13. Settler colonialism and home
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INTRODUCTION

Settler colonialism is a specific configuration of the complex relationship between home and immigration. As a 'structure, not an event' (Wolfe 2006), settler colonialism is an organized migration movement, whose deep goal is to create a new home for the settlers, thereby pushing the colonized out of their homes, replacing them as the legitimate 'natives' of the place. To tell the story of settler colonialism is accordingly to tell the story of homes that are themselves tools of destruction – homes that have been constructed on the ruins of others' homes. It is to tell the story of those ruined homes – but in a way that insists to see beyond the mere act of destruction, to see into the life of the ruin, as well as the life of all that remains (Leshem 2016).

Given the fact that settler colonialism is primarily a project of homemaking, it is often accompanied by a massive construction of houses for the colonizing population. Importantly, this construction is coupled with the destruction of local homes. Either concretely or more metaphorically, settler colonialism is thus an act of living inside depopulated homes, sites of destruction, or landscapes of ruination. Yet, as a movement intended at 'self-indigenizing' (Veracini 2013), settler colonialism is not just about physical homes; it is also about the very sense of home and spatial attachments. To become natives (or to develop a sense of nativeness), settlers need to entrench their presence in the land, to perform longstanding ties – fabricated, real, or somewhere in-between – to the territory. At stake, then, is a migratory movement that is invested in the practices, rhetoric, and symbolism of stability.

This movement is dialectical and affects the concrete homes and sense of home of both the colonizers and the colonized. To justify their own entrenchment in the land, settlers often work to portray the colonized as nomads or invaders, themselves without roots in the land (Ryan 1996; Said 2000). Importantly, this myth operates not just at the rhetorical level, but serves to legitimize concrete acts of displacement and removal (Kotef 2015). Moreover, even when not being forced to move, across almost all settler colonies, legal means and various land regimes render the homes of the colonized temporary and unstable. On the other side of this movement, and precisely therefore, merely being at home becomes an act of resistance for the colonized. This native entrenchment and insistence on home in the land carries the potential of destabilizing settlers' sense of home. Yet this destabilization is not necessarily a step towards the undoing of settlers' placement; it may be translated, rather, into increased efforts of forced removal of indigenous groups, and so the dialectical movement continues.

In this chapter, we chart some of the links between settler colonialism and the question of home. Given the introductory nature of this chapter and its limited scope, some of these links will be done here conceptually and will lack the nuances that history and concreteness offer. Nevertheless, we shall often turn to the context of Palestine/Israel to provide examples. This is not because this case is exceptional or unique; nor is it because it is somehow more exemplary.[1] This focus has to do with our own research, as well as original belonging, and is done here primarily for the sake of clarification. We begin by developing the connections

between settler colonialism and the question of home by investigating home as the organizing metaphor of settler colonialism. The second section looks at homes more concretely, through the housing dispositives in the settler colony. Finally, we look at homes and homemaking in the settler colony as a form of resistance.

SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE QUESTION OF HOME

We see the paradigm of settler colonialism not as a cohesive theory but rather as an interpretive framework of cumulative historical analogies, which allows to examine a number of contexts, such as the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Algeria, or Israel. Most often, settler colonialism is thought through a binary opposition in which a group of immigrants – who usually have an affinity for a metropole – takes over and settles in a space inhabited by an indigenous group. However, as several works clearly show (Evry and Kotef 2020; Mamdani 2020; Wallach 2014), the histories of settler colonialism are often much more complex than this clear dichotomy allows. Settlement practices, their technologies, and frames of justification vary from society to society and from one historical context to another, and so are the political, cultural, economic, and even ethical meanings of both indigeneity and settlement. Moreover, territories, populations, and acts of invasion are in fact interdependent and mutually constructed in ways that render problematic this binary of pre-existing versus 'invading' populations. One cannot speak of 'invasion' without presuming clear, well-defined territories that did not necessarily exist as such prior to the colonial immigration. Identifying groups as 'invaders' and 'invaded' is therefore often anachronistic, as the invading groups change through time, and the invaded space is often composed of different people whose coherent identity only crystallizes through spatial and political struggle.

Nevertheless, one shared structure remains that is key to our analysis. While the focus of colonial studies is first and foremost on relations between the metropole and the colonial periphery, the paradigm of settler colonialism shifts the focus to the processes of change in the settler societies and the production and preservation of their home in the colony. This shift in focus is what ties settler colonialism to the question of home; it further allows examining settler colonialism not through questions such as 'who was here first' or through the contested relations between the metropole and the colony – which are often neither historically straightforward nor politically productive – but through the practices constituting settler colonialism. Specifically: mass migration into a territory with the intention of creating a home, while pushing aside and replacing (by expropriation, extinction, confinement, or even assimilation) the existing population.

