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# Environmental Justice, Settler Colonialism, and More-than-Humans in the Occupied West Bank: An Introduction

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# Environmental Justice, Settler Colonialism, and More-than-Humans in the Occupied West Bank: An Introduction

Irus Braverman

*Abstract*

Our special issue provides a first-of-its kind attempt to examine environmental injustices in the occupied West Bank through interdisciplinary perspectives, pointing to the broader settler colonial and neoliberal contexts within which they occur and to their more-than-human implications. Specifically, we seek to understand what environmental justice—a movement originating from, and rooted in, the United States—means in the context of Palestine/Israel. Moving beyond the settler-native dialectic, we draw attention to the more-than-human flows that occur in the region—which include water, air, waste, cement, trees, donkeys, watermelons, and insects—to consider the dynamic, and often gradational, meanings of frontier, enclosure, and Indigeneity in the West Bank, challenging the all-too-binary assumptions at the core of settler colonialism. Against the backdrop of the settler colonial project of territorial dispossession and elimination, we thus illuminate the infrastructural connections and disruptions among lives and matter in the West Bank, interpreting these through the lens of environmental justice. We finally ask what forms of ecological decolonization might emerge from this landscape of accumulating waste, concrete, and ruin. Such alternative visions that move beyond the single axis of settler-native enable the emergence of more nuanced, and even hopeful, ecological imaginaries that focus on *sumud*, dignity, and recognition.

*Keywords.* environmental justice, settler colonialism, more-than-humans, occupied Palestinian territories, Palestine/Israel, Indigenous studies, ecological decolonization

**Place Figure 1 here: A donkey in the occupied Jordan Valley. "Animal lives can illuminate human hopes, fears, and absurdities in a small land scarred by conflict and occupation" (Johnson 2019, xiii). Photo by author, July 2019.**

Understanding how the more-than-human and environment are employed to reproduce a settler colonial order is crucial to mobilizing strategies to disrupt the settler colonial project and its attempts to violently reproduce the entire planet in its image.

---Zoe Todd, 2017

## Introduction

More than fifty years into Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, it is important to consider one of the lesser known aspects of this ongoing apparatus of settler colonial control: the environment. Rarely highlighted by scholars and often viewed as marginal in comparison with the deadly threats for the humans who dwell here, concerns about soil, water,

air, waste, and flora and fauna are in fact central to the functioning of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, as well as to the broader relationships performed in the region. At the same time, environmental issues are also key to resistance, resilience, and decolonization on the part of the marginalized communities here. This special issue examines the environmental injustices that take place in the occupied West Bank through interdisciplinary perspectives, pointing to the settler colonial and neoliberal contexts within which they occur and to their more-than-human implications (see, e.g., Figure 1).

Although many nongovernmental reports focus on matters such as water and waste in Palestine, they are typically framed as humanitarian (but not *also* as environmental) crises (e.g., Al-Haq 2015; B'Tselem 2017; OCHA 2012). Simultaneously, environmental activism in Israel usually stops at the Green Line (Dean 2012). There is also scarce academic scholarship on environmental justice topics in this region, and in the occupied territories in particular. Our special issue thus provides a first-of-its kind attempt to address some of the topics that arise in this context. Specifically, it engages scholars from law, geography, and anthropology to explore both the theoretical and the empirical questions at stake, with a strong emphasis on the nexus of environmental justice, settler colonialism, and more-than-human matters. Building on the recognition that fights for justice and the environment are inseparable, we offer that ecological resistance may make way for new and decolonized futures (Martinez-Alier 2014).

Nothing about the making of this special issue was easy; instead, it quickly became obvious that this would indeed be a *special* issue. The workshop that ignited this conversation took place in Buffalo, New York in February 2019, and was unusual in many respects. For instance, only days before we met, some of the Palestinian participants still didn't know if they would be able to attend in person for fear that they wouldn't be allowed to return to the occupied

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territories. Then, I found myself in the awkward position of guarding our workshop from undermining participants from across the university who insisted on their right to join it, and of refusing entry to reporters as this felt risky to some of the participants.

The workshop brought together scholars from Palestine and Palestinians from the diaspora, alongside diasporic Jewish Israelis as well as scholars who are neither Israelis nor Palestinians. This is a rare accomplishment—some of the Palestinians had never sat around the same table with Jewish Israelis—and has opened up long overdue conversations. After the workshop, a couple of the participants from Israeli universities voluntarily dropped out from this edited volume because of shared concerns that collaborating on a special issue might be interpreted as a sign of normalization to the colonial state; then, my coeditor for the collection (and for this introduction) had to step down because his university signaled that, even without the Israeli academics on board, coediting with a Jewish Israeli expatriate could still be seen as normalization.

I will spare the readers the additional dramas that unfolded around this project. At the end of the day, I found myself editing the issue on my own, a position I was hesitant to take on, not only because of my privileged upbringing as a Jewish Israeli citizen in West Jerusalem but also because of my ongoing privileged mobility in Palestine/Israel due to my dual U.S. and Israeli citizenships. The importance of this project and the strong convergence of articles that have emerged out of the ensuing collaboration, as well as the support by my wonderful colleagues who contributed to this issue, convinced me to take this special issue to the finish line.

The articles for this issue were born out of insistently fruitful communications, from which this introduction, too, greatly benefited. The introduction also benefited from comments by those who were originally part of the workshop and agreed to stay on board as informal

contributors. Unfortunately, I cannot name them here; this is the sorry state of working together on a collection about Palestine/Israel at this fraught time. But even when collaborations could not take place formally, the intense discussions that occurred behind the scenes informed this special issue in important ways.

It is arguably not coincidental that all seven of the articles in this issue were authored (in one case, only coauthored) by women. The overall approach toward environmental justice proposed here, and the understanding of how tightly linked environmental degradation is to violence, time, and myriad other nonhuman matters, are closely in line with feminist care ethics (Whyte and Cuomo 2017). Correspondingly, many of the articles in this issue depict strong female protagonists—Bishara et al.'s documentation of the Palestinian mother waiting for water in her kitchen, McKee's interviews with rural women who have lost their public green spaces in al-Auja, and Meneley's engagement with Vivien Sansour's seed share project.

Two central questions repeatedly came up as we discussed the common themes that weave through this special issue. First, of the myriad relevant theoretical frameworks from which we could address the unjust power dynamics in Palestine/Israel—why highlight environmental justice? This question further breaks down into two: how will focusing on the environment contribute to the evolving understanding of settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel and, if we do choose to focus on the environment, why adopt an environmental justice perspective? The second and related question is why limit our geographical explorations to the occupied West Bank? What about Israel of the Green Line borders, or historic Palestine? Gaza and the Golan Heights? Other settler societies? The answers to these two questions—why environmental justice and why the occupied West Bank—will be addressed throughout this introduction, illustrating

the unique juncture of this special issue between environmental justice, settler colonialism, and more-than-human geographies and ethnographies as they all manifest in the West Bank.

