Displacing the Anthropocene: Colonisation, extinction and the unruliness of nature in Palestine

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Abstract
Recent 'Anthropocene' commentaries have argued that as humans have become decisively entangled in natural systems, they collectively became a geological species-agent potentially becoming aware of its own place in the deep history of planetary time. Through this, the argument goes, a pre-political collective consciousness could emerge, paving the way for a progressive construction of a common world, beyond particularistic justice-claims. The reverse case is made in scholarship of settler colonialism: the Anthropocene is rooted in histories of settler colonial violence and is deeply tied up with the dispossession and 'extinction' of Indigenous life-worlds. In this article, we foreground nature–human entanglement as crucial for understanding the operations but also the instability of settler colonialism in Palestine. We suggest that fractures and openings become legible when paying attention to the 'afterlife' of nature that was erased due to its enmeshment with Indigenous people. We provide a historical and ethnographic account of past and emerging entanglements between Palestinians refugees and their nature, ultimately arguing that indigeneity is recalcitrant to obliteration. With that in mind, we return to the Anthropocene's focus on universal human extinction and ethical consciousness by critically engaging with it from the standpoint of colonised and displaced Indigenous populations, like the Palestinian refugees. We conclude by arguing that only when the profoundly unequal access to Life entrenched in settler colonialism is foregrounded and addressed, does a real possibility of recognising any common, global vulnerability that the species faces emerge.

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And the road continues eastward between mountains and over mountains, and the Galilee is revealed to me in its splendor, its hidden places and folds, its crimson smile and its green softness and its desolation. I have never seen it like this. It was always bustling with man and beast. And the latter pre-dominated. Herds and more herds used to descend from the heights to the valleys of the streambeds, their bells ringing with a sort of discontinuous sound, which vanished in the ravines and hid among the crevices, as if they would go on chiming forever. And the shepherds striding after them like figures from ancient times, whistling merrily and driving the goats towards the trees and bushes - to gnaw at them hungrily; and now the picture has disappeared and is no more. A strange stillness lies over all the mountains and is drawn by hidden threads from within the empty village(s?). An empty village: what a terrible thing! **Fossilized lives**! Lives turned to fossilized whispers in extinguished ovens; a shattered mirror; moldy blocks of dried figs and a scrawny dog, thin-tailed and floppy-eared and dark-eyed. At the same time-at the very same moment-a different feeling throbs and rises from the primordial depths, a feeling of victory, of taking control, of revenge, and of casting off suffering. And suddenly the whispers vanish and you see empty houses, good for the settlements of our Jewish brethren who have wandered for generations upon generation, refugees of your people, steeped in suffering and sorrow, as they, at last, find a roof over their heads. And you knew: War! This was our war. (Joseph Weitz 1948, cited in Benvenisti, 2000: 155–156, emphasis added).

Introduction

One common claim associated with the 'Anthropocene' is that with the pervasive and global impact of human activity on Earth systems, any sharp distinctions between a 'human' and a 'natural' sphere have become unsustainable. Our species is now the primary planetary force (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000; Crutzen, 2006; Ellis and Ramankutty, 2008; Lynas 2011), whose current actions and choices are producing effects that will be traceable by future stratigraphers searching for markers of geological periods (Zalasiewicz et al., 2010). Beyond the geological debate, the implications of this idea have also been widely explored in social sciences, humanities and popular culture (e.g. Baskin, 2015; Biermann, 2014; Hamilton, 2017; MacFarlane, 2016). Notably, Dipesh Chakrabarty reflects on how, as a species, humans are now falling into 'deep history' by becoming thoroughly enmeshed with geological processes: 'the crisis of climate change, by throwing us into the inhuman timelines of life and geology, also takes us away from the homocentrism that divides us' (Chakrabarty, 2016: 183). This 'carries a certain shock of recognition – recognition of the otherness of the planet and its very large-scale spatial and temporal processes of which we have, unintentionally, become a part'. (Chakrabarty, 2016: 181). Looking out at the scale and depth of geological time and facing collective extinction, such arguments run, humans should activate an ethical consciousness – a pre-political collective position that might allow a step towards the 'progressive composition of a common world' (Latour, 2004: 18, cited in Chakrabarty, 2012: 14).

In this article, we explore what power operations and knowledges such calls for an ethical consciousness might occlude. We do so from the vantage point of the Indigenous Palestinian displaced population and their ecology, subjected to a process of physical erasure – 'fossilized' as the quote at the outset has it – through the settler colonisation of their lands. Throughout the making of Israel, two-thirds of the Indigenous Palestinian population (around 720,000 out of the 900,000 who lived in the territories that became Israel) fled or were ethnically cleansed following a plan which was intended to also make their return to their villages, towns and lands permanently impossible (Pappé, 2006). Villages were

destroyed and most vegetation replaced (Benvenisti, 2000). However, as the quote indicates, one of the main narratives sustaining the settler colonial take-over was that what existed before Jewish colonisation was an inert, empty and lifeless landscape (Kedar et al., 2018). This discourse, based on a great deal of imagination, fabrication and selective remembering, sought to obliterate Indigenous forms of being and belonging (Said, 2000), including the relation of the Indigenous to nature.

In this light, rather than seeing the Anthropocene as opening a potential door to overcoming the geopolitics that divides us, we draw on work that sees the Anthropocene as fundamentally intertwined with colonial dispossession and its ontological remaking of human, and other than human, relations across space and time. We take the view, with Davis and Todd, that the Anthropocene 'betrays itself in its name: in its reassertion of universality, it implicitly aligns itself with the colonial era' (2017: 763). Rather than naming a new geological epoch where a universal human species becomes the primary historical agent, the Anthropocene concept and debate can, however, from a different perspective, help shed new light on the central place of nature in the working of colonial violence and on unexpected avenues of resistance to it (Davis and Todd, 2017; Yusoff, 2019). For all its problems, the Anthropocene term may yet allow us to not lose sight of how settler colonialism involves the violent displacement of not only Indigenous peoples and their nature, but also of Indigenous' enmeshment with nature.

In Palestine, like in other settler colonial contexts, the elimination of the Indigenous population rested on more than just physical displacement, destruction and ecological alteration. Settler colonialism drew an equivalence between Indigenous Life and Nonlife, with humans and nonhumans together fossilised or desertified by the ongoing settler colonial project which aimed at turning the settlers into the new Indigenous. Like in other settler-colonial contexts, nature was not simply destroyed. It was assigned the ontological status of Nature (capitalised to indicate its supposed pristineness) only when appropriated by the settlers, and then worked upon to subsequently become the blooming 'settler-Nature'.

