**Introduction**

**Settlers and Citizens: A Critical View of Israeli Society**

This special issue was born out of the SOAS Palestine Society’s 10th annual Conference, held in October 2015 at SOAS. The issue, much like the conference, aims to contribute to the growing body of literature that intersects settler colonial studies with empirical studies of Palestine and Israel. Its thematic focus is grounded in aconcrete and contemporary interrogation of the structures and mechanisms of Zionist settler colonialism, through the lens of Israeli politics and polities. Bringing critical studies of Palestine into conversation with a critical study of Israel’s internal workings offers a platform through which the two intertwine and form a united body of knowledge on the settler-colonial realities in which they are situated.

The designation of Settler Colonial Studies as its own disciplinary arena has been an important development for understanding its particular machinations, as intersecting with but still distinctive from other forms of colonial practice. As part of this work, a rich body of literature has already emerged on the historical development and contemporary realities of settler colonialism in Palestine. Historians, critical theorists and social scientists (among many others) have detailed the ways in which Zionist colonisation took form in Palestine from the late 19th century onwards, how this project interacted with the indigenous population, and how it continues to play itself out, today. For its part, the *Journal of* *Settler Colonial Studies* produced its own seminal issue on this case, calling for and cultivating a new praxis for analysing and challenging its political and social infrastructure (Salamanca et al, 2012). *Settlers and Citizens* attempts to extend this effort by adding a much-needed detailed engagement with Israel, as it evolves and normalises settler colonial relations in the region.

Moving beyond the critical work that has already established the efficacy and analytical astuteness of the settler-colonial paradigm in this case, the issue’s contribution to the field is framed by our analytical reading of the materiality of ‘the settler-colonial logic’. While its structural features reach across place, space and time, settler-colonialism takes on concrete forms through the colonisation of people and land. As it uproots and violates native political structures and physical landscapes, it constantly seeks to legitimise itself, through a range of legal, political, economic and social institutions. This is not only because settler societies encounter obstructive and clashing processes within its own constituencies, among its financial and political support networks at home, and/or competing claims by other imperial powers; but because of the indigenous communities that continuously resist and directly challenge colonisation. Thus, the agents of settler colonial systems and states work endlessly to evolve and entrench themselves through both productive and coercive processes, in order to further sustain their dominance over territory, capital, institutions and people, and at the same time eliminate even the memory of that which existed before them. The articles in this issue will trace these lines through the complex relations, modalities and mechanisms that embed Zionist settler-colonialism as part of the everyday life of present-day Palestine.

The topics presented and discussed in this issue interrogate the material ambiguities of the Israeli case, while advancing our theoretical understanding of settler-colonialism, as an ongoing global, regional and local project. Through diverse cases and modes of analysis, the articles each deal with the physical, cultural and ideological manifestations of Israeli settler colonialism, albeit from different lenses and in different ways: from settler anxieties concerning legitimacy and the economies of violence these produce, to modes of disciplining indigenous communities in the realms of education and knowledge production, the treatment of indigenous women’s bodies, and even the ecological environment. The subjects discussed herein are too often considered to be the sole preserve of Israel Studies’ publications and tend, therefore, to be approached through the limits of this lens – in which certain boundaries, narratives and histories are never broached; in which the past and future of the settler state can be critiqued but not questioned and in which the settler reality is further effaced and normalised. By challenging these boundaries – in physical and disciplinary terms – the task of understanding the particular modes of the settler colonial state and society, become part and parcel of the process of unsettling the colonial order and contributing to its dismantling.

The three articles that open this issue focus on anxiety as an essential feature of Israeli settler society; and thus, we argue, of settler colonialism more generally. Anxiety is a key component of the settler condition, fundamental to the way settler communities respond to their own internal contradictions – because they are never completely at home, never completely settled. It also becomes a critical tool and a trigger for garnering support from their constituencies and allies, inside and outside the settler state.

