E-scaping apartheid: Digital ventures of Zionist settler colonialism

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Abstract
The ongoing “Intifada of Unity” against Israel’s settler colonialism has resuscitated discussions about the liberatory potential of digital emancipation due to the massive data traffic circulation through its international media coverage. In fact, in a process that has intensified since the outbreak of the global pandemic at the very least, social media platforms and geospatial mapping tools have been subverted from more mundane uses, developing into new forums for organizing, imagining, and practicing more just futures. Yet, the centrality of infrastructure both as a means of digital extractivism and as a site for rupture and resistance demonstrates that the path toward new trajectories of e-scaping cannot be conceived as a virtual venture directed at designing alternative volatile geographies alone, but should always involve facing and challenging power in its everyday forms. By investigating the materiality of cyber colonialism, this paper explores the entanglement between imperial cartography and digital map-making which has reduced Palestinians and their space to a pixelated terra nullius, sanitized from the paradigmatic sites of the occupation and overwritten by a pseudo-biblical narrative that aims to legitimize the re-indigenization of the Zionist settlers. At the same time, it unpacks online processes of hyper-visibility through which Palestine suddenly materializes as a signer of its dangerous nature, yet fragmented and enclaved by an intangible and discretional regime of immobility enforced through the neglect of permits and visas, as well as by the material constraints posed by apartheid roads, barriers, checkpoints, gates, and walls. Finally, it retraces the rationality of Israeli violence diluted through the technical means of built environment, infrastructure, machines and algorithms which, on one hand, contributes to the de-development of Palestine and the censorship of its people, and on the other, normalizes Israel’s position in the region due to its perceived technological superiority vis-à-vis its neighboring counterparts.

Keywords
cybercide, decolonial infrastructure, settler colonialism, racial capitalism, technopolitics

Settler colonialism is a project of racial domination. Operating through the structures of the settler state, it is characterized by an ongoing effort to dispossess native peoples of their lands in order to replace their presence with a society dominated by settlers (Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 1999; 2006). Colonialism, in this sense, is built upon the hierarchical stratification of subjects along ethical and legal lines, juxtaposing the “traditional” and “backward” native with the figure of the “human” and “progressive” newcomer. Settler colonialism entangles racial capitalism (Du Bois, 1998; Robinson, 2020) in as much as colonial domination simultaneously operates to dispossess, exploit, and eliminate unwanted populations while at the same time promoting the accumulation of property and wealth within settler communities (Coulthard, 2014). In this context, land also holds a symbolic value and toponymic acts have been performed by settler states to reclaim territory while justifying settlers’ “return” through the deployment of a romanticized collective memory of the mythical past.

In the same way, the Zionist project of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine undertook a process of territorial legitimization through the construction of new notions of national identity (Masalha, 2012; Pappe, 2006). Colonial strategies of de-Arabization occurred alongside policies of re-indigenization of the Zionist settlers which sought to overwrite the Palestinian landscape with a newly coined Hebrew nomenclature and biblical-sounding place names that would demonstrate their sense of belonging (Azaryahu and Golan, 2001; Masalha, 2015). Hence, at the core of contemporary practices of representing Palestine/Israel lie forms of power sedimented on the British Mandate’s survey and cadastral mapping projects which, by promising agricultural modernization, facilitated the settlement of European Jews into...
Palestine and Zionist land purchase. The legacies of this form of colonial erasure continue to inform current policies and experiences in Palestine, and centralized, top-down, state practices of “memoricide” (Masalha, 2015) [Latin memoria, memory + caedere, to cut, to kill] have conformed to the development of the 2.0 framework of user-generated content. These structures have penetrated the politics of the Internet in new forms of “cybercide” (Aouragh, 2011; 2016) or “cyber colonialism” (Tawil-Souri and Aouragh, 2014) so that nowadays the battlefield of content/ion has extended to the sphere of the intangible. In other words, processes of e-scaping have once again been deployed to organize both stasis, by crafting digital cartographies based on imperial visions, and movement, by developing navigation apps and augmented realities that arrange mobility in sanitized and depopulated geographies filled with a religious-nationalist pantomime. Palestinians have breached the algorithmic infrastructure of Zionist cyberspaces by instead deploying an infrastructure of people and actions developed out of the material relations of identity and locality of everyday life, that have shown themselves to be promptly mobilized in case of confrontation with the power.