In this article, we foreground nature–human entanglements as crucial for understanding the operations – but also the instability – of colonial power. We suggest that fractures and openings become legible by paying attention to ecological ruins, that is, the afterlife of nature that was erased in its enmeshment with Indigenous people.

Before we move on, we give a note on genealogy and positionality: The article is born out of an interdisciplinary effort integrating two different research focuses and positionalities. The authors are a Palestinian anthropologist whose family was displaced in 1948 and whose research has predominantly focused on displacement and refugee-ness, and an International Relations scholar whose work engages the role of nature and 'Anthropocene' technologies in international politics. We found this interdisciplinary engagement a fertile ground for developing aspects of our reciprocal research fields.

The argument unfolds in the following sequence. First we account for how settler colonialism in Palestine is a form of domination that involves not just displacement and control of populations and appropriation of natural resources (biopower) but also one that authorises hierarchical ontological classes of 'nature' and 'human'. We then present ethnographic material collected among Palestinian refugees in Palestine[1] and personal recollections of Ruba Salih, showing how despite destruction of the natives' natural and social habitats, the Indigenous turned out not to be a passive receptacle to settler operations. Ecological ruins produce affects and claims which do not merely underscore but re-actualise the deep historical enmeshment between displaced Palestinian refugees and their nature. We suggest that Palestinian indigeneity is recalcitrant to obliteration. We then critically engage with the Anthropocene's focus on universal human extinction and ethical consciousness from the

standpoint of colonised and displaced Indigenous populations, like the Palestinian refugees. We conclude by arguing that only when the profoundly unequal access to Life entrenched in settler colonialism is foregrounded and addressed, does a real possibility emerge of recognising any common, global vulnerability that the species faces.

Anthropocene: The view from the already extinct

That the Anthropocene as a concept is as contested as it is political is clear from the controversies surrounding its semantics and its onset. One initial Earth System science Anthropocene narrative suggested that generic 'human activity', particularly since the industrial revolution, had inadvertently brought on a new geological epoch (Crutzen, 2006: 13–14). Others identify the 'great acceleration' from around 1950 – the period signaling the globalisation of industrialisation and the nuclear age – as a significant rupture with the previous epoch. In this perspective, the so-called Golden Spike, 'a global widespread and abrupt signature', sets the Anthropocene onset at 1964 (Waters et al., 2015: 46). Such accounts have been heavily criticised, not least by those arguing that 'Anthropocene' as a concept does much prescriptive work, potentially legitimating planetary engineering interventions, normalising 'a certain portion of humanity as "the human", and reinserting man into nature, only to re-elevate "him" above it' (Baskin, 2015). They consider the name (Age of Humans) deeply misleading, insisting that responsibility rests not with the species but with 'a tiny minority' representing 'an infinitesimal fraction of the population of Homo sapiens in the early 19th century' (Malm and Hornborg, 2014: 63–64). 'Capitalocene' would for some critics be a more apt term since it is not 'humanity' but a particular economic–political system that has produced ecological destruction (Moore, 2015, 2017).

Most pertinent here, however, is the scholarship emphasising the role of colonial violence in provoking Earth system changes. The start of the Anthropocene from this perspective is instead 1492 when the *Conquistadores* first set foot in South America. Their arrival set in motion processes of violence and disease that decimated native populations by around 90% (Miller, 2007: 50). This precipitated widespread collapse of farming and a wholesale reforestation of the continent, trapping sufficient CO_2 to lower global average temperatures by the year 1610 (Davis and Todd, 2017; Lewis and Maslin, 2015). In fact, the colonial connection reappears even in the later dating of the Anthropocene. When nuclear weapons states deposited artificial radionuclides worldwide in the Earth's crust via atmospheric test explosions, such tests invariably took place on colonised lands. The very first was detonated by the USA in the Tularosa Basin, an area held by Apache native Americans until 1850. The USA later chose Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands (claimed by Spain in 1592, later sold to Germany, captured by Japan during the First World War and occupied by the USA during the Second World War) as the site for a total of 23 test explosions between 1946 and 1958. For its tests, the UK chose aboriginal land in Australia, permanently displacing an Indigenous population in the process (Parkinson, 2002). Kathryn Yusoff calls this the 'nuclear colonization of the Pacific and Marshall Islands' (2019: 46).

On the other side of the equation, settler colonial literatures have long described what might be considered 'local Anthropocenes' resulting from colonial violence, including the expulsion or eradication of native populations (Wolfe, 2006) and the wholesale re-shaping of landscapes and natural habitats (e.g. Brook, 1998; Crosby, 2004; Hubbard, 2014; Weizman, 2007), which 'curtails the reproduction of Indigenous modes of production' (Wolfe, 2006: 395; see also Veracini, 2013). Recent work has suggested that settler colonial genocide has often been enacted through 'ecocide' (Short, 2016). In Palestine, notions such

as 'spatiocide' have been used to denote the erasure of living space for the Palestinian Indigenous population (Hanafi, 2009).

Davis and Todd (2017) bring a much-needed decolonial Indigenous lens to the debate by foregrounding the erasure of Indigenous knowledges in Anthropocene representations of an erstwhile binary: a universal humanity on the one hand and Nature on the other. In most Indigenous cosmologies, land and people are an integrated entity. People are born from land and 'thought on earth is animated through and bound to bodies, stories, time and land' (Davis and Todd, 2017: 669–670). At stake, and erased by the Anthropocene term, are therefore not only hierarchically ordered humanities and histories of dispossession and destruction, but also unequal narratives of what constitutes nature and which entanglements are allowed to live. In Palestine, as we will show, these antagonisms can be defined in terms of an Indigenous nature that has been constantly erased, 'fossilised' or made extinct, with the manufacture of a settler-Nature on its ruins.

Although, as Patrick Wolfe has argued, genocide, extinction and settler colonialism are always connected, in so far as '(l)and is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life' (Wolfe, 2006: 387), extinction here does not equate to genocide, death or physical extermination. Nor does it suggest that the Palestinian refugee community is biologically extinct. Rather, the making of the refugee problem is part of an ongoing process of forcing the extinction of Palestinian indigeneity. 'Extinction' points therefore to a settler colonial process that started in 1947 with the settlers' attempts thereafter to make themselves the Indigenous in Palestine by forcibly erasing Indigenous life-worlds (Veracini, 2013). However, the argument of this article is that this process is unfinished, fractured and made unstable partly by the unruliness and resurgence of Indigenous nature itself and, most crucially, as we will show later, by displaced people attending to this resurgence.

