

**Provincializing Sovereignty;
Or, why I must always look up the meaning of sovereignty**

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What, to the necropolitical, colonial, subject, is sovereignty? What are the conceptual costs and benefits of focusing on sovereignty in the way political science historically has, and what possibilities are there for rethinking its meaning and use? This paper tries to interrogate the space sovereignty occupies in our current political imaginations, and suggests there might be attachments we need to analyze more. This requires asking what are the problems that "sovereignty" has contained, bound and solved for political thought, and where this legitimacy might come into question in present times. An encounter between Jacques Ranciere and Achille Mbembe starts a conversation that may help parse and critique the presuppositions of sovereignty and see what can replace them if the study of politics actually stopped deeming the colonial question as an exceptional, "provincial" one. How can provincializing sovereignty, in turn, allow a radical reorientation of political theory to the politics of subjects that have been deemed "settled." Here, the work of Simpson, Povinelli, Rifkin and DaSilva may offer some ways to unpack and challenge the settlements and consensus endemic to and hidden within the enterprise of political theory, in order to rethink, even unthink sovereignty.