Imperial cartography

The supposedly transformative effects of decentralized and horizontal cyberspaces are being dismantled through acts of digital measurement, categorization, and representation of the old enemies of the Empire. Behind the seemingly benevolent interface of a search engine, Google has sent its teams into our streets, in a race for data that deeply resembles the imperial cartographic ventures of modern times. Like the colonial expeditions of transatlantic voyages, contemporary tools of digital experiences have aimed to appropriate space, as well as time and personal data, through Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) calculators, traffic alerts, weather pattern predictions and mobile parking apps. In the late 20th century, cartography was transformed to a large degree from the realm of a trained body of experts and surveyors into a “people’s cartography” (Crampton and Krygier, 2006: 18), which allowed users to integrate their own data and representations across different layers of mapping. While this held a great potential to create new forums for political actions and to shape alternative spatial imaginations, the development of cyberspaces has in effect reiterated cultural, social, and political biases, becoming a tool to crystallize colonial forms of knowledge and cement their respective “imaginative geographies” (Said, 1985: 49).

The history of geography and cartography in Palestine demonstrates the ways in which the art of mapmaking has been integral to both the British consolidation of imperial acquisition and the Zionist project of state-building (Masalha, 2012; Pappe, 2006; Sa’di, 2016; Schelhaas et al., 2017). In this distorted representation, Palestine and its people continue to be depicted, and therefore produced, through the colonial logics of a digital terra nullius. The Western fantasies of a “godlike” journey through the e-streets of virtual cities must come to terms with the reality of a pixeled imagery that reveals their constructed nature as well as the asymmetries of power behind the politics of digital in/visibility. In other words, the democratic possibilities of cartographic experiences from below, enabled by the production and the sharing of data and information by ordinary people, should not be overstated.

Digital representations of the Palestinian space have long acted as tools to communicate certain political claims, and to produce particular geopolitical territorial arrangements. To illustrate this: for more than two decades, in a manner intended to protect Israeli national security concerns, a bipartisan legislation known as the Kyl–Bingaman Amendment (KBA) to the 1997 US National Defense Authorization Act prohibited American companies from providing high-resolution satellite images of Palestine/Israel (banning the representation of any unit smaller than two meters across) (Rallis, 2012). Although the KBA regulation was lifted last year, and several commercial satellite imagery providers such as Planet Labs (2021) adjusted their products accordingly, companies such as Apple (2021), Bing (2021), and Google (2021) have failed to update their maps, which still appear blurry. Similarly, in August 2016, the hashtag #PalestineIsHere began trending following the removal of the terms “Gaza” and “West Bank” from Google Maps. The disappearance of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) nomenclature, now defined only by the deployment of a dashed nameless territory, promotes the narrative of a full Israeli annexation. In other words, it evokes the assumption that not only the 1948 Palestinian territories, or the internationally recognized borders of Israel, but also the West Bank and Gaza Strip fall within the jurisdiction of the Zionist state. The contemporary enterprise of digital earthwriting has renewed modern promises for accuracy, efficiency, and neutrality in cartographic representations and Google has claimed on several occasions that neither their practices of border-making (The Washington Post, 2020) nor their use of data (eCorner, 2006) is political. As a consequence, when several media platforms enquired about the removal of the OPTs from their maps, Google rebutted through a pre-written statement that the omission was rather caused by a technical bug (al-Arabiya English, 2016; Engadget, 2016; Mashable, 2016). Yet today “Palestine” remains digitally elided from Google’s globe projection, demonstrating once again the entanglement between the politics of geospatial representation and global relations of power (Said, 1985; 1993).