Whereas we were all working from, and committed to, a settler colonial perspective that views the occupation as part of a broader colonial apparatus that began with the Zionist movement and that encompasses Israel of its pre-1967 borders (also referred to as the Green Line)—and so is similar in many ways to settler colonial regimes elsewhere, for example in the United States and Australia—we have been no less committed to exposing the singularity and the particularities of Israel's occupation apparatus established in the West Bank's 1967 and in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords in the mid-1990s, and the concomitant environmental injustices that have ensued in this place during this timeframe.

Perhaps most importantly, however, we were all invested in revealing the slippages between the settler colonial enterprise and that of the occupation, and the ingenious ways in which these two regimes have enabled, and even co-produced, each other. The term "borderlands" (Anzaldúa 1999; see also Gutkowski, this issue) and the notion of hybrid colonialism (Abu Hatoum; Braverman, this issue) highlight such imbrications. The many environmental justice issues that we have identified here are much more extreme and thus also more apparent in the occupied West Bank than in Israel within the Green Line or in many other settler colonial settings. Carefully peeling off the systematic injustices underlying such environmental issues in the West Bank inevitably leads us back to the heart of the colony—here, Zionism and the State of Israel.

Moving beyond the settler-native dialectic, we draw attention to the more-than-human flows that occur in the region—which include water, air, waste, cement, trees, donkeys, watermelons, and insects—so as to take a more comprehensive material approach when

attempting to understand the socioecological dynamics in this place. Against the backdrop of settler colonialism's project of territorial dispossession and elimination, we thus illuminate the infrastructural connections and disruptions among lives and matter in the West Bank, interpreting these through the lens of environmental justice, orientalism (Davis 2011; Said 1978) and environmentalism of the poor (Martinez-Alier 2003; 2014). Such alternative visions that move beyond the single axis of settler-native to the multifaceted landscape of the "everyday state" (Ranganathan and Balazs 2015) enable the emergence of more nuanced, dynamic, and even hopeful ecological imaginaries that focus on dignity, recognition, and *sumud* (or steadfastness).

Questions abound, and interdisciplinary critical scholarship is much needed in the nexus of justice and the environment. In what follows, the introduction will explore a few themes that have emerged through our collective engagement with the occupied West Bank that might advance the current thinking about environmental justice toward a more critically engaged and geographically diverse theoretical account. I will start with a brief overview of central facets of the environmental justice movement, and then move to sketch the parameters of environmental justice that we promote in this issue: fluid, reciprocal, interconnected, processual, and inclusive. Next, I will outline the relevant literatures on settler colonialism and Indigenous studies and discuss the interface of these literatures with environmental justice. Finally, I will emphasize the importance of considering more-than-human matters, both nonliving and living, with a special focus on the deep effects of colonial violence on nonhuman animal life in the occupied West Bank. Mirroring the order of the articles in the special issue, I will conclude this introduction with contemplations on hope amidst ruination.

Whatever challenges still lie ahead, the very existence of this collaboration is a statement of hope. Not a Pollyannaish sort of hope, but rather an active, engaged, and resilient hope that is closely tied to the pursuit of justice, which is oriented toward process and not dependent upon the occurrence of specific events. The process we have undertaken here is to create a "green print" for a counter structure that we and others may carry forth to help bring about decolonized futures amidst the ruins.

## Environmental Justice: A Brief Outline

The early environmental movement is often perceived as consisting of "white upper- or middle-class people concerned with conserving a pristine wilderness . . . focused on action to protect threatened forests, rivers, and nonhuman species" (Shrader-Frechette 2002, 5; Taylor 2000). The move toward environmental justice, on the other hand, began as a grassroots movement "led largely by women of color" and combining "many of the philosophies and goals of civil rights and environmental activism" (Shrader-Frechette 2002, 6; see also Bullard 1989; 1993; 2000; 2007; Bullard and Wright 2012). Emerging in the context of the civil rights politics of the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, environmental justice has mostly focused on the legal and political contestation of proposals to site polluting and toxic facilities in predominantly poor and black communities. Unlike prior environmental framings, the environmental justice concept "makes the injustice frame explicit—a master frame so to speak" (Taylor 2000, 523).

The central mobilization of the environmental justice movement in the United States has been around questions of distribution, inequality, and injustice (Walker and Bulkeley 2006, 655), calling attention to "the ways disparate distribution of wealth and

power often leads to correlative social upheaval and the unequal distribution of environmental degradation and/or toxicity" (Adamson et al. 2002, 3). Accordingly, most discussions of environmental justice focus on maldistribution—the fact that "poor communities, indigenous communities, and communities of color get fewer environmental goods, more environmental bads, and less environmental protection" (Schlosberg 2007, 4; see also Martinez-Alier 2003; 2014).

Beyond this conception of "distributive justice," environmental justice also incorporates "procedural" and "substantive" forms of justice (Schlosberg 2007; Agyeman and Evans 2004). This expansion of the term "justice" has allowed the movement to advance from issues of equality so as to address the structural and institutional processes that construct maldistribution (Schlosberg 2007, 4; Pulido 2000; Ranganathan 2016). In this way of understanding environmental justice, it is intimately interwoven with environmental racism—the idea that "nonwhites are disproportionately exposed to pollution" (Pulido 2000, 12). Rather than merely looking at intentionality, or at "malicious, individual acts," however, environmental racism activists also insist on examining "the role of structural and hegemonic forms of racism in contributing to such inequalities" (ibid.). In Laura Pulido's words: "it is clear that people of color are disproportionately exposed to a particular set of environmental hazards. Such patterns are not the result of any single decision or particular act. Instead, they are the result of [practices performed by] a highly racialized society over the course of 150 years" (2000, 32).

Alongside the focus on racial justice, some environmental justice scholars have advocated the framework of "just sustainability," which "represents an attempt to look

holistically at the human condition, at human ecology, and to foster joined up or connected, rather than piecemeal policy solutions to humanity's greatest problems" (Agyeman and Evans 2004, 157). This definition of environmental justice includes an "explicit focus on justice, equity and environment together," considering not only present but also future generations (ibid.). Just sustainability seeks to get rid of the underlying source of injustice, not merely to divide this injustice more equally. In the words of environmental sociologist Dorceta Taylor: "Environmental justice is the first sector of the environmental movement to examine the human-human and human-nature relations through the lens of race, class, and gender. . . . [It] examines how discrimination results in humans harming each other, how racial minorities bear the brunt of the discrimination, and how discriminatory practices hasten the degradation of environments" (2000, 523).

This more holistic and less anthropocentric view of environmental justice is a good starting point from which to incorporate more-than-human bodies and materialities, thus enhancing the dynamic understandings of environmental justice (Taylor 2000, 509). I will come back to the importance of incorporating both an (infra)structural understanding of environmental issues and a heightened focus on nonhumans into our understanding of environmental justice toward the end of this introduction.

**Environmental Justice as a "Traveling Theory"**

Although environmental justice, both as a research theme and as a movement, remains American at its core, with a heavily skewed representation from American scholars and activists (Reed and George 2011, 838), this terminology has now travelled beyond the United States and the sites of grassroots activism within which it originated (Walker and Bulkeley 2006, 655). Extending the environmental justice framework, which

has had limited theoretical rigor, to other geographic and cultural contexts has facilitated a deeper understanding of environmental justice as an evolving and expansive concept (Ranganathan and Balazs 2015).