Concerning Palestine, an important and extended body of scholarship documents how settler colonialism operates through ecological, spatial and infrastructural destruction, alteration, appropriation and expropriation (Abu El-Haj, 2001; Alatout, 2009; Falah, 1996, 2005; Meiton, 2015; Pappé, 2006; Selwyn, 1995; Tesdell, 2017; Weizman, 2007; Weizman and Sheikh, 2015; and earlier Abu Jiryis, 1973; Abu-Lughod, 1982). Classic texts like Beshara Doumani's (1995) or Meron Benvenisti's (2000) accounted, crucially, for the colonial erasure of the knowledge and practices of the Indigenous agrarian society as well as the upending of the material and natural landscape in Palestine.

More recently, research by legal geographers has cast new light on the ongoing processes of land dispossession, which necessitates constant novel legal expedients by the settler colony. This has become a particularly vicious pattern in the case of Indigenous Bedouins in the Negev (Kedar et al., 2018). Some scholars explored the rare projects of conservation of Palestinian depopulated areas to analyse the ruins and their afterlife (Lekach, 2015; Leshem, 2017) while others have engaged with Palestinians' spatial and material decolonial rubrics and strategies (Petti et al., 2009). Similarly, a conspicuous literature exists on the conditions that propelled Palestinian displacement and expulsion (Pappé, 2006; Masalha, 2003; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 2007) producing the political, embodied, temporal and spatial precarity of Palestinian lives in exile and under Israeli occupation, the latter appropriating not merely space but also their time (Allan, 2014; Peteet, 2005; Salih, 2013, 2017).

Despite this crucial body of scholarship, settler colonialism and displacement in Palestine remain predominantly analysed through the territorial and bio-political lenses of 'land' and 'people'. Only recently a number of Palestinian scholars have begun to interrogate the material, cultural and epistemological elements of natural-social enmeshments. Omar Tesdell (2017) analyses the Indigenous agrarian knowledge that has been erased through the settler colonial project; Mazzawi and Sa'ar (2018) look at the transformation and

resurgence of the ḥawākīr of Nazareth, traditional domestic gardens that provided both livelihood and sociality.

Building on these important foundations, here we foreground nature–human entanglement as crucial for understanding the operations, but also the instability, of colonial power. We show that the emerging antagonism in Palestine, like in other settler colonial contexts, is neither between generic 'Humans' and 'Nature', nor merely between colonisers and colonised. It runs between different nature–human entanglements, where the power to draw the distinction between what constitutes Life and Nonlife determines which class of entanglement predominates. We suggest that such fractures and openings become legible when paying attention to the enmeshment between displaced Indigenous Palestinians and their nature. In her discussion on settler colonialism and the Anthropocene, Elizabeth Povinelli calls this prerogative 'geontopower' and associates it particularly but not exclusively with late liberal settler colonialism (Povinelli, 2016). Whereas biopower concerns power that fosters and regiments human life (Foucault, 1998: 158), for Povinelli, geontopower foregrounds the ability to define and draw the line between Life and Nonlife (capitalised to underscore that 'Life' includes birth, growth, reproduction as well as dying and extinction, whereas Nonlife includes everything non-vital, that is inert and barren). The Life/Nonlife distinction – taken as self-evident in biopower – has been rendered visible and problematic in the Anthropocene via intense political contestations around fossils, carbon molecules and the apparent vitality of the Earth system. It is perhaps far from incidental that two of the main types of such geontopower are captured by Povinelli in terms of the 'Desert' and the 'Virus'. The Desert 'stands for all things perceived and conceived as denuded of life' (Povinelli, 2016: 16). It is a space where 'life was, is not now, but could be if knowledges, techniques, and resources were properly managed' (Povinelli, 2016: 16). Whereas the Desert represents an inert state that could be made into life again with the technological input, the Virus is 'an active antagonistic agent'. The Virus 'with its central imaginary of the Terrorist provides a glimpse of a persistent, errant potential radicalization of the Desert'. Because it cannot be contained or defined by the distinction between Life and Nonlife, the Virus 'confuses and levels the difference between Life and Nonlife while carefully taking advantage of the minutest aspects of their differentiation' (Povinelli, 2016: 18–19).

Differently from Povinelli, however, here we are not pursuing the question of how to give nature a voice in the political order (Povinelli, 2016: 131). Nor are we interested, as 'new materialist' and 'ontological turn' scholars might be, in the ethical and philosophical question of whether nonhuman lifeforms, such as the olive grove, might have normative capacities or agencies, let alone feelings or voices (Kohn, 2013). We attend instead to the epistemic and ontological violence of geontopower (designation of Nonlife) in Palestine and on the afterlife of ecological ruins, with the attendant political claims these open.

Forced displacement and settler-Nature

The quote at the outset is from the diary of Joseph Weitz, a Polish Jew who settled in Palestine in 1908 and who sat in the first and second Transfer Committees (1937–1948). These were formed between 1948 and 1949 to deal with the 'Arab problem' defined as the presence of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians on the land that the UN attributed to Israel in 1947 (Morris, 1986). Weitz was also the director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Settlement Department from 1932 to 1948 (Masalha, 1992) and in his roles, he adamantly supported the expulsion of the Arab population and the expropriation of their lands and possessions. Not differently from other classic colonial tropes, his teleological account

of settler colonialism in Palestine consigned the Indigenous population to a distant temporal time-space through a semantic that augured their material and sensory disappearance.

Yet, the long quote bears citation as it also indicates how changing conceptions of nature mattered in settler colonial imaginaries, interlacing with the elimination of the Indigenous population. For Weitz, Indigenous nature is first a primitive unity of human and non-human life 'bustling with man and beast', saturated with a primordial remoteness, a barren landscape filled with silence which is burnt or shriveled, until the human and non-human presence is rendered fossilised life. The Indigenous population's erasure, forcibly expelled in 1948 during what the Palestinians call the *Nakba* (catastrophe) (Masalha, 2003; Pappé, 2006), figures in Weitz' affective and sensory account as a non-fact; in an instant he envisions that 'the picture has disappeared and is no more' and the landscape is eventually apprehended as Nature, ready to be cultivated, thanks to the settling of the 'Jewish brethren' in the land of Palestine.