Following Said’s (1996:27) insistence that although cartography is “the art of war” it can also be turned into “the art of resistance”, several Palestinian projects ranging from
collaborative mapping software to open-source graphic layers have sought to expose Israeli settler colonial violence through the deployment of indigenous knowledges. These counter-cartographic works are of particular relevance as they have not merely replaced the homogeneous unity of a territorial projection with an Arabic nomenclature, debunking therefore the narrative of a “conflict” between two antagonistic nationalisms for the conquest of the same sliver of land, but also, by combining militant research with political practices, have constituted a distinctive space for the subalterns to speak (Spivak, 1988), reclaiming their existence by rejecting the politics of recognition which have historically served the interests of colonial powers (Coulthard, 2014). Drawing on the Atlas of Palestine 1948 (2004) illustrated by the Palestinian cartographer and engineer Salman Abu Sitta, in 2006 Thameen Darby, the son of a 1948 refugee from Balad ash-Sheikh (7 km southeast of Haifa), created a “Nakba Layer” for Google Earth. The project aimed to integrate officially produced maps with the visual data of hundreds of destroyed and existing Palestinian villages, while also linking their landmarks to the Palestine Remembered website (2006) for the more comprehensive purpose of contextualizing visual artifacts with the history, topography, and demographics in which data are embedded. The information collected has expanded to the extent that in 2018 the data-driven Visualizing Palestine rights group launched Palestine Open Maps (2021), a project designed to vectorize 155 scanned maps crafted by the British Mandate of Palestine, thus allowing users to digitally chart the ongoing colonization of Palestinian villages since the 1880s. It is evident that these cases have proven decisive, in as much as the refusal to be virtually erased has fostered cooperation toward a collective storytelling, one which is able to practically subvert asymmetries of power in real life.

Virtual Im/mobility

The “struggle over geography” (Said, 1993:7) not only defines the stasis of visual representations, but also has an impact on embodied forms of mobility when traversed in their physical reality. Notably, the boundaries of the Palestinian territories, as conceived by the colonizer, start to suddenly materialize when it becomes useful to emphasize their dangerous components. Navigation apps such as Google Maps (2021), Waze (2021), an Israeli-developed, now Alphabet-owned traffic app, and even Maps.me (2021) which relies on open-source data, all display warning messages of a “high risk area” upon entering the West Bank and require manual confirmation to start route planning, without which they bypass the OPTs in toto, even at the cost of doubling the overall travel time (7amleh, 2018). Not surprisingly, when it comes to calculating both walking and driving directions to and from different sites located within the Gaza Strip, no route can be found. In addition, these virtual maps are problematic because, even when accessed from the OPTs, they treat users as though they are international or Israeli, meaning that they are supposed to be able to traverse all territories of historical Palestine without any restriction. In other words, the illusion of connectivity overshadows the uneven regime of mobility in place. As a matter of fact, the quotidian experiences of Palestinians are fragmented by a variety of obstacles, ranging from the more intangible regime of deliberate closures and bureaucratic impediments like discretionary neglect of permits and visas to material constraints such as urban barriers, gates, apartheid roads, checkpoints, and walls.

The spatial politics of digital cartography have also allowed for the development of alternative navigation services that take the political complexities on the ground into account. In the past few years, a number of apps have been set up by Palestinians themselves to deal with the politics of space and how it affects their road mobility. “Azmeh” (2021) [traffic jam in Arabic], “Doroob” (2021) [paths], and “Qalandiya” (2021) (named after a major Israeli checkpoint on the outskirts of Jerusalem) are examples of Palestinian-developed apps, based on crowd-sourced road and traffic data from users, that aim to avoid temporary road-blocks and traffic jams especially in the proximity of Israeli checkpoints. The purpose of this online mapping software is to combine motorists’ knowledge of the roadscape with the arbitrary politics of blockage that constrain Palestinian travel, even inside the OPTs. For example, these commuter apps calculate routes bearing in mind that Palestinian-licensed vehicles are not usually able to drive through Israeli settlements, while also alerting users to possible delays due to flying checkpoints and random traffic flow stops carried out by the Israeli authorities and thereby allowing for diversions. In addition, these applications have been able to overcome the difficulties faced by Palestinians due to poor mobile data connections. In fact, they operate on slower local networks, taking into account that Israel does not provide 4G coverage to Palestinians. These applications certainly do not overcome the obstacles imposed on the Palestinian movement. But by making visible everyday experiences of closures, restrictions, and immobility, they force users to come to terms with their existence.