The articles in this special issue grapple with the complex interface of settler colonialism and environmental justice, suggesting that each worldview would benefit from the other's core insights. We propose, specifically, that the term environmental justice, if used slightly differently than its original trajectory in the United States, can aptly capture some of these complexities. Such an analysis must be practiced with care, however, as the "traveling of theories" (Said 1983)—here, the translatability of environmental justice from the United States to Palestine/Israel—is not without implications. As it moves from one environment to another, a theory will change, being "to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place" (227).

Along these lines, Malini Ranganathan and Carolina Balazs (2015) discuss how environmental justice travels, and how solidarities also extend, between sites of water marginalization across the Global North and South. In addition to understanding the power of the "regulatory state," which has been central to the work of environmental justice in the Global North, in the Global South the "everyday state" is equally if not more significant. Traveling in this context has, in other words, made available the novel capacity to see the state as a multifaceted system: whereas the regulatory state is "embodied by a discrete set of environmental regulatory policies and enforcement practices," the everyday state is "an ethnographically rendered ensemble of actors deeply enmeshed in society" (2015, 411). As I will discuss shortly, this more plural view of the State is helpful in the Palestine/Israel context as well.

To many, framing any issue as "environmental" implies that it is neutral and apolitical (Braverman 2008; 2009; McKee 2018). Yet environmental issues are inextricably intertwined with relationships of power and domination. As scholars in the environmental justice tradition have poignantly pointed out: "violence to earth and violence between humans are connected" (Maracle 2015, 53; see also Adamson et al. 2002). Under the Zionist project—and under any other (settler) colonial project, for that matter—there arguably exists no environmental issue that is not already an issue of environmental justice. Drawing on Kyle Whyte, the contributions in this special issue move beyond the distributive and procedural emphases of the traditional environmental justice literature to highlight the concept of interdependence, which "includes a sense of identity associated with the environment and a sense of responsibility to care for the environment" (2018, 127). According to Whyte, "Interdependence highlights reciprocity or mutuality between humans and the environment as a central feature of existence" (128).

Reciprocity and mutuality are also central to our contributions here. While most environmental justice scholarship does not concern itself with the natural world outside human impact (Schlosberg 2007, 4–6; 2013), this issue emphasizes the interconnections between more-than-human and human forms of life, modes of governance, and types of infrastructure, seeing them as interdependent components of a just environment. This insight, while rarely discussed neither in the settler colonial nor in the environmental justice literature, has been crucial in an array of fields, including feminist Science and Technology Studies, political ecology, environmental history, multispecies ethnography, and animal geographies (see, e.g., Braverman 2018; Buller 2014; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Lorimer and Srinivasan 2013).

**Environmental Justice in the West Bank: Unsettling Space and Time**

What does environmental justice mean in contemporary Palestine/Israel? Which issues are illuminated by using this framework, and which might it obscure? What legal regimes and institutional apparatuses are currently in place that have enabled, and that continue to enable, the emergence of environmental justice problems and concerns? And how might environmental justice and settler colonialism framings, when considered in tandem, enable a more holistic analytical platform from which we might start working toward decolonized futures for all living beings?

The scant scholarly literature that has dealt with environmental justice issues in Palestine/Israel within Israel's internationally recognized 1948 borders has emphasized that "many environmental justice studies internationally are less applicable to Israel because its very limited size means that the bulk of the risks located in its core areas affect everyone" (Shmueli 2008, 2384). The idea, in other words, is that pollution and injustice in one place will have a similar impact on different communities because of their proximity. As Israeli environmentalist Alon Tal put it: "The question is not whether Israeli Arabs suffer from noise, water pollution, and air pollution: by virtue of the fact that they live in Israel, they do" (2002, 332). This observation extends into the occupied Palestinian territories, where myriad transboundary pollution issues abound (Al-Haq 2015; Salem 2019). Untreated Israeli and Palestinian sewage, for example, has become a major environmental and health hazard. The sewage treatment crisis in Gaza in particular, exacerbated if not caused by Israel's blockades and airstrikes, has resulted in raw sewage spills to neighborhoods in Gaza and into the Mediterranean Sea, closures of Israel's southern beaches, and public health risks to all who are exposed, humans and nonhumans alike.

But despite the relatively small size of this place, environmental injustices clearly occur here and, in fact, are much more extreme than in 1948-Israel, thus illuminating certain aspects of the settler colonial power dynamics that might be obscure in other settler colonial settings. Numerous nongovernmental reports indicate that "Israel has turned the West Bank into a sacrifice zone, exploiting and harming the environment at the expense of the Palestinian residents, who are completely excluded from the decision-making process" (see, e.g., Al-Haq 2015; B'Tselem 2017, 18; OCHA 2012). Our special issue explores the tensions between the "one shared environment" (or "nature knows no boundaries") approach, on the one hand, and the "unequal distribution of harm" perspective, on the other hand, pointing to the problems with the wholesale application of either in this context and showing how both are further compounded by climate as well as other ecological changes in the region.

Accordingly, Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins illustrates, in "Failure to Build: Sewage and the Choppy Temporality of Infrastructure in Palestine" (this issue), that Palestinians and Israelis alike see themselves as "drinking from the same bowl"—literally, from the same system of aquifers spanning the boundaries between Israel and its occupied territories. She highlights along these lines that "the notion of a single ecological system echoes a broader, post-1970s environmentalism that lends moral value to seeing the earth as a single, interconnected unit in 'planetary crisis'" (this issue, page). The upshot of this approach, according to Stamatopoulou-Robbins, has been that the majority of the wastewater projects proposed by the Palestinian Authority since 1995 have been rejected or delayed by Israel, inevitably leading to a "failure to build."

Closely related to seeing the environment as one, applying "global" standards (which are, in fact, Israeli ones) renders Palestinian infrastructural rhythms underdeveloped and outdated

(page 4). Palestinian infrastructure is therefore deeply affected by "a globalist urgency around rescuing the planet from further human damage. Time passing brings shared social horror. Time is ticking, and ticking existential. But it is always-already. . . too late in at least two senses: humans have already (irreversibly!?) harmed the environment and, as environmental protection standards change, infrastructures designed under older standards become environmental liabilities" (Stamatopoulou-Robbins, this issue, page). I will return to this "failure to build" perspective later in this introduction.

Much environmental justice scholarship has focused on the relationship between minority groups and state governments (Pulido et al. 2016), and environmental justice has simultaneously become part and parcel of the rhetoric of government agencies around the world (Agyeman et al. 2004; Walker and Bulkeley 2006, 655). Similarly, the limited scholarship on environmental justice in Palestine/Israel has concentrated on the environmental implications of domination by an occupying government (Alatout 2006; Zeitoun 2008). Yet despite the occupying regime's visible prominence, one must also attend to other, more plural and less formalistic, understandings of society and governance (Bhandar and Ziadah 2016). While the Israeli military and civil administrations—and their Palestinian corollary, the Palestinian Authority (Bishara et al.; Gutkowski; McKee; Stamatopoulou-Robbins; this issue)—are central to our study of environmental justice in the West Bank, the contributors of this special issue also examine how environmental networks cut across other scales and affinities. In other words, we claim that environmental issues here are shaped not only by the Palestine/Israel dialectic, but also by geographic, socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, and political affiliations.