In Hila Amit’s article, she focuses on the state’s still-fixed discourse around immigration and emigration, as a window into understanding how anxiety is cultivated and becomes the operational core of Israeli social and cultural life. In particular, she examines how its anxieties around holding a demographic Jewish majority vis a vis Palestinian residents of Israeli-controlled territories, leech into how Israeli society sees and imagines itself as always under threat, and always fighting for survival. Her analysis speaks to the settler’s uneasiness at ‘going native’; to their attempt to develop, ground and naturalise a place-based national narrative that turns settler-immigrants into indigenous peoples, and indigenous peoples (if they remain) into foreigners. Yet, as Amit also demonstrates, these attempts remain abnormal and unsettled, as anxieties around legitimacy, permanency and rootedness are deeply embedded into the discourse that frames immigration and emigration as a ‘national problem’. As she says, multiple institutions have become key constructors of this discourse, while she zeroes in explicitly on popular culture, academia and academic texts, as essential servants and subjects of this ideological bent in Israel.

For Hilla Dayan, who is dealing with parallel sets of questions as she examines Zionism as a contemporary hegemony, it is the European context that helps her tell this story: of being threatened, of being under attack, yet reaffirming that the only safe place for Jews is the Israeli state. In her analysis, which intersects Israeli internal hegemony with how it reproduces itself in international contexts, an important tension is maintained through triggering these anxieties around Zionist legitimacy and survival, in the Jewish metropole/diaspora. They are orchestrated abroad, where they can ensure international support of a still contested colonising project, and help to bolster, re-invent and retrench Zionism as part of contemporary hegemonic relations, at a time when it is allegedly being targeted by internal and external threats. Her analysis of what she calls ‘Neozionism’ – which she differentiates from other approaches to this term – rethinks Israel’s settler colonial anxieties as part of a global phenomenon, rather than an exception; and articulates how Israel’s narrative about ‘the Arabs’, those inside and beyond its borders, contributes to and shares in global productions of Islamophobia.

Our third article focussed on the theme of anxiety is geared explicitly at how it is cultivated around ‘the trauma’ of settler expulsions. Nicola Perugini investigates the ways in which memorialisation and commemoration are being used to produce a new pathway for entrenching settler anxieties, through a series of inversions that he locates in the settler society’s ongoing attempts to erase and replace indigenous experiences. Taking his readers on a tour of the ‘Gush Katif Museum of Expulsion’, he focuses on the settlers’ appropriation of Palestinian trauma, human rights, expulsion narratives, and even key symbols of the right of return. His argument is that the museum seeks to reclaim the narrative around victimisation (locally and globally), and ultimately re-write the story of occupation and colonisation, as it triggers deep-seated anxieties among the settler community around what happens when Jews are expelled from their homes and homelands.

The following two articles deal with the outcomes of such anxiety – the violence that it produces, and the resulting culture of militarism that is pervasive in Israeli society. Together, they tell us about both the structural and contingent violence of the settler state, and its meaning for the society that perpetuates this violence, as well as those colonised – and thus targeted – by it. In his article, James Eastwood traces the role of race in articulating/activating colonial modes of violence. Through the lens of a case in which a Mizrahi (Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin) soldier kills a Palestinian man, he examines the moral economy of violence in Israel. Eastwood dissects the clashing reactions of the Israeli public, in the context of a long history of anti-Mizrahi racism in Israel. Arguing that this racism is inherent to the settler colonial logic that, on the one hand, co-opts the Mizrahim towards acts of front-line violence against Palestinians, and on the other, portrays their brutality as reason for their inferiority vis a vis Ashkenazim (Jews of European origin). Eastwood reveals a particular form of racialisation within the settler society, which is central to the Zionist domination of the Palestinian people.