This is not the case for cyberspaces like those developed through the so-called “hyper-realities” that, despite their name, conceal, rather than reveal, the material artifacts of the occupation. By combining existing urban geographies with the fabrication of cyber settings, the application of augmented reality (AR) technologies to gaming purposes have dismantled the alleged dichotomy between physical worlds and virtual abstractions. For example, the gaming geographies of Pokémon Go appear as diluted spaces, retracing the lines of actual roads that players are called upon to navigate to collect the fictitious creatures designed by Satoshi Tajiri. The colorful lines of their digital representation transform
road networks into a walkable matrix that provides to users the illusion of a uniform land. When compared with the politics of geospatial mapping, which augment conflicting narratives in the production of jurisdictional lines, AR does something deeper still by erasing the urban products of the Israeli occupation (Cristiano and Distretti, 2017). Paradigmatic sites such as the apartheid wall, the Green Line, and refugee camps suddenly disappear into gray voids, blurring their material infrastructure into a virtual limbo. By emptying the space of the symbols of oppression and allowing walking along predetermined paths only, game voids unveil the tensions between virtual exploration and nonplay.

Neutralized, sanitized, and depopulated digital explorations must come to terms with the material layers of reality they overlay, and it is the paradox of sovereignty that turns barriers into borders. By marking Jerusalem as the uncontested capital of Israel, the creators of several cyberspaces have ignored its internationally recognized status—regulated by the UN General Assembly Resolution 181—and helped to normalize its unilateral annexation. By the same token, by making Israeli settlements in the West Bank uncritically visible, while at the same time inaccurately labeling or Hebraicizing Arabic place names (Masalha, 2015), they are complicit in the virtual exercise of statecraft fostered by Zionist expansionism. In so doing, private companies have performed the outsourced functions of map-making which historically were designated to an elite of cartographers close to the circles of Empires. For instance, in Israel, the race to toponymic memory began, at the very latest, with the inception of the state (Masalha, 2012). In March 1951, the Governmental Names Commission was established to replace Arabic names with Hebrew nomenclature, drawn from fields of scientific knowledge including botany and zoology to toponymy (Azaryahu and Golan, 2001), a process which has nowadays been resumed by private companies. Institutional practices of renaming the environment and its built infrastructure are deeply relevant as these have served the deployment of a collective memory that could legitimize settlers’ presence while eradicating indigenous Palestinian ties to the land.

Israel’s tourism industry has benefitted greatly from both the distortion of the Palestinian spatial representation and from a narrative of the mythical biblical past that bolsters Zionist colonization. For instance, the world’s leading digital tourism companies—Airbnb (2021), Booking.com (2021), Expedia (2021), Travelocity (2021), and TripAdvisor (2021)—all list Israel’s settlements among the properties they advertise, normalizing what has been recognized as an illegal situation under international law. Among the attractions suggested to satisfy tourists’ desire for meaningful authentic experiences, companies like Viator (2019) suggest activities such as shooting at the Israeli Counter Terror & Security Academy, where, according to their website, tourists can immerse themselves in autarchic activities by taking part in handgun and rifle training sessions, against a backdrop of stories of the Israeli army and its operations. In addition, these companies have advertised online putative archeological sites and national parks that are actually located in the proximity, if not overlapping with, Palestinian properties, sparking episodes of confrontation and violence between trespassing tourists and residents3. By promoting these contested sites as tourist destinations, digital tourism has contributed to the economic viability of illegal settlements, alienating Palestinian people from their own geographies while filling the 2D imaginary of the terra nullius with the enactment of a religious-nationalist pantomime.