Emily McKee's contribution to this issue, "Divergent Visions: Intersectional Water Advocacy in Palestine," accentuates this point. In this article, she argues that "inclusive

environmental justice agendas require the recognition of multiply marginalized groups and the fundamentally different understandings of environmental hazards and benefits they may have" (McKee, this issue, page 2). In her careful explorations of the social and economic dynamics in al-Auja and the historical trajectories of the different communities that have come to dwell in this place, McKee demonstrates how joining an environmental justice framework with intersectional analysis can help push our examination beyond the rigid application of group identities. In their place, dynamic distinctions and unexpected affiliations emerge.

If, for example, the rural al-Auja women have longed for the shade of the trees that the family had once sat under near the then-flowing spring, the urban Palestinian NGO staffers have focused on the sense of rightful share in, and rehabilitation of, the Jordan River. "[Such] incongruencies are particularly consequential because these proponents stand on unequal footing," McKee argues (page 17), highlighting that while the Palestinians all agree that Israeli occupation is a central cause of water injustice, they nonetheless propose divergent visions for achieving water justice. In her words: "While some emphasize the lack of Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources, others concentrate on the obstruction of villagers' agricultural livelihoods and unfair water pricing" (this issue, page).

Significant international and nongovernmental support and funding has had an especially strong impact on the West Bank landscape for the last few decades. Several articles in this issue explore how such (and other) neoliberal dynamics have affected multiple geographies in the West Bank, including urban (Abu Hatoum, this issue) and rural areas (McKee, this issue), refugee camps (Bishara et al., this issue) and national parks (Braverman, this issue). These divergent accounts stress both the similarities and the differences across myriad geographies. On the one hand, Anne Meneley notes how some agro-activists speak critically about the "NGO-

ization of Palestine" (this issue, page 2), highlighting the philosophy of "heirloom seeds, organic fertilizers, and a reciprocal relationship between plants and humans and between farmers and consumers rather than depersonalized agro-industrial capitalist exchange" (accordingly, the farm's slogan is "Made with No Aid").

On the other hand, Bishara et al. illuminate the contribution of small nongovernmental organizations to everyday life in refugee camps. In their words: "no authorities are listening to what the people are saying about their water, and so—in a bind that is quite different from the neoliberal one (i.e. retrenchment of state services)—a community must aid (or at least monitor) itself if it is to expect the quality of the water coming out of the tap to improve" (this issue, page 15). Somewhere between these two extremes, Emily McKee emphasizes the controversial role of EcoPeace, an international NGO based in al-Auja and aiming to restore the Jordan River, despite many villagers' different water priorities (McKee, this issue).

**Settler Colonialism in Palestine/Israel: A Brief Overview**

In its early days, the environmental justice movement in the United States recognized colonialism as a crucial element of environmental problems (Bishara et al., this issue). The Declaration of Principles of Environmental Justice by the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit from 1991 states, for example, that "Environmental Justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms" (First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit 1991). Connected to the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, a revitalized Native Studies in North America and a critical rethinking of Indigenous Studies in Australia and elsewhere in the Pacific have emerged, sharpening the debates about the politics of recognition in settler colonial nation states (Abu-Lughod 2020, 3).

Before delving into the nexus of settler colonialism and environmental justice in the occupied West Bank, a brief overview of settler colonialism is warranted. Settler colonial scholarship explores the processes by which a settler society ultimately eliminates and replaces the Indigenous population—allowing the settlers to view themselves as the "new native" and thereby legitimizing their territorial claims. "Settler colonialism destroys to replace," Patrick Wolfe writes (2006, 388). He asserts, additionally, that "the primary motive for elimination is . . . access to territory," observing that "Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element." Put differently, "Land is life" (ibid.). While elimination ranges from forms of integration and assimilation to more overtly violent means, adhering to this "logic of elimination" distinguishes *settler* colonialism from colonialism, which is premised instead on exploitation (Busbridge 2017, 92). Hence, a completed settler colonial project ceases to exist as such—although some have emphasized that the settler can never truly become native (Barakat 2017).

The relevance of the settler colonial framework to Zionism has been the subject of an ongoing debate. While expanding the settler colonial frontier, the infrastructure of Jewish-only settlements and apartheid roads entrenches settler-native distinctions, contrary to the integrationist aims of settler colonialism. For this reason and others, Lorenzo Veracini argues that settler colonialism has been the central regime, and relatively "successful," within the Green Line. In the West Bank, however, the occupation regime depends instead on "maintain[ing] the sharp division between colonizer and colonized," leading to a reversion from settler colonialism to colonialism, while also undermining the settler colonial project within the Green Line (2013, 29). "Failed settler colonialism reverts to colonialism," Veracini writes (2013, 32).

Rana Barakat, Rachel Busbridge, and others have criticized what they depict as Veracini's bifurcated alliance of settler colonialism in 1948-Israel versus colonialism in the West Bank, claiming that this outlook ignores the ongoing modes of elimination "still very much at play in all fragmented parts of Palestine" (2017, 2). Veracini's language of "successful" settler colonialism presents a second, closely related, concern for some scholars. This framing fails to acknowledge the ongoing plight of Palestinians within the Green Line, and the religious and ethnic barriers to assimilation in this context. A third concern in this regard is with the question of interactions between settler colonialism and Indigenous studies. Barakat argues the "settler dominated framework in the scholarship is the attempted devaluation and eventual erasure of the Native history of and presence on the land" (2017, 7). Likewise, Bhandar and Ziadah write: "[a]t issue . . . is the loss of the rich scholarship by Indigenous scholars which does not fit neatly into scholarly boundaries" (2016). This special issue makes an effort to facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous voices, interpretations, and experiences within the settler colonial framework, while attending to the sensitivities surrounding such identity politics, which I will touch on shortly.

Still, the importance of applying settler colonial scholarship to this region arguably outweighs its limitations. At the same time, these, as well as other, concerns about the application of settler colonialism and Indigenous studies to Palestine/Israel must not be set aside, but should instead steadily inform the evolving settler colonial scholarship. The importance of applying the settler colonial framework in this context is threefold. First, the settler colonial framework serves to uncover the structure of the occupation, not as a series of isolated events but as a "coherent and legible frame with which to make sense of Israeli-Palestinian relations" (Busbridge 2017, 92). Second, settler colonialism highlights avenues for solidarity between Palestinians and broader Indigenous movements (Busbridge 2017; Salamanca et al. 2012). Third

and Finally, settler colonialism suggests fronts for decolonization and pushback against Indigenous elimination.