Relying on the material and metaphysical reframing of Indigenous nature as fossilised life, Weitz forces Palestinian human–nature entanglement into the realm of Nonlife. Palestine becomes not only a 'land without a people' as the idiom has it[2] but in particular a 'waste-land', a desertified and motionless place, redeemed by the arrival of Jewish settlers taming nature, and famously claiming to make the 'desert bloom' (Kadman, 2015).

The notion that 'Palestine was run down' still dominates scholarship on modern Zionist environmental ethics – with its emphasis on reforestation and tree planting (Braverman, 2014) – but also underscores the ongoing project of dispossession. Natalia Gutkowski (2018) notes how Palestinian traditional rain-fed agriculture has been accommodated and appropriated to suit an Israeli environmental ethic, which in effect helped to extend Israeli state power over, and subjugation of, the Palestinian rural community inside Israel. The idea is rooted in early visions of Zionism, particularly those of the early 1900s, imagining the 'redemption of the land' connecting the Hebrews with the land they had been expelled from in 70 CE. Redemption was about re-establishing the godly order of things, reconnecting the 'people of the land' to a land that they dutifully represent in all accounts as barren (Long, 2009).

Reconnection, return and redemption combine, therefore, to justify the settler colonial extinction of Indigenous life-worlds in Palestine. This is part of a wider pattern. In classic settler colonial contexts like Australia or the Americas, what Wolfe calls the 'doctrine of discovery' (2006: 392) consisted in first illegal settlers violently expropriating the land and looting possessions, and then having the federal states intervene to sanction and legalise the acts, often by imposing compensation on the natives. In Palestine, a set of analogous arbitrary rules were put in place to separate natives from their land and to prevent displaced refugees from returning. The first tool was emptying the land of its original inhabitants by making them refugees. Then followed a systematic confiscation, Judaisation and nationalisation of Palestinian land, coupled with centralisation and unequal distribution of land rights. Most Jewish arriving in Israel before the early 1950s were settled on land evacuated or confiscated from Arabs, as were 350 out of 370 settlements established at the time (Kedar and Yiftachel, 2006: 127). Between the end of the 1940s and the end of the 1960s, Israel introduced a set of laws aimed at legalising refugee land confiscation. These included the Absentee Property Law (1950) and the Land Acquisition Law (1953) which authorised the transfer of refugees' and internally displaced's lands to the Israeli state. The Land Purchases Law transferred legal ownership of refugee property and land to a Development Authority and established an Israel Land Authority to manage it. By the end of the war, Israel controlled 78% of land covered by British-Mandate Palestine, although only 8.6% of the area was under Jewish ownership.

Adding to the process of seizing property through temporary or emergency regulations, these laws retroactively legalised the illegal acquisition of Palestinian land and properties (Abu-Lughod, 1982; Kadman, 2015: 16). In some cases, measures adapted or interpreted Mandatory and Ottoman laws, but these were often refined over time to perfect the mechanism of expropriation by making it appear as a system of technical or 'legal' tools (Kedar and Yiftachel, 2006; Kedar et al., 2018). For example, two categories of land under the Ottoman code were *miri* and *mawat*. *Miri* land, owned by the sovereign, was defined as land used for cultivation or pasture under lease, while *mawat* land was vacant land: unpossessed, uncultivated land, including rocky fields and mountain areas. Under Ottoman law, later confirmed in Mandate law, anyone who possessed and cultivated *miri* land for longer than 10 years could acquire a title deed and later rights over the land. *Mawat*, dead land, was defined by vacancy in relation to human–nature bonds: as a land that lies at 'such a distance from towns and villages from which a human voice cannot be heard at the nearest inhabited place' (cited in Amara, 2013: 32). *Mawat* could be reversed into *miri*. Fluidity between categories of land was allowed such that anyone who revived dead – *mawat* – land could acquire deeds over it, making it into *miri* land. Customary law and settlements were also integral to attribution of land deeds. Under the British Mandate, a process of land registration was instituted, and changes were made so that anyone wishing to revive a dead or vacant *mawat* land would require state permits or incur fines, without which they would be considered trespassers. As Amara puts it, these were two fundamentally different conceptualisations:

> the Ottoman notion of 'public land' was land that, though formally owned by the state, would be accessible for cultivators. The British understanding of 'state land' however, was to keep it under state control and out of public reach, unless otherwise assigned by the government. (2013: 34)

The latter was in sum a process by which the government forced a notion of 'state land' which Israel would use to its own ends of expropriating, redistributing and then nationalising land. Together with the settlement land title tool, this active manipulation of previous laws allowed Israel to gain control of 93.5% of the land in Israel by 2011 (Amara, 2013: 36).

The cultivation techniques implemented on land from where Palestinians were expelled or escaped was also instrumental (Benvenisti, 2000): the land suitable for intensive cultivation was distributed to Jewish settlers and to the cooperative settlements. Land and crops of no interest were neglected or destroyed. Citrus groves were left to die, and water pipes and irrigation systems were dismantled and often stolen. As cultivation would require a considerable workforce, and now the Arabs were not available anymore as cheap labour, cooperatives were not necessarily interested in such land, which was transformed into housing developments. The same applied to olive groves, which were destroyed or neglected and replaced with field crops. This is what Benvenisti describes as 'the disappearance of the human landscape' (2000: 165).

Analysing a deeper reconfiguration of nature in Palestine through deliberate changes also in agriculture and flora, geographer Omar Tesdell examines how cultivated wheat varieties were used to transform Palestine into a site of colonial expansion and takeover: 'Wildness, native-ness, and agro-climatic suitability are scientifically constituted within and not apart from colonial conquest' (2017: 45; see also Doumani, 1995).[3]

The settler logic of forcibly displacing and replacing was articulated with alarming clarity by one of the state founders, Theodor Herzl: 'If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct' (cited in Wolfe, 2006: 388). Echoing other colonial

canons in many respects, Herzl offered a clear vision of what ecological imaginary and notions of settler-Nature this implied, including 'piercing the hills', establishing chemical industries and producing energy for 'driving machines' (Herzl cited in Tal, 2007: 275). The Israeli ecological imaginary found its sublimation in attempts even to engineer a European climate via afforestation (Weizman and Sheikh, 2015). When in 1959 Israel passed the Nature Preservation/Goat-Induced Damages-Law, it aimed at limiting grazing in order to engineer a shift to the so-called ecological climax, which, it was claimed, had been prevented by grazing and herding. The law was finally enacted in 1977 by then-Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon, who set up the 'Green Patrol' to implement a crack-down on herders (Meishar, 2004: 305).[4]

The emerging scenario is here that of a settler-Nature resulting from a canonical settler colonial practice: first eliminating the native and their natural and ecological habitats, then discursively constructing the landscape as 'wasteland', bending and refining existing legal edifices, and finally redeeming the land through settlers' technologies, ethics and hard work. The expulsion of the Indigenous people and the destruction of their villages are a prelude to a differential ascription of Life and Nonlife, which is not consequential to, but co-constitutive of settler colonial operations of power.