The second article, by Shir Hever, unpacks the role of neoliberalism in producing de-centralised and privatised violence in the liberal settler state; a violence that is everywhere, because it has proliferated into the hands of ‘citizen-mercenaries’, and away from ‘citizen-soldiers’. While he visits some of the same terrain as Eastwood, Hever uses this lens to examine the crisis of Israel’s ‘security elite’, as well as their ways of coping with it – including selling their ‘battle tested’ capacity for domination, security and violence (against Palestinians) to external bidders. This article, in addition to exploring a critical aspect of Israeli economic relations, advances new thinking on how settler colonial states intersect with and are transformed (as well as entrenched) through the neoliberal shift in global geo-economics.

The following three articles shift focus, from the settler community to how indigenous communities experience and are impacted by settler colonial structures and practices. Ismael Abu Saad’s article focuses on how the Israeli education system is designed to serve settler colonial aims of subduing and oppressing the Indigenous population. Abu Saad demonstrates how the segregated education system and carefully designed curricula promotes only the values of Jewish culture and loyalty to the state, whilst also reshaping regional history to fit the hegemonic Zionist narrative. Yet, Abu Saad concludes that this attempt to eliminate the Indigenous other through epistemic mechanisms has not been wholly successful and Palestinian students in Israel are exposed to politicised narratives and politics that shape their identities beyond those intended by state institutions.

Kim Jezabel Zinngrebe’s article considers Zionist settler colonialism as not only a racialized process but also a gendered one, and focuses on the experiences and narratives of Palestinian women with Israeli citizenship. Accounting for the ways in which Palestinian women’s bodies have been targeted by Zionist strategies since the Nakba, this article stresses that the body plays a central role in Palestinian women’s experiences of being ‘citizens’ in Israel. These experiences are marked by violence and difference, imposed on the body, which constantly fluctuates, reflecting the relationship between the settler and the colonised. Zinngrebe concludes that it is through the very mechanism of citizenship that the state is able to control their bodies as colonial subjects.

A.D. Jaber’s article adds a much-needed layer into our analytical framework, and discusses the ecological implications of the Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine. Utilising the term ‘ecocide’, which is yet to be incorporated into the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, her work reveals the scale of environmental destruction entailed by Israel’s ongoing colonisation of lands and resources. Drawing on the case study of Al Khader, a Palestinian town in the West Bank, it opens up a sphere of analysis that could and should be applied to other contemporary and historical studies of space in Palestine. Jaber’s work uniquely explores ecocide through the dispossession and erasure of the local Palestinian population, and sees it as a main feature of the Zionist settler colonial project, and thus, a core part of the operations and effects of settler colonialism generally.

The final article, written by the co-editors, investigates and challenges the myriad modalities through which Israel produces and normalises the colonial narrative. By critiquing existing representations and framings of the Israeli state – and the spaces and structures in which these take hold – the article contributes to the range of scholarship and communities of scholars working to radically recalibrate knowledge of ‘Israel’ and ‘Palestine’. As part of this work, the authors centre indigenous, anti-colonial frameworks that reconnect intellectual analysis of settler colonial relations, with political engagements in the practice/praxis of liberation and decolonisation. The idea here is to shift who, as well as what, should be centered in settler colonial and decolonising analytical frameworks, even when we investigate the settler state and society.

The articles in this issue collectively and individually offer a re-reading of the Israeli case, both in terms of the analytical lenses used to explore settler colonial relations, as well as the platforms that shape how they are treated and challenged. Yet they also feed back into the larger theoretical terrain with which settler colonial studies grapples, helping to advance a more global and contingent analysis of the settler state within contemporary geo-economic and geo-political realities.

Our hope is that the body of work we have included here contributes to the advancement of critical understandings of the global settler colonial present, while unsettling our understanding of and engagement with Israel, as a specific instance and node in past and present transversal structures of power. We contend that the expansion of the boundaries with which we treat both case and theory, leads to the expansion of the lines and limits of our political commitments to decolonisation as a material practice. More explicitly, the goal of this project overall has been to contribute to the intellectual and critical resources of the growing international solidarity movement with the Palestinian people’s struggle for liberation.