**The Interface of Environmental Justice and Settler Colonialism in the West Bank**

The recent flourishing of discussions on the settler colonial framework has been productive, especially in the Palestine/Israel context. Instead of the "well-worn comparisons with the imperial powers of the colonial/postcolonial canon," which highlight the *national* colonial project, settler colonialism has brought to a sharper focus the plight of Indigenous and First Nation peoples, and with that "a fresh reference and alternative mode of decolonization" (Abu-Lughod 2020, 3). Similar to the extreme manifestations of environmental injustices in this place, different elements of settler colonialism, too, are accentuated to an extreme in the occupied West Bank. This section will briefly reflect on a handful of such elements that have figured in this issue: the settler-native/Indigenous binary, the recruitment of the frontier, and the elimination of the native through various "elimination technologies," including green grabbing (or, more broadly, naturalization), criminalization, and normalization.

Embedded in physical infrastructure, racialized biopolitics, and bureaucratic institutionalization, settler colonialism is part and parcel of the physical and imagined environments of this region (Abu Hatoum; Bishara et al.; Braverman, this issue; see also Alatout 2006; Salamanca 2016; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2019; Weizman 2007; Zureik 2015). The Separation Wall, one of the more visible materialities in this place, both creates violence and also serves to obscure it (Bishara 2020). The Wall constantly erases old, and produces new, states of exception, while at the same time fostering hopeful yet lopsided anti-Wall and pro-Nature affinities and networks (Reynolds 2016). Which brings up the question: can shared understandings over the necessity of nature protection and collaborative actions inspire a way out

of the imperial ruin (Stoler 2013; Tsing 2015), or are such environmental imaginaries and practices merely technologies for furthering, justifying, and even institutionalizing such ruin?

Specifically, we consider the dynamic, and often gradational, meanings of frontier, enclosure, and Indigeneity in the West Bank, alongside schemes for ecological decolonization that might emerge out of this landscape of accumulating waste, concrete, and ruin. Finally, this special issue challenges the all-too-binary assumptions at the core of settler colonialism— namely, the juxtapositions between center and frontier, elimination and integration or normalization, and settler and native (Allegra et al. 2017; Busbridge 2018; Ghanim n.d.; Salamanca et al. 2012; Veracini 2013; 2015; Wolfe 2006; 2012; Zureik 2016).

Although not a direct focus of this issue, it is important to note the wariness of many Palestinians and, respectively, of Palestine Studies scholarship (including several of this issue's contributors) toward a tight embrace of Indigeneity as the prominent lens through which to define Palestinian identity and environmental justice debates in this region. Alongside concerns about reinforcing the hegemonic settler-native binary (Busbridge 2018), thereby silencing Palestinian voices and agency (effectively "museumifying" Palestinians in the past; see Barakat 2018; Abu-Lughod 2020), there are also concerns that autochthonous claims of Native rights to original ownership are both untenable for these communities and politically problematic for (other) non-Indigenous communities (Nichols 2020, 7; Tatour 2019; Waldron 2003).

Lila Abu-Lughod details at least three interrelated reasons for why Palestinians might resist comparing themselves with Indigenous people, including the resolutely non-nationalistic tone of the latter's claims. Eschewing this tone, Palestinians have consistently "sought national recognition for a national territory in a world of nation-states," she points out (2020, 12). Additionally, Abu-Lughod stresses that "Palestinians were never pressured, or even allowed, to

assimilate," implying that settler colonial paradigms do not apply neatly in this context. Instead, she offers, "illegal occupation of parts of the Palestinian homeland, including Jerusalem, and limited self-governance, along with international recognition of a Palestinian quasi state, keep the political tensions alive" (2020, 12).

As I mentioned earlier, while we were acutely aware of the concerns and reservations over the applicability of settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel in general, and of the native-settler dichotomy and the Indigeneity framework as these manifest in this place in particular, and have in fact advanced some of these criticisms ourselves, the narrative of settler colonialism and its entanglements with environmental issues in Palestine/Israel have nevertheless served as a prominent framework for our issue. We tend to agree with Abu-Lughod that the value of the settler colonial framework "lies in the alternative political futures that the comparisons it sets up help us imagine" and in the "new solidarities these comparisons engender" (Abu-Lughod 2020, 14). As Ann Stoler contends, only if one presumes that settler colonialism is a distinct "type" does one have to reject it for the multiple ways it does not map perfectly onto the historical and political dynamics of Palestine/Israel (Stoler 2016, quoted in Abu-Lughod 2020, 3).

Along these lines, Natalia Gutkowski has argued for "interpreting the human-nonhuman entanglements in this land as a part of the larger interplay of settler/colonialism, thereby situating Israel/Palestine politics within a comparative scholarly framework" (this issue, page 5). She further suggests that "the political lives of nonhuman bodies in Israel/Palestine are integral to Israel's control mechanism and its restrictions on Palestinian bodies' mobilities, [highlighting] that the entanglement of human-nonhuman bodies as a means of control is situated within a longer history of settler/colonial systems." Finally, Gutkowski offers that the insights acquired with regard to the workings of power in Palestine/Israel are highly relevant to "other borderlands

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in the era of climate change" (this issue, ). The ways in which COVID-19 has recently affected global border regimes supports Gutkowski's observations on the political entanglement of the human-nonhuman body in a globalized world.

Coauthored by Amahl Bishara, Nidal Al-Azraq, Shatha Alazzeh, and John Durant, the next article in this special issue, "The Multifaceted Outcomes of Community-Engaged Water Quality Management in a Palestinian Refugee Camp," focuses on the Palestinian residents of Aida Refugee Camp and their lack of adequate drinking water supplies. In 2011, a young filmmaker, working at a small Palestinian nongovernmental organization, produced a documentary called *Everyday Nakba*. This documentary suggests that for Palestinians, water scarcity is a continuation of the historical crisis of dispossession that began in 1948.

Water scarcity here is a lived experience; moreover, it is an (infra)structure, not an event (on the importance of this realization in the settler colonial arena, see Wolfe 2006). As the filmmaker's mother explains in the documentary: "The water comes every month, every week, every three weeks. They are in charge. It depends on their mood." She concludes with a penetrating statement that is highly relevant to our entire issue: "Every day we have the Nakba. This [water crisis] is the biggest Nakba" (this issue, ). For Bishara and her coauthors, this situation has called for collaborative work toward more imaginative forms of sovereignty that are based on Palestinian ways of being—which resonates in interesting ways with Ranganathan and Balazs's notion of the "everyday state"—starting with the Palestinian value of a tidy kitchen.

Another alternative form of sovereignty mentioned in Bishara et al.'s article was inspired by the rooftop garden project in Aida refugee camp. Investigating the food sovereignty movement, this project asserted its ties to Indigenous North American approaches toward building community power. Bishara et al. write that, "to have food by means of a self-governing,

eco-conscious movement that places power and health in the hands of a community is to be food

sovereign." The food sovereignty movement could very well be the next frontier in this

community's collaborations toward decolonized futures (this issue, page; see also Figure 2).