Algorithmic infrastructure

Infrastructural breakdowns are the normal condition of colonial settings. When the everyday life of the colonized is turned into the battlefield of contention, electricity cuts and power shutdowns are not exceptional. Although in the context of Palestine/Israel information and communications technology (ICT) systems have become particularly visible through their destruction and explosion, being a direct target of warfare (Adalah, 2019), their life does not run along teleological lines of temporality, and infrastructural networks entail violent means even when they are functioning perfectly. One need only to consider that high-speed data services have just been launched by Palestinian cellular providers, after Israel lifted its restrictions on frequencies and equipment imports and use in the OPTs in 2018. Yet access to mobile broadband is still limited for Palestinian users as 3G network service, which allows high-speed access to the Internet, is only granted in the West Bank, while the Gaza Strip is still compelled to run on 2G. It is crucial to stress that Israel’s control over telecommunications infrastructure contravenes Oslo I (1993) which legislates that “Israel recognizes that the Palestinian side has the right to build and operate separate and independent communication systems and infrastructures including telecommunication networks, a television network and a radio network” (Article 36B.1). In other words, although according to the Oslo Accord Israel should have transferred ICT governance to the Palestinian Authority (PA), the Zionist state has retained control over Internet backbone and service delivery infrastructure, hindering Palestinians’ development of an independent network that would grant greater safety and freedom of expression.

It is evident that Israel’s control over ICT is not only a matter of economic de-development but has also been translated into the creation of new technologies of surveillance and repression (Who Profits, 2021). Israel has long been the laboratory for experimentation on instruments of control, tested on Palestinians before being exported to other states around the world, in an extremely lucrative
market (Sa’di, 2021). In this regard, the European Union remains Israel’s largest trading partner (28.3% of Israeli export), with the departing United Kingdom (8.3%) in the lead among European states (War on Want, 2017), followed by the United States (26.2%), and the Asian economies of China (8.7%), India (5%), and Hong Kong (2.6%) (CBS, 2020). Israel’s technology sector is strongly intertwined with its military industry and has increasingly been used to target a number of human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and political dissidents (Adalah, 2017). One clear example is the case of NSO Group, also known as Q Cyber Technologies, an Israeli-based company that develops and sells spyware technology. Their flagship malware, Pegasus, is among the most advanced spyware available on the market and can penetrate security features in both Android and iOS operating systems. Once Pegasus infiltrates a device, it is able to both extract data and control the flow of information, but also to run actions, such as turning on the camera, microphone, and GPS functions. Unsurprisingly, despite the company’s claims that it sells its technology to government clients only, it has been demonstrated that the commercial spyware has been injected into targeted phones, even upon ringing the number just once. Particularly for the case of Palestine/Israel, the issue with this sort of datafication of human experience is that the collection of intimate details and information, including the sexual orientation and political beliefs of Palestinians, has been used to recruit collaborators. Indeed, personal data has often been traded in exchange for information on security grounds, especially when targeting groups such as women and LGBTQ+ people (al-Qaws, 2014).

Digital surveillance does not come as a surprise when considering that Palestinians, especially during the pandemic, have increasingly turned to social media as a tool for organizing. Without romanticizing the effects of a bodyless “cyberdemocracy”, the online sharing of quotidian episodes of colonial power, state violence, and police brutality—historically hidden from the collective scope in the privatized spaces of detention centers, intelligence headquarters, and police stations—has certainly created a breach in the flow of global media coverage. In March 2021, in the effort to garner international support against ethnic cleansing and the Judaization of spatial policies, families of the now-famous Palestinian neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem launched the hashtag #SaveSheikhJarrah. This grassroot campaign has served as the catalyst for a mass popular mobilization dubbed by some “the Intifada of Unity” (Open Letter, 2021). Indeed, in the wake of seven decades of Zionist settler colonialism, the new uprising has brought together Palestinians all across the colonized territories alongside those living in diaspora, overcoming the process of fragmentation which has been imposed not only on their geographies—scattered across a variety of enclaves from ghettos to refugee camps—but also their social and political milieu.

