic activities required large numbers of laborers, consisting mostly of indigenous workers who were involved in infrastructure projects, worked on plantations, and ultimately transported vast amounts of commodities. "Colonial governments faced pressure to deliver long-term workers for the private sector [...]" (Waijenburg, 2018, p 49). While some of this labor was salaried and voluntary, the practice of forced labor was wide-spread, especially in earlier phases of colonialism.

Despite—or because of— its many uses, labor was often a scarce resource. As such, the exploitation of labor, capital, and resources was characterized by both collaboration and competition between economic actors as well as between actors in the societal and political sectors. Militaries not only mobilized local labor for economic purposes, but they also used it to expand their own forces and to build colonial armies. Furthermore, slave trade, in particular the transatlantic slave trade in which both economic and political actors participated, implied exploitation on an international scale and a massive loss of human capital for "exporting" territories. Colonial administrators also needed to report economic success to colonial officials in the metropole. Therefore, political actors at the local level often collaborated with commercial and financial players strongly connected to the power centers in the metropole to further their reputation and advancement within the empire. Moreover, there was high personal overlap between economic and political actors and a dense web of contacts and personal relations. For example, a large number of officials in the directorates of companies and powerful economic lobbying organizations were colonial administrators and military leaders (Persell, 1983). These strategic interactions have important implications for the effectiveness of economic exploitation as well as the consequences for local populations.

Societal actors, and in particular Christian missions, played an ambiguous role. On the one hand, they again assume an enabling role in mobilizing and developing a local labor force, and thus the extraction of labor resources. On the other hand, they were opposed to the practice of slavery. Missionaries reported on especially malicious cases, and Churches lobbied metropolitan governments in favor of abolition. Eventually, trade unions provided a means through which workers

could mobilize in order to resist exploitation and acquire protection.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we introduced an actor-centric approach to the study of colonial empires and their legacies. Our approach articulates how actors shape, and are shaped by, colonialism along three dimensions: political control, the subjugation of indigenous populations, and economic exploitation. It highlights how actors are situated within the institutional and ideational context of colonial empires and how this is reflected in, and is partially reproduced by, post-independence actor constellations. Analyzing pre- and post-independence actor constellations opens up new ways to explore and understand colonial legacies and their impact today. It enables the detection of differences and similarities across and within Empires as well as the identification of continuity and change between pre- and post-independence periods. In other words, this approach is meant to serve as a heuristic, rather than an explanatory, tool that helps to take relevant actors and their dynamics into account and to guide empirical analyses. This is necessary if we are to move towards a more comprehensive, thorough, and systematic understanding of the effects of colonialism over time.

Taking a transnational approach to the study of colonialism, and how its effects and legacies varied across empires and territories, emphasizes: (i) that colonialism cannot be fully understood without simultaneously taking metropolitan and colonial actors into account; and (ii) that transnational actor constellations and their dynamics channel colonial legacies. First, one peculiarity of colonialism is its hierarchical structure. While the behavior of actors in the colonies had more immediate effects, the struggle over guiding ideas and institutions took place largely in the metropole. This struggle defined how and the extent to which different colonies were politically controlled, populations subjugated, and resources exploited. Second, while many colonial legacies result from the institutions and ideas that were introduced during colonial periods, most actors—local and external—did not vanish with independence. These actors continue to struggle over ideas and institutions, in ways that may continue to affect governance arrangements within these territories today.

Attention to the dynamics of colonial actor constellations across sectors reveals a close, if not symbiotic, link between the colonial administrative elite and a handful of powerful financial, economic and societal players. Not only were there strong interrelationships between political, economic and societal actors, but there was also no clear distinction between these three spheres. For example, political actors conducted economic activities, such as providing work force, while economic actors assumed political tasks, such as tax collection or issuing currency. It is plausible that actors, institutions, and ideas dominant during colonial times may have differed within and across empires and that these unique features did not simply disappear with political independence.

To illuminate these similarities and differences as well continuities and changes, it is necessary to *empirically* spell out what actor constellations, as well as institutions and ideas, looked like in different colonies through extensive case studies. Which actors were present in the French, British, Belgian, or Dutch transnational actor constellations? How were these actors interrelated? In which institutional and ideational context did they operate? This next step would enable us to answer the question of whether the Empires are really as different as argued by some scholars and to which dimensions – actors, institutions, or ideas – the differences can be attributed. The same applies to the comparison between the colonial and post-colonial era. Which actors disappeared, changed, or

transformed and which rules changed? In a further step, actor constellations as well as institutions and ideas have to be linked to specific policymaking processes. Did different actor constellations result in different fiscal, economic, or social policies during colonial times? What do the long-term effects of these colonial legacies look like? This paper is one step towards a more systematic answer to these questions and towards a better understanding of the mechanisms through which metropolitan influences impacted colonial territories.

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