**Place Figure 2 here: Palestinian watermelon seller balancing watermelon and Palestinian flag on his head, in Area A of the West Bank near Ramallah. "*In Palestine, watermelon halves are raised against Israeli troops for the red, black, white, green of Palestine. Forever* (Aracelis Girmay, "Ode to the Watermelon"; but see Meneley, this issue, for a more nuanced discussion about watermelon displacement and resistance). Photo by author, July 2019.**

The "frontier" concept, appropriated by Aida residents as acts of everyday resistance, has

been central to settler colonial discourses around the globe. In her article for this issue, "For 'A

No-State Yet to Come': Palestinians' Urban Place-Making in Kufr Aqab, Jerusalem," Nayrouz

Abu Hatoum focuses on Jerusalem's Kufr Aqab, a village that lies outside the Separation Wall

but inside the Green Line. Here at the "concrete frontier," the distinction between colonial and

settler colonial modes of spatial and racial governance in fact collapses, Abu Hatoum argues. In

her words: "As a frontier space, Kufr Aqab illuminates the surreptitious working of a colonial

logic of separation and settler-colonial logic of elimination" (page).

Specifically, Abu Hatoum draws on Mark Rifkin (2014) to argue that, although settler

colonial frontiers are often conceptualized as falling beyond the reach of the juridical apparatus,

the frontier is in fact never fully external to state sovereignty. "Being a frontier, Kufr Aqab does

not fall out of the Israeli expansive sovereignty" (Abu Hatoum, this issue, page 9). Instead,

frontiers like Kufr Aqab "are not meant to be sealed or closed, extending the threat of colonial or

settler-colonial states' sovereign expansion into the future yet to come" (page). Indeed, Kufr

Aqab dwellers are "suspended in time and in a liminal zone between the ghost of displaceability

from the Israeli state and in a deep suspension of no-state. . . . What is at stake in Kufr Aqab is

not that it is merely an 'edge' in space, but more importantly that it is an 'edge' in time, yet the

fear of future displaceability generates much of the present structures and infrastructure of the space" (page 20). Space and time are tightly intertwined through the powerful modes of governing at the frontier.

In line with Abu Hatoum, my own contribution to this special issue, entitled "*Nof Kdumim:* Remaking the Ancient Landscape in East Jerusalem's National Parks," studies the liminal environmental legalities in East Jerusalem's villages to highlight the dynamic forms of colonialism practiced in this place. My article starts with a rhetorical question: "Why is it Jerusalem, of all Israeli cities, that has the most national parks, and why are most of them in East Jerusalem?" (this issue, page 11). Once a national park or nature reserve is declared by the State of Israel, I explain, it is considerably difficult to alter this designation, reflecting the idea that natural spaces are in the interests of future generations.

Consequently, the national park landscape is stronger than many other landscapes in Palestine/Israel. As such, it often sets in stone (quite literally) a particular way of seeing that de facto strips current owners of the land from many of their rights, including the right to build and, in some instances, also the right to cultivate and graze within their private property. Hence, in the name of a public need for green space, certain populations—but not others—are deprived of their ownership rights without compensation (Braverman 2019). Exploring the gray legalities of this colonial regime, I claim that East Jerusalem's national parks are a hybrid between the two distinct park systems operating in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. In effect, "The liminality of East Jerusalem can teach us about both the continuities and the slippages between national parks in these two seemingly distinct jurisdictions," and, respectively, about the fluid properties of settler colonialism in this region (page).

The use of the national parks designation for land grabbing ends is yet another example for the importance of comparative work on colonial regimes. Across the globe, the designation of national parks has been used to enclose such areas perceived by the state as encompassing natural and cultural values into an independent legal regime, creating a "state within a state" (Marijnen 2018). The emphasis on territory, so central to settler colonial practices, has recently been taken up in scholarship on green militarism. Most of this literature points to the ways in which green militarism contributes to the extension of state authority over territories and populations. According to Esther Marijnen: "The enclosure of land designated for the protection of wildlife populations and nature became a tool for colonial governments to enforce and extend their control over territory and over reluctant populations, and thus formed part of the political project of colonial state building" (2018, 794; see also Braverman, forthcoming; Neumann 1998; Dunn 2009). Similarly, Paul Jepson and Robert Whittaker have argued that by creating the national parks system, the colonial state attempted to fulfil the perceived need to preserve untamed and unspoiled landscapes, mainly for its elites. This has often entailed ignoring a long tradition of land use by local communities, thus positing "a separation between humans and nature, the latter being constantly at threat from the former. Thus, the creation of national parks is grounded in the Western opposition between humans and the environment" (Jepson and Whittaker 2002).

My article highlights the work that the national park apparatus does in the settler colonial context of East Jerusalem. Specifically, Israel's nature officials distinguish between the unappealing "refugee landscape" of concrete and debris prominent in Palestinian villages in and around Jerusalem, on the one hand, and the highly valued mountainous landscape of the bible, with its manmade springs and agrarian terraces, on the other hand (Braverman 2019). The

imaginary of an egalitarian battle between these two, seemingly juxtaposed, landscapes is especially ironic, as the "refugee landscape" is in fact very much a result of the ideology underlying the "biblical landscape"—indeed, its violent and spectacular imposition—rather than a landscape of choice by Palestinian Jerusalemites. In this sense, the making of the natural landscape is always a remaking, and requires an erasure of the other's landscape (page 13).

Discussed here in the context of East Jerusalem's national park system, this mode of "green grabbing" (Fairhead et al. 2012), which is a particular form of naturalization (Braverman 2019), was, and still is, used in myriad settler colonial contexts around the world (Grove 1995; Peluso 1993; Spence 1999). Such national nature conservation projects highlight why traditional environmental protections have been depicted by some as a Western, white, and elitist enterprise, quite distinct and removed from real notions of justice (Agrawal & Redford 2009; Dowie 2011). The environmental justice movement has sought to correct this alienation of the traditional environmental approach, which is often grounded in colonial foundations, although some have contended that this movement, too, has become part of the dominant establishment (Bishara et al., this issue, page).

Alongside practices of green grabbing, criminalization is another technology of elimination exercised by Israel as a settler colonial state. In the face of the settlers' continued failure to expel and eliminate the native, they have instead found themselves "struggling to rule and manage this population by vilifying and criminalizing them and attempting to silence or discredit their narratives" (Abu-Lughod 2020, 4). Criminalization as a particular technology of elimination, which has been extremely useful in so many other (settler) colonial settings (see, e.g., Jacoby 2001), is explored in several articles in this issue—from my own discussion of the discriminatory demolitions of "illegal" houses in East Jerusalem and the legalization of

otherwise illegal Jewish structures in the national park areas, through Abu Hatoum's discussion

of the precarity of building without permits in Kufr Aqab, to Gutkowski's discussion of

smuggling and the criminalization of Bedouin/Palestinian camel owners and shepherds (see also

Braverman, forthcoming; and Figure 3).

**Place Figure 3 here: Palestinian shepherd with flock, near Highway 90 in Area C of the occupied Jordan Valley. "Nothing passes [from the West Bank into Israel]—at all. Only with special permits," an Israeli official commented (Braverman, forthcoming). Photo by author, July 2019.**

Alongside green grabbing and criminalization, another interconnected technology of

elimination discussed in this special issue is normalization. According to Marco Allegra et al.,

"From the very start, the banalization [or normalization] of Jewish life in the West Bank has

been a crucial feature of colonization, a historical pattern that was shaped by an array of long-

term structural processes and transformations" (Allegra et al. 2017, 3; see also Handel et al.