However, during the uprisings, several users have called out companies like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok over mounting evidence of the unjustified removal of Palestinian content, including several online actions organized for the general strike of 18 May 2021, causing the interruption of live streaming on different social platforms. Facebook, through its “Instagram Commons” Twitter profile, officially claimed that glitches caused the removal of posts and the suspension of accounts, a convenient justification that would absolve them from their responsibilities for the violation of Palestinian digital rights (7amleh, 2020). According to the Israel State Prosecutor’s Office, TikTok and Twitter are even more likely to accommodate requests of content removal submitted by Israeli accounts for a percentage of 89 and 82 of takedowns, respectively. Not surprisingly, Palestinian users do not enjoy the same online protection even when facing episodes of hate speech and racism against “Arabs” as several groups and profiles inciting violence against them are still able to post content.

In fact, content moderators have increasingly relied on automation and machine learning tools to assess conversational patterns, but this does not justify disproportionate censorship. Even arbitrary technical errors are underpinned by human agency, as algorithms are trained by humans to codify, filter, and manipulate content. It has now been admitted by social media companies themselves that the reason that Palestinian voices have been suppressed was due to the inaccurate labeling of certain Arabic words used online as incitement to violence (The Washington Post, 2021). Machines have been taught that words like “Hamas”, “martyr”, “resistance”, “Zionist”, and even “al-Aqsa” are associated with dangerous individuals and terrorist organizations, resulting in the blocking of posts that mention them in their publications.

Thus, the process of outsourcing the implementation of content moderation policies to machines has resulted only in censoring the voices of those who attempt to denounce the violence inflicted on them by the occupation in real time. In a world in which machines and human beings are increasingly intertwined, new algorithmic pedagogies are needed to grasp the nuances of unruly political contexts. In this process, accountability should be found by retracing the human histories of the colonial knowledge that has allowed for the development of certain software while also taking into account the exploitative relations of labor and resources proper of extractivism that have led to the development of its tangible hardware.

Conclusion

Digital mining is the new frontier of extractivism. It proves that virtual worlds gain a particular political relevance when analyzed in their material manifestations, as digital
infrastructure reproduces relationships of exploitation in the organization of daily life and the allocation of resources proper of capitalism, while extracting value from the exchange of data, especially for those users who are racially profiled. In the case of Palestine/Israel, the promise of the digital emancipation of free flow and unconstrained connectivity was intended to overcome the impediments to physical mobility imposed by apartheid. When compared with the material barriers enforced from above, the circulation of personal data is rather considered as a choice, driven by the desire to become visible, if only online. Yet, the illusion of leveling up power asymmetries in cyberspaces alone has to come to terms with the material means that enable their functions, and unequal access to technology and digital apartheid only reiterate, in the virtual dimension, the physical impediments that hinder connectivity.

At the same time, we are enmeshed in coalesced experiences in which cyber and material spaces blur into each other. In this reality, means shape ends, and technological devices fundamentally determine choices, priorities, and lifestyles. They are neither an arena for political liberation, nor the Orwellian means toward a dystopian future of total control. Increasingly, the agency of violence is diluted into technical means of built environment, infrastructure, machines, and algorithms, which aim to provide technical solutions to political problems. And in so doing, escape routes are filled with hierarchical systems in which everyone is responsible, and no one is accountable.

As shown in the case of the “Save Sheikh Jarrah” campaign, the paradox is that it is the material world that must topple the tyranny of the web, and clicktivism can only work if it aims to supplement the materiality of the struggle. Re-territorialization through community-based organization is the key to forms of mobilization that would enable sharing, staying together, discussing, and struggling as one body. In spite of the claims for neutrality and totality, cyberspaces not only reproduce, but are also productive of new forms of colonial violence. The glitches, errors, and game voids they contain are not the manifestation of technical bugs but demonstrate that the political system in which they develop is faulty. It is by following them, by leaving the predetermined e-roads imposed on the users, while at the same time also facing power in its offline forms, that an escape route can be found.