Some very important work exists that sheds light on the ecological imaginary that sustained this process. Joanna Long (2009) speaks of the metaphysical capacity of trees to provide patriotic sustenance to the Jewish settlers. Looking at the 'myths and practices' (2009: 63) through which the natural landscape was constructed in Israel, she shows how the understanding of the 'natural' took place through the planting of trees as both a physical activity and a transcendental performance. The settlers not only became patriotic citizens, but nature came to be cast through notions of 'innocence' and 'righteous' acts (Long, 2009: 63). This ethos was particularly pervasive in the kibbutz, where planting trees was intimately connected to taking possession of the land, engendering a settler-Nature that continued to cast the previous landscape as blighted by 'Biblical desolation' assigning it to the realm of the non-living (Slyomovics, 1998: 50).

The settlers' imaginary was however in dissonance with the affective actuality of the land. Palestine was not a wasteland but a living human landscape, some of which escaped obliteration or kept resurging. Settlers, now in control of the land, were keen to dis-entangle the nature they found on site from the Indigenous people who had borne it. Kadman (2015), who conducted an extensive study of the Jewish communities that settled on the ruins of 25 Palestinian villages, reported that their early newsletters and publications never or very rarely mentioned the previous history of the village or its inhabitants (2015: 56). Occasionally, some kibbutz dwellers would recognise the beauty and abundance of the Indigenous nature and its landscape, and mourn its destruction in the name of infrastructural development, but these accounts rarely acknowledged the previous Palestinian human presence. Palestinian land prior to Jewish settlement was and still is generally represented as desolate, deserted or interspersed with ruins from time immemorial. *Horvot*, the Jewish word for ruins, featured ubiquitously in the catalogues of *Ein Hod*, a Palestinian village transformed into an arty village for Israelis (Slyomovics, 1998: 50). In this 'settler' moral economy, olive trees might be appropriated to support the emergence of a new cosmology, like for example the creation of a Jewish collective diasporic consciousness. Kibbutz Beit Guvrin named the citrus orchard of the village of Bayt Jibrin an *Arab orchard*, uncultivated and in need of the laborious efforts of the new inhabitants to render it lively Nature, a signification that geonto-politically constructs and relegates Indigenous nature to Nonlife (Kadman, 2015: 7).

When the land was emptied of its inhabitants, the scattered nature that escaped taming could unproblematically be integrated into the settlers' notion of an Israeli landscape. This is the operational mode of what we call settler-Nature, where Palestine represents just one instance in a range of settler colonial projects that have upended Indigenous worlds (Blair, 2017; Clarsen, 2015; Crosby, 2004; Mavhunga, 2011; Rumford, 2006; Short, 2016).

The attribution of Nonlife to the Palestinian entanglement with nature is unstable, however. It is not to the resurgence of nature per se that we turn to next , but to the way, but the way renascent vegetation triggers Palestinian displaced and refugees' return to their ecological ruins, subverting the attempt to confine them to the Nonlife side of the geontopower divide.

Indigeneity and the unruliness of nature

The destruction and depopulation of more than 400 Palestinian villages during the 1948 war is the object of landmark studies (Abu Sitta, 1998; Elmusa et al., 1992; Pappé, 2006). Most scholarship focused on refugees' memories of the violent events that propelled the forced expulsion from their towns and villages at the hands of the Zionist military and paramilitary forces (Masalha, 2012; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 2007; Salih, 2017; The Nakba Archive, 2008). But the crucial place that vegetation and nature played during the expulsion of Palestinians is a central aspect of refugees' oral narratives and has not received the same attention. The presence of nature in memories of fleeing and survival appears prominently in dozens of oral narratives collected by Ruba over the past decade among Palestinian refugees across Lebanon, the West Bank and Jordan, and can similarly be found across her own family's oral memories. Her paternal family is originally from Haifa where her grandfather, Abu Suheil, was a railway officer working under the British Mandate and where he took part in the railway trade union movement before being expelled in 1948. Her maternal grandfather, Abu Adnan, was a small landowner in *Kufr Zibad* (Yafa) whose land and property were seized by Israel after his expulsion during the war.[5] In general, small peasants cultivated and produced for themselves and sold produce in town markets. Big landowners were able, even through traditional methods of farming suited to the rocky landscape, to produce large agricultural surpluses and to be integrated in the world capitalist economy as exporters of wheat, barley, sesame, olive oil, soap and cotton during the 1856–1882 period (Doumani, 1995).

Oral narratives of life pre-1948 typically recount how, as a peasant society, community existence was organised around what displaced Palestinians often define as 'natural life' (*haya tabi'ie*) (Salih, 2017 and forthcoming), a cosmological notion encompassing human and non-human rhythms. In their recollections, refugees often bring memories of a communal life as peasant families to life, gathered in the harvest and offering reciprocal support in constructing houses for newly formed families.

Going through fieldwork transcripts and remembering family oral history, Ruba recognises the ubiquitous presence of nature. During the 1948 war, olive groves surface in memories as shelters for women and children to hide under, sometimes for many days, during the recurrent attacks of the Zionist forces on Palestinian villages. Asked to remember the 1948 events when – aged only 8 – he was taken away with hundreds of other children by the Arab Army to shield them from the violence of the 1948 war, Ruba's uncle Muhammed recalls: 'We were taken to the trees. We lived under the trees. The trees were our refuge'.