2015). Making national parks into tourist attractions for American Jews who are shopping for a

spiritual experience during their visit to the Holy Land is central to the normalization of the

occupation. Along these lines, touring the City of David National Park in East Jerusalem is

presented as a recreational, rather than a political, act. The history of Jerusalem and its old-new

landscape is recast as a marketable Zionist commodity (Braverman, this issue).

Part and parcel of normalization is the rule of law and its ritualistic affect. The "natural"

landscape is always intricately imbricated with law, and is in fact co-produced by regulatory

regimes to form "lawscapes" with varying biopolitical modes and mobilities (Braverman, this

issue). Several of this issue's contributors have explored elsewhere how legal, administrative,

and environmental categories, classifications, and standards serve to conceal, naturalize and, in

turn, reinforce the geopolitical boundaries and the extreme environmental (and other) injustices

established in this place (Braverman 2008; 2013; McKee 2016; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2014).

The complex workings of scientific standardization in particular cuts across many of the articles in this issue, which highlight how environmental sensitivities and discourses of scarcity are used both as a "ploy"—a facade for appropriation and control—and as an explanation and justification for the continuous "failure to build" sustainable infrastructures in the West Bank (Stamatopoulou-Robbins, this issue; see also Alatout 2008; Gutkowski 2018; Selby 2013). At the same time, this issue's articles also explore how race and nature are enlisted in the "grey spaces" (Abu Hatoum, this issue; Yiftachel 2009) that lie beyond formal legal structures, also referred to as "liminal environmental legalities" (Braverman, this issue). In these spaces, legalities and toxicities emerge and intertwine, solidifying into infrastructure, landscape, and other matters.

**More-than-Human Matters**

Our special issue travels along multiple geographies: Al-Auja village in the Jordan Valley, Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem, Jenin's wastewater treatment plant, Kufr Aqab at the northern edge of Jerusalem municipality, Silwan and Walaje in Jerusalem's national parks system, and agricultural activity in Area C. We also explore myriad temporalities and their corresponding violence: from temporalities of suspension and their slow modalities of violence to the accelerated production of urban landscapes and their violence of concrete.

Throughout, we demonstrate that time is of the essence, as environmental violence and degradation are slow, accumulating, and accelerating. The temporality of failing-to-build is a specific kind of infrastructural suspension, Stamatopoulou-Robbins instructs. It is a slow violence enacted by Israel that occurs in the midst of Israeli accusations of slowness toward the Palestinians. From her perspective, however, the story of slow violence (Nixon 2013) "must be told alongside the story of eruptive violence perpetuated by bombs and bulldozers. These two

forms of violence work in tandem, moving between one another and affirming each other"

(Stamatopoulou-Robbins, this issue, page 10).

**Place Figure 4 here: Israeli tear gas canisters repurposed in the garden of the Palestine Museum of Natural History in Bethlehem, January 2021. "Some are like wind chimes, some are for planting, [and] some are for cigarette butts," Qumsiyeh explained. Photo courtesy of Mazin Qumsiyeh.**

Another matter that we aim to highlight in this issue is the impacts of Israel's settler colonial regime of occupation on nonhumans in this region, whether nonliving or living. Myriad materialities drift in and out of focus throughout this issue. For example, tear gas applied in Aida refugee camp—"the most tear-gassed place in the world" (Bishara et al., this issue, page 16)—resurfaces in another context as collecting discarded tear gas canisters becomes part of an ongoing project to heal the earth (Meneley, this issue, page; see also Figure 4).

Water concerns are central to many of the contributions here, their fluid materiality inviting a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach. If in one context working on water facilitated interdisciplinary collaborations and the assemblage of a network of activists across the West Bank and the United States (Bishara et al., this issue), in another context different priorities and preferences toward water highlighted and deepened the divisions among residents of a small village (McKee, this issue). This fluidity of water as infrastructure goes to capture what Julie Chu calls "the very tensions between the mundane and the eventful capacities of infrastructure," when infrastructure "sits murkily between ruination and renovation" (2014, 353). As Chu points out, it is at these times of slow breakdown that infrastructure "can lead to a redistribution of the sensible across the political landscape" (Chu 2014, 352).

Or, it can lead to further breakdown. This has indeed has been the case with water that has been contaminated by human use: an estimated 3,000 cubic meters per day of wastewater flow from Jenin city into Wadi al-Muqata'a stream, the Ramallah and al-Bireh's plants are

"overloaded," and Jericho's plant, with a treatment capacity of 9,600 cubic meters per day, treats only 300 cubic meters per day (Stamatopoulou-Robbins, this issue, page).

Meanwhile, East Jerusalem's urban space has been growing its own "forest of concrete"—"a state of unregulated, haphazard construction" (Abu Hatoum, this issue, page). This forest of concrete is "a model of the destructive infrastructure fashioned by settler colonial governance of time, spaces, and bodies," Abu Hatoum writes. "There are nearly no trees or gardens anymore between the constructed buildings, and any unbuilt space is used for solid waste" (this issue, page). Indeed, concrete is another infrastructural, more-than-human, matter that we pay attention to here. Kali Rubaii has asserted along these lines that "the enemy of social justice is concrete" (2016, n.p.), explaining that this is why, in addition to Israeli academic, cultural, and governmental institutions, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement has targeted multinational corporations manufacturing concrete. The very nature of concrete is one of its contradictions, Zoe Todd instructs (2017). "It is marked by incipient violence against the constituents that comprise it, crushing and mixing things together to form a malleable substrate for contemporary building." Adopting a broad definition of invasive species as an "excessiveness and repetition of the same that threatens diversity, coexistence, and survival of others," Rubaii defines concrete as an invasive matter, together with radiation, plastics, and genetically modified crops.

At the same time, Rubaii also acknowledges that concrete is a form of life and of effective resistance in that it can be repurposed to refuse settler colonial erasure. In her words, "From the perspective of the ecologist, concrete may be hostile to life: from the perspective of the anti-colonial nationalist, concrete *is* life. And in Palestine, it is strangely, both. Concrete offers not an impasse but a set of productive contradictions. Valuing lifeways is not simply about

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the connections between species or things, but about the ability to choose the terms of how those connections are made and changed" (2016, n.p.).

Since its earlier days, the State of Israel, too, has been obsessed with concrete, which was and in many cases is still perceived as an effective means for transforming the desolate landscape into a thriving modern metropolis. In his 1934 poem "Morning Song," renowned Israeli poet Nathan Alterman speaks to the Jewish Homeland, promising "her" that "We will clothe you with a dress of concrete and cement." Whereas large parts of Palestine/Israel have indeed been paved over on the horizontal plane, Israel's not-very-biblical infatuation with concrete also manifests on the vertical plane with the Separation Wall, which in many areas consists of eight-meter tall concrete blocks that cut through the landscape (Figure 5).