Acknowledgements
I greatly benefitted from Frances Grahk’s extensive reading and accurate feedback provided throughout my whole research. In an academic world that seems to champion competition and individual merit, I am grateful to Halime al-Ubeidiya, Wassim Ghantous, and Chiara Cruciani for their support and encouragement as well as for creating in our everyday encounters moments of sociality, collectivity and co-learning that are disruptive and truly horizontal. I am also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers and Camilla Royle of this journal for their helpful suggestions towards revision. I alone remain responsible for any errors and limitations.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Notes
1. Although in settler colonial studies Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini have often been conflated, there are several crucial differences in their theorisations which are highlighted in the article in memorial of Wolfe by Veracini (2016) “Patrick Wolfe’s Dialectics”, Aboriginal History Vol. 40: 249-260. Veracini (2016) also cites the short paper by Kehaulani Kauanui (2016) “A Structure, Not an Event: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeniety”, Lateral 5(1). Kauanui (2016) warns that the ways in which Wolfe’s work has been read and used in academia might run the risk of having detrimental effects on native and Indigenous peoples. Although Wolfe himself made abundantly clear that race “is an ongoing, ever-shifting contest” (see Wolfe 2016 Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race, Page 70), Kauanui (2016) argues that the focus on the dogged work done by race as a “trace of history”, if not approached with cautions, might be misinterpreted as having successfully eliminated Indigenous peoples and erased their geographies. In addition, the overemphasis on settler colonialism as a structure might unwittingly obscure the ways in which it operates as an event and how Indigenous peoples negotiate, resist and contest colonial power in the everyday life. Therefore, I agree with Kauanui (2016) that the consolidation of settler colonial studies as a distinct scholarly field “does not, should not, and cannot replace Indigenous Studies”. For a look at the ongoing political contestation over the use of the settler colonial analytic in Palestine, see Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziada (2016) “Acts and Omissions: Framing Settler Colonialism in Palestine Studies”, Jadaliyya https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32857.

2. The layers can be downloaded at http://umkahlil.blogspot.com/2006/09/thameen-darby-creates-nakba-layer-for.html.

3. To promote bookings in the illegal settlements, e-tourism industry has boasted their proximity to desert tours, national parks, museums and Bible-themed attractions mostly run by settlers, with detrimental effects for the neighboring Palestinian communities. For instance, the Palestinian residents of Khirbet Susiya were evicted in 1986 to make way for an archaeological site.
and visitor attractions such as settlement wineries and vineyards now digitally advertised on tourism platforms. Even the City of David is noticeably advertised by digital tourism companies, yet it lies on the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan in occupied East Jerusalem, a neighborhood threatened with forced eviction by the urban policies of Judaization.

4. See the related Twitter posts from 6 May 2021 (https://twitter.com/instagramcomms/status/1390376354322487681?lang=en), 7 May 2021 (https://twitter.com/instagramcomms/status/1390485897787883523?lang=en), and 8 May 2021 (https://twitter.com/instagramcomms/status/1390818110664593409).

5. See the related Facebook post from 19 May 2021 [in Hebrew]: (https://www.facebook.com/283445232509318/posts/916928559160979/)

6. See the example of social media accounts associated with “La Familia”, the far-right football support group of the Israeli Premier League club Beitar Jerusalem. The online violence, epitomized by a video on Twitter allegedly threatening Hapoel Beer Sheva’s John Ogu while holding a gun (still available at https://twitter.com/raphael_gellar/status/958633242932918272?lang=en) only reflects the sense of alienation and insecurity imposed on black and Palestinian people when traversing their wallscapes, warning “Mohammed is dead. Death to Arabs” (see the Twitter post available at https://twitter.com/babagol_/status/1333706803604041728?lang=en). Even if most of these episodes have been dismissed as simple jokes, they still demonstrate the sense of entitlement and impunity enjoyed by Israeli Jews and the asymmetries of power in place both online and offline vis-à-vis their Palestinian counterparts.

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Author Biography

Ivana Bevilacqua is a researcher and graduate teaching assistant at King’s College University London. Her research and writing are rooted within critical race, settler colonial and indigenous studies and cross the fields of geography, anthropology, and politics. In her LAHP-funded doctoral research Ivana combines archival research with ethnography and...
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