Besides this prominence of natural and rural life permeating narratives and memories of displacement, we are here interested in the afterlife of recalcitrant Indigenous nature, and the ways in which the latter awakens and re-populates the post-settlement ruins, unearthing

the past and making colonial erasure and control unstable in the present. Consider, for example, the rendition of Palestinian intellectual Raja Shehadeh's experience of walking on the landscape of Palestine. His *Palestinian walks. Notes on a vanishing landscape* opens with the realisation that the familiar landscape of Palestine, its olive orchards, the traditional green terraced cultivations, the white stone houses which remained unchanged for centuries – and which, until recent times, would have still looked familiar to a contemporary of Christ – had been transformed in a few decades 'beyond recognition' (Shehadeh, 2008: 1). Again, in his A *Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle* (2010), Shehadeh narrates the walking journey he undertakes in the footsteps of his great grand uncle Najib Nassar a century earlier, only to find out that virtually none of the names, places, flora and fauna described in his uncle's memory exist anymore. In Shehadeh's lyric, resurging vegetation affords an 'ability to see what is no longer there' (Shehadeh, 2011: 87). The almond tree proves indispensable for restoring the memory of Palestine's landscape and its community livelihoods before disappearance. And yet, this walking endeavour does more than merely allow the past to resurface or be remembered. It also crucially provides the viewer with an altogether novel sense of the present space and place, providing an ability to re-imagine the present. It is this, an act of subversion of settler colonialism's power to occupy the colonised imagination of a different present, that offers Shehadeh the affective force 'to escape the confining reality of occupied Palestine, to free myself *to see another reality beneath the present reality* that tries to impose itself on our minds in every way, driving home its immutability' (2010: 84, emphasis added).

Shehadeh's sensory resistance to the immutability of the present is the theme of an art installation by Palestinian artists Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme entitled *And yet my mask is powerful* (2018). The work of art displays footage of the return of some young Palestinians to the site of ruins of the villages from which their families were expelled. During the visits, something new happens: the destroyed village does not appear as an erased place of traumatic memories – not even merely as fossilised ruins. It materialises as a site containing an affective force underscoring an unexpected vitality:

> The young people making these trips treat the site as a living fabric. They reactivate the disused spaces, camp out on site, eat, sing, dance. But even more, something in the very tissue of the site itself is undeniably living and resisting colonial erasures. It permeates from the soil into the stone and back into every bit of vegetation. There is a swarm of non-human life forces here, from the insects to the wild thorns, to the pomegranate trees that are inscribed with the living memory and story of the site. And it is here in the living archive of the vegetation itself that the site lives and breathes. (Abbas and Abou-Rahme, 2018)

These artistic literary and auto-ethnographic insights offer a remarkable entry point into Palestinian intergenerational refugees' narratives of expulsion and their living practices of return, which underscore the novel human–nature entanglements and political claims the afterlife of nature sustain. We are interested in how the growth of cacti and vegetation that Israel sought to make extinct with the expulsion of the 'human landscape' (Benvenisti, 2000: 9) become the site of unexpected practices in the present, which reaffirm the Indigeneity of the Palestinian refugee population. The gaze is on intergenerational narratives collected among refugees who live in close proximity to their lost villages and lands in Israel, members of communities who were expelled or sought refuge in surrounding areas across the green line in the West Bank during the 1948 war. Differently from refugees residing in Lebanon, for example, the former could sustain visits and returns to these sites, either because the border remained open until the 1980s, or because their land is situated in an area which is

still accessible, e.g. in the grey zone between the Palestinian Authority areas and the Green Line or 1949 armistice line, like the village of Walaja. But first a caveat. By foregrounding Indigeneity, we are wary of the problematic ways in which the notion has been made legible and instrumentalised within liberal and settler colonial legal and cultural governance, as a static and confined cultural or traditional identity (Povinelli, 2016; Tatour, 2019). Indigeneity here refers to the *political* claims of return of refugees, which include the right to a particular way of being in and with nature. In short, we conceive of indigeneity as an active anti-colonial practice.

The re-creation of the human landscape is common in places of exile: the cemented, crammed, breathless human life in urban refugee camps such as Dheisheh or Chatila is interspersed with the fresh sight of olive trees, often lying at the edges of the camp, or in the middle of miniature house courtyards. Walking around camps, one can bump into the unexpected intensity of green, yellow and orange colours of fruit trees, popping out of hindered yards and breaking the seamless grey of the cement and black of the open air electric wires. Occasionally, the surprising presence of goats interrupt the weirdly monotonous soundscape of the camp. Elderly refugees keenly insist on reproducing the rhythms, smells, and tastes that were left behind decades ago, but also affect a present actuality with their production of milk and cheese for the family. This reproduction of a past human–nature entanglement in the camp should not be read merely through the trope of nostalgia for a rural lost past and livelihood. Crucially, for the argument of this article, it rather antagonises erasure and disappearance in the present by imposing, and bringing to life, novel enmeshments (Stoler, 2008).

Refugee memories and living practices also bring to life an intense and affective enmeshment with nature resurgent amidst material ruins of the villages destroyed during the *Nakba*. Such enmeshments are revealed by the unruly work of cacti, fruit trees and groves. This persistent and resilient activity of non-human life around the ruins of villages incites refugees' practices of return and revitalises their claims to the sites.

Members of the younger generation, who were allowed to enter the 1948 borders when under the age of 18, remember their family visits to the village ruins as 'visits to home'. Gheida, originally from Walaja, recalls how since she was a child they would visit and picnic on the site of the ruins:

> Our village was near Beit Jala. We didn't do much during the visits, we would do barbeque (*mashwi*). We used to go with the family and during the holidays we still go, we have built a small house there, just a tiny place. I used to go with my grandfather (*dar sidi*) and he and the other elderly used to tell us: 'this is our home, we have to go home'.

Walaja was cut into two parts by the 1949 Armistice Agreements when the Green Line was drawn through the village, and then it was destroyed (Khalidi, 1992). The villagers rebuilt part of the village in the West Bank, but Israel redrew the Jerusalem municipal boundaries, annexing the half of al-Walaja's land that had remained in the West Bank after the 1948 war. Israel imposed Israeli law on its inhabitants while denying residency rights to the villagers and often proceeded to demolish their houses.

Ward, a woman in her 50s who was born in the Dheishe camp in Beitlahem, West Bank, is originally from Walaja. As a woman she used, until recently, to be able to visit East Jerusalem without a permit from the Israeli authorities. Although there are checkpoints, she used to still be able to enter the city and from there to reach Walaja. Ward describes how in Walaja most of the original village houses have been destroyed, although some are still standing:

The Israelis use them as *makhzin* [storage]... We have trees there and we built a new house, it is just a room...When we used to go we used to sit under the trees so we thought why don't we make a small room or house, not to sit in the heat. That was the idea. But this idea in the end did not work out, as the house is about to be demolished [by the Israeli army]. The Israelis say that this is originally an agriculture land, so we are not allowed to build. But we have almonds and grapes so we can do our agriculture there, at least ...When I go to Walaja I feel that this is our right, our land. If I was given the chance, I would live there now on the ruins. Look, I have many memories here in the camp. But this doesn't feel like my *ard* [my land], I belong to the *mukhayyam* [camp] but the *ard asli,* [the original land] and *aladi,* that is stronger, that is mine, *intimah aktar* [bond to the land is stronger, being the Indigenous population of the land]