**Place Figure 5 here: Israel's concrete Separation Wall at the Qalandia Checkpoint, north of Jerusalem. Photo by author, July 2019.**

Bringing other-than-humans—tear gas, water, concrete, et cetera—to the fore has been a major impetus for our engagement with both environmental justice and settler colonialism in this geopolitical context. This engagement is especially important in the context of nonhuman animals. In her contribution to this collection, "Bodies that Count: Administering Multispecies in Palestine/Israel's Borderlands," Natalia Gutkowski asserts that: "To date, there is a dearth of scholarship examining the political entanglement of humans and animals in Israel/Palestine. The relative lack of scholarship in this area highlights the novelty of the posthuman scholarly turn in the social sciences and the pressing urgency of examining environmental justice and political ecology issues beyond water and land" (this issue, page). "Humans ought to take responsibility to be respectful of nonhuman ways of knowing," Kyle Whyte instructs us along these lines (2018, 127). And Deborah McGregor adds that, "All beings have responsibilities to fulfill, and recognizing this contributes to a holistic understanding of justice. Our interference with other

beings' ability to fulfil their responsibilities is an example of a great environmental injustice, an injustice to Creation" (2009, 40).

The grave injustices inflicted upon nonhuman lives in the West Bank context manifest in myriad ways: wild gazelles and other larger mammals whose habitats have become fragmented by the Separation Wall can no longer travel through or migrate across the landscape (Braverman, forthcoming; Johnson 2019), olive trees are uprooted by the Israeli military, vandalized by the Jewish settlers, or denied harvest by their farmers (Braverman 2008; 2009; Meneley 2011), chemical and sewage waste products heavily pollute the West Bank's ecosystems and the living organisms who rely on them (Al-Haq 2015; Craddock et al. 2020; Davis & Garb 2019), and massive concrete structures are built overnight on top of what were once green valleys teeming with life (Salamanca 2014; Tesdell 2017; Trottier 2007).

Nonhuman forms of life not only suffer the consequences of human-inflicted colonial violence, they are also utilized as technologies for furthering such violence, and simultaneously also as decolonial tools for subverting it. Gutkowski argues in this vein that nonhuman bodies are central to Israel's control mechanism in the occupied West Bank. Delving into the agricultural record of the Israeli Civil Administration, she details how the Israeli system of control operates through animal bodies. Breaking from the traditional focus of environmental research on endangered *wild* species, Gutkowski illuminates the conditions of *domesticated* species such as camels and donkeys and their restricted mobility as proxies for the humans who own them (see, e.g., Figures 1 & 4). Health measurements and public health regulations in particular justify a vast surveillance mechanism put in place by Israel, which is similar to mechanisms utilized in other (post)colonial borders such as United States-Mexico and India-Bangladesh (this issue, page). This bureaucratic record, which is highly invested in monitoring animals' production,

treatment, disease, and death, can also tell us something important about the potential disruption of power through these animals' unpredictable mobility.

**Conclusion: Toward Decolonization and Hope**

Drawing on anti-colonial theories and methods from environmental justice, political ecology, settler colonial studies, and Indigenous studies literature, this special issue highlights the uniqueness of the West Bank landscape and its particular temporalities, as well as the ways in which studying this place can enhance understandings of environmental injustice and settler colonialism elsewhere. It is our hope that new horizons of research will emerge through this initial scholarly examination of the nexus of environmental justice, settler colonial, and more-than-human frameworks and their relevance, and importance, in Palestine/Israel.

Throughout the issue, we show that while the term "environment" implies a neutral or apolitical space, in the context of the occupied West Bank it is neither. Benevolent tree planting practices continue to be used by the Zionist Jewish National Fund as a means for appropriating land, redeeming identity, and erasing memory, while Israeli nature reserves and parks in the West Bank continue to exclude Palestinians from their own land, forbidding them from foraging certain edible plants like *za'atar* (wild thyme) and *akoub* (an edible cactus) (Meneley, this issue, page) and confiscating their camels, donkeys, goats, and sheep (Gutkowski, this issue, page; see also Braverman, forthcoming; Johnson 2019; Novick, forthcoming). It is therefore imperative that notions of justice, for all forms of life, be part of any claims about the environment and against settler colonialism.

In the final contribution to this issue, "Hope in the Ruins: Seeds, Plants, and Possibilities of Regeneration," Anne Meneley draws on Anna Tsing, Ann Stoler, and Bettina Stoetzer, as well as on her own everyday encounters with young Palestinians (especially women), to articulate her vision of "ruderal ecologies" (see also Bishara et al., this issue). "Ruderal," Latin for rubble, is

utilized here as a play on "ecological communities that emerge spontaneously in disturbed environments usually considered hostile to life" (Meneley, this issue, quoting from Stoetzer 2018). For Meneley, this term highlights the potential of life to flourish in counterintuitive spaces. "Palestinians face similar problems reclaiming livable spaces from the ruins of the occupation: the tear gas canisters, spent bullet casings, the remains of home demolitions." But unlike Stoetzer's post World War II rubble landscapes, in Palestine "there is no end in sight. The rubble of the occupation continues and the Palestinians are the ones who have to live within it, finding ways to work around it or even with it" (Meneley, this issue, page).

Meneley finds particularly compelling "generative practices that engage with the nonhuman (soil, seeds, plants) and the preservation of local knowledges essential to the activities of planting, harvesting, and foraging." She clarifies, however, that the hope for a Palestinian state is not an imaginary that her interlocutors have found particularly persuasive. Instead, the ideas espoused by these Palestinian agro-activists are about "trying to decolonize the Palestinian diet and reclaim older traditions where food was to heal as well as nourish, to provide pleasure and comfort and strength" (this issue, page; see also Figure 5). These ideas underline the importance of including Indigenous discussions on regeneration and resurgence in our contemplations of settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel. Finally, Meneley reflects on the issue of time and memory, suggesting that "The past is not to be mourned as lost, or 'museumified,' but used toward futures of hope, hope foraged or sprouting from the ruins, to be shared at a moment in time when life is anything but easy" (this issue, page 12).

Although they do not use the direct language of hope, Bishara et al.'s contribution points to similar notions when they suggest that the collaboration for their research project "has raised awareness around water quality for residents of Aida, and it has led to real energy around

environmentalism for youth in Aida Refugee Camp. These are subtle but significant political transformations. . . . Settler colonialism is insidious and stubborn, but this collaboration oriented around water and environmental justice has helped one refugee camp to open possibilities for re-arranging power and living better in the meantime" (this issue, page 16). For Gutkowski, the hope lies in the capacity of nonhumans to disrupt regional power dynamics. She tells about "animal species that contest the existing power balance in the region and remind Israel that a political geography of walls and checkpoints cannot safeguard it [and] that it belongs to an ecosystem in the Middle East rather than its imagined location in Europe" (this issue, page 15). Finally, Abu Hatoum, too, speaks about the promise of a city "yet to come." Drawing on Emile Habibi's *The Pessoptimist* (2010), her use of "yet to come" is "fueled with a force of pessoptimism, feeling optimist and pessimist simultaneously" (this issue, page).

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