With its reconfiguration of patterns of occupancy, ownership and circulation – and in later years, with whole systems of walls, gated communities, exclusion zones, green lines, roads and borderlands – the settler colonial project has evolved into an elaborate system of enclosure, which Ward is confronted with daily in her attempt to reconnect to Walaja. Ward also describes how after expelling the population and using their original houses as storage for their tools, the Israelis also introduced the notion of 'agricultural land'. The aim was to enforce separation of the Indigenous people from their villages, preventing them from re-building concrete houses on their land, and destroying any material structure erected on the ruins (Abu Jiryis, 1973). Yet, the reformulation of the land as 'agricultural land' in Walaja to prevent people from rebuilding houses or sheds on the ruins of their destroyed villages which still stand (as evidenced by the bulldozing of the small shed that Ward's family built), has an unexpected outcome. Ward and her family continued going to Walaja, to 'do agriculture instead' as Ward recounts, harvesting the almonds trees and caring for the grape groves that kept resurging on the site of the new and old ruins. It is the persisting endurance of the Indigenous vegetation which kept bearing fruits that makes people like Ward return to their land, opposing the political effects of settler colonialism's closure and erasure.

Nasser, an activist and well-known socialist refugee from Dheisheh camp, describes the journey of his mother to her village of origin, Ras Abu Ammar, that was located 14 km west of Jerusalem. There, homes were all destroyed and the population ethnically cleansed during the operation ha-Har (Khalidi, 1992) in 1948. Nasser has fond memories of these visits as a child when they were still allowed to go inside Israel, as the borders were still open, prior to the late 1980s. Similarly to Ward, his account revolves around nature: grass, fruits, herbs and vegetation; and again, around how the Israelis altered cultivation on the ruins. As in Ward's account, natural and material ruins are enmeshed as part of one single living habitat encompassing human and non-human life, with fruits and vegetation which, Nasser recalls, kept growing:

The village was big... we also had *Kharroub* (carob) and *zaatar* (wild thyme). Figs and cactus trees are always present where there was a Palestinian village, but the Jews planted *snober* (peanuts), *Tuffah* (apples), *khokh* (plums) to replace them. My mother left the village when she was ten...She visited Ras Abu Ammar a lot of times. Before the intifada, in the eighties, her uncle was taking them there three times a year. We were going and we usually collected *miramyya* (sage), *teen,* (figs) *sabr* (cactus pears), [and yet those kept growing...] there is one guy from Ras Abu Ammar who every year goes clandestine and collects *sabr* (prickly pear). I would die to eat my prickly pears! In the 1980s there was still a well and half of the house was still up and standing, and there were trees... I remember how my uncle uprooted all the bad grass infesting the site and my mother cooked, and myself and my sisters played. My family used to go

in three separate cars full of family members every year. Most of the people who could visit were
visiting. The last time my mother went to Ras Abu Ammar was in 1999.

Villages where rubble still stands are often 'signposted' by cactus bushes and remains of olive
groves that continued to grow. Well-known Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi also writes of
Ras Abu Ammar describing how wild vegetation kept growing among the debris in addition
to almond, olive and carob trees. Cacti grew on the south-eastern and south-western sides of
the village. Villagers relied on springs for drinking water and irrigation of their cultivated
land, which was based on rainfed grain, vegetables and fruit trees, including olive trees and
grape vines. The vegetation that endured destruction not only bears witness to a past natural
and living habitat but effects, in the present, novel signifiers of Indigeneity. It is what prompts
new practices of returns in the form of family picnics and days out in nature. Nasser's family
visits, intended initially as rites of belonging commemorating a past life, acquire new meanings
which go well beyond the mere act of paying tribute to the ruins. Sitting under, smelling, and
eating the fruits and vegetables of the land which the settlers had tried, unsuccessfully, to
eradicate by replacing them with other varieties, engenders a new vital affective force and
attachment, as Nasser recalls in the above quote.

    Rana whose family is from Ras Abu Ammar like Nasser's, recalls she used to think that
the village was 'a place with lots of agriculture, near to Al Quds, but there is now a park
there', pointing to the settler colonial practice of reforestation by creating natural parks in
place of some of the destroyed Palestinian villages. Rana was able to visit her village for the
last time in 2007 and to bring back, on that occasion, material from the site which she names
athar – which curiously translates as both 'antiques' and 'ruins'.

    Like in Ras Abu Ammar, as described by Rana above, in most cases, the Israeli state
planted green forests around these villages (e.g. 'Ayn Ghazal in Haifa sub-district or Islin
and 'Aqqur in Jerusalem sub-district). At these sites, forests were planted among the
remains of the houses in the early years of the state, and once the forest grew, bulldozer
access was impossible without destroying that as well. Hence crumbled walls continue to be
visible among the vegetation and the pre-existing groves kept growing through the ruins:
'Ironically', notes Palestinian geographer Ghazi Falah, 'forests were planted here to conceal
the site, yet ultimately those same forests have protected the walls from further destruction
and hindered full-scale de-signification and obliteration' (Falah, 1996: 272).

    Surveying the ruins of the around 400 villages destroyed during the establishment of the
Israeli state in 1948, Falah found that the destruction followed six different patterns ranging
from partial to complete, with each level comprising three different sub-levels. Complete
obliteration meant that villages were destroyed with removal of all building material, the site
leveled out and turned into a new landscape. This pertained to 19% of the villages, where
hardly any rubble can be found. These sites involved radical changes in land use too. But it
is of significance for the argument proposed here that, whether complete obliteration of
these villages occurred or not, depended in part on the material itself. In the villages of the
plains, houses were often built with adobe bricks and wood – easier to destroy than the solid
stone houses with concrete roofs more commonly built in rocky areas. This also draws
attention to the unanticipated effects of non-human matter potentially unsettling settler
colonial architectures of destruction and taming which aim to impose settler-Nature as
Indigenous.

    The oral narratives of Palestinian refugees presented here underscore returns to nature as
much as to village ruins. Ecological and material ruins appear as one enmeshed habitat
which has an ongoing actuality, effecting Indigenous entanglements, which invite new
claims and visions in the present. It is not the work of melancholia, nor is it the mourning

of a romanticised memory of a pre-*Nakba* past where indigeneity is conserved. Ecological ruins are more than sites of commemoration. They become 'living archives' as expressed in the powerful vision of Abbas and Abu Rahme's art installation. Through the narratives of fleeing, the natural world is recorded as bundled with human life, continuing to be so in the present. This revitalises a Palestinian Indigenous entanglement that resisted erasure and fossilisation, destabilising the settler colonial Life/Nonlife boundary.

Anthropocene and ethical consciousness: Centering coloniality

With these considerations in mind, let us go back to Chakrabarty's notion that the Anthropocene scenario of collective extinction requires that 'we' the 'human' species activate a 'common' ethical or pre-political stance that might take humans beyond the divisive (in)justices of politics. For that purpose, he borrows the notion 'epochal consciousness' from philosopher Carl Jaspers who coined it in the 1950s while contemplating the potential and imminent destruction of the planet by the atomic bomb:

> An epochal consciousness cannot be charged with the function of producing solutions for an epochal crisis because all possible concrete solutions of an epochal problem—and Jaspers welcomes them all—will be partial or departmental, one important department being that of politics, the specialization of politicians (2016: 146)

Epochal consciousness therefore has to be pre-political, leading humans to feel as one whole: 'It is about how we comport ourselves with regard to the world under contemplation in a moment of global crisis; it is what sustains our horizon of action' (2016: 146). It is, for Chakrabarty, 'a thought space that came before and above/beyond politics, without, however, foreshortening the space for political disputation and differences' (2016: 181). Despite the notion of epochal consciousness being precarious and at risk of shattering into fragments again, for Chakrabarty 'it remains a thought experiment in the face of an emergency that requires us to move toward composing the common' (2016: 146–147).

What Chakrabarty refers to as 'our smaller histories of conflicting attachments, desires and aspirations' (2016: 183) are, from the vantage points of Palestinian Indigenous nature and people, shown to be the very sites through which – historically and in the present day – profoundly unequal and violent processes have effected techniques of extinction (fossilisation) of Indigenous Life.

The supposed aggregate merging of 'human' and 'natural' in the Anthropocene is not merely an unfortunate bi-product of economic and technical development or nuclear testing. The pervasive and strenuous – yet unfinished and fractured – endeavour to make the settlers and settler-Nature Indigenous, show the centrality of colonial geonto-politics in ordering and reordering the boundaries between Life and Nonlife.

From this point of view, rather than a single species 'impacting' upon nature, threatening extinction for a common humanity, it is more appropriate to argue that the very possibility of human and non-human Life is determined by past and ongoing colonial architectures of power. Although the 'Anthropocene' offers us a fuller and more complex understanding of the ontological depth and temporal scales of violence, it does not in itself offer hope that this violence might be subsumed under the planetary whole. In this sense, while recognising the heuristic potential of calling for an epochal consciousness in the face of threats of collective extinction, we would argue that a mood of common vulnerability must *reinforce and expand*, rather than suspend or defer, attention to local and time-bound injustices. Recognising and resolving such injustices should be a necessary prelude to facing, in an ethical mood, the

common threat we do face as a species. This is particularly so when, as the case of Palestine shows, Indigenous populations have historically been – and continue to be – de-humanised, disposed of, violently erased or consigned to the sphere of Nonlife.

Conclusions

In this article, we have explored the historical and contemporary example of settler colonialism in Palestine suggesting that the recasting of the Life/Nonlife divide has been not incidental to, but part-constitutive of, the political operation of this project. As constitutive modalities of settler colonialism, Life and Nonlife are always discursively assigned rather than being straight forward ontological givens, and this assigning is the result of intra-human injustices and political struggles albeit through their entanglement with the nonhuman.

By reading settler colonialism in Palestine through the lens of geontopower, we aimed to offer a case in point to challenge suggestions that questions of intra-human justice can be occluded by a more encompassing Anthropocene condition of collective vulnerability. From the vantage point of Palestine, we argue the contrary: given that power and politics are at the very core of the ways in which nature and humans become enmeshed or forcibly separated, only when these inequalities are conceived, and then foregrounded, is there a possibility of recognising a common or global vulnerability. For Palestinian refugees and their nature, the threat of collective extinction is not a future common risk, but a process entrenched in their everyday reality since 1948. Like aboriginal Australians and other native populations, Palestinians were 'fossilised' and their entanglements with nature were forced to the Nonlife side of the geonto-political distinction (the 'desert' and the 'virus', to use Povinelli's evocative figures). Importantly, however, we also showed how these operations are fractured and unfinished. Drawing from sources as diverse as personal memories, ethnographic explorations, novels and works of art, we showed that ecological ruins not only bring to light what has been destroyed, allowing the recovery of traces of a previous life, but also most crucially have an afterlife, unsettling politically drawn Life/Nonlife boundaries. Far from a nostalgic claim to a pristine and authentic life-world that pre-existed the settler colonial intervention, indigeneity thus signifies an intimate form of reciprocation of native people to their vegetation and animals – an Indigenous entanglement, which proved recalcitrant to taming and fossilisation. It is perhaps no coincidence that *Sabr*, the Arabic name for the cacti fruits, also means patience and signifies endurance as a natural and human virtue.

Highlights: Fossilised lives!

- We take issue with the 'Anthropocene' claim that the threat of collective extinction might relativise intra-human injustices.
- We approach the debate from the vantage point of the already extinct: Palestinian refugees and their ecologies.
- Settler colonial projects involve the expulsion of indigenous populations, and a re-drawing of the very distinction between human and non-human.
- The unruly and unpredictable work of indigenous nature produces novel political claims and visions.
- Power and intra-human divisions are at the core of how ontological distinctions between 'Nature' and 'Humans' come into being.

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Notes

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2. According to Noga Kadman (2015: 37), this idiom was coined by Zionist activist Yisrael Zangwil.
3. Similarly, settlers of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) constructed themselves as natives by classifying species as native or 'invasive' and through agro-industrial and techno-scientific value systems that categorise human and nonhuman cohabitants according to status (Blair, 2017).
4. This legacy is reproduced in the contemporary environmental ethic that permeates nature conservation and preservation projects. Consider, for example, this narrative: With about a third of the country set aside as parks and nature reserves and another 10 percent designated as forests (both afforested lands and natural woodlands), a considerable fraction of the land has been preserved. Israeli public policy, emerging from a distinctly Zionist conservation ethic, has averted the mass extinctions of mammals and birds that loomed so ominously during the first half of the century during British rule. (Tal, 2007: 279).
5. Memories of Ruba Salih's family history are contained in her late mother's memoir Salwa Salem, (2006) *The Wind in My Hair*, Interlinks Books, London.

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