'Home' – as a metaphor, a concrete apparatus, a way for thinking about belonging and its territorial dimensions, a symbolic order linking identity and space – can thus be seen as one of the main axes differentiating colonialism from settler colonialism. Since 'settlers come to stay', and since settler colonialism is 'first and foremost a project of replacement' (Wolfe 2016, 33), home becomes a defining element within this structure (see Kalir, Chapter 17, this volume). This is a home that destroys as it expands, and yet a home nonetheless, which becomes a site of attachment, identity, kinship, and protection.

Put differently, 'settling' involves not only major construction and infrastructure projects, but also the production or facilitation of sentiments that allow one to *stay put*, to form an identity unaffected, or less affected, or at least not completely undone by its contradictions

and violence. If the settlers' final wish would be to 'cease to be defined as such and become 'natives', and their position becomes normalized' (Veracini 2013, 29), and if part of the affectual meaning of 'nativeness' is the unquestioned ability to feel at home in a given place, then homemaking – indeed the possibility to settle – is one of the key apparatuses of settler colonialism. In other words, in settler-colonial settings, building a home is an act of violence (Handel 2021), but not less importantly, it is the mode or venue through which the settlers' violence is normalized by understanding and presenting itself as nothing but an act of dwelling (Allegra et al. 2017). This calls on us to ask about the mechanisms that enable one to construct a mode of being-in-place which is stable, even peaceful, when their home is established on violence (Fenster 2014, 2018).

Avery Gordon thought of homes as essentially tied with the notion of haunting and vice versa. She looked at homes that are tangled with systems of violence – homes that then hound those inhabiting them, reminding them of all the pain and suffering enmeshed in their histories. Such hounding, she argues, renders the home unhomely, unfamiliar. Gordon emphasizes the eerie sense 'when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what's been in your blind field comes into view' (Gordon 1997, 2). Much like Gordon's ghosts, but often still very much alive, the colonized – in their insistence on their right to these homes, in their visits to their previous homes, or sometimes just in their mere existence – re-presence the violence of the colonizers' homes. This places the symbolic order of home in the settlement as a quandary: how can one settle amidst this haunting?

Let us look at Israeli homes as an example. These reminders of the constitutive violence are integrated into so much of the Israeli landscape – which is inlaid with ruins of Palestinian past lives: piles of stones that used to be walls of Palestinian houses, collapsing arches, terraces, fig trees, olive groves, hedges of prickly cactuses (Kadman 2015; Khalidi 2017). All these serve as a ghostly and yet very material reminder of the violence at the foundation of Israeli homes. At times, however, these 'ghostly' reminders become more animated: after 1967, with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and once again after the signing of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, many Palestinians gained for the first time access to the places they lost with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and came to visit their former houses. The numerous accounts of such visits, both actual and fictional, attest to the significance of this moment (Kanafani 2000; Tamari and Hammami 1998). When a Palestinian family knocks on the door of these homes they remind the current inhabitants that their home is actually another's. Amahl Bishara observes that 'even in the least controversial contexts, we might feel a shred of displacement or disbelief if a former resident of a house we have long inhabited knocks on our door to remember past lives'. This is since, she says, 'the house is "our corner of the world", and it is difficult to imagine sharing it' (Bishara 2003, 143–144). In a different geopolitical context, Yael Navaro-Yashin's ethnographic work shows how life in the depopulated home of one's enemy produces a fragmented, if not failed, sense of belonging. When 'one's very dinner table, lounge or bedroom' and 'the night gown she wears or the cookery she uses' are items belonging to others, collected or found in the aftermath of war, one is unable to be fully at home, she argues (Navaro-Yashin 2009, 6).

One may thus conclude that home in the settlement is bound to be unsettled. Yet if one looks at concrete historical processes, one often finds the opposite process. Elsewhere, one of us examined in detail the ways by which such 'knocks on the door' as well as more ghostly reminders of one's complicity in violence do not disturb, but rather serve to entrench Israelis' sense of home and belonging to the land. Further, they often facilitate more violent forms of

entrenchment (Kotef 2020).[2] Here emerges the aforementioned quandary: What allows settlement amidst violence? What forms of community-making, subject formation, and cultural apparatuses stabilize belonging (that is: home) amidst settlement?

FROM SYMBOLS TO CONCRETE STRUCTURES: HOUSE AS A DISPOSITIVE OF POWER

> *Dispositive*: [A] thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions … The dispositive itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements … formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent need*. The dispositive thus has a dominant strategic function. (Foucault 1977, 194–195, italics in original)

Thinking of homes as symbolic emblems of attachment and violence works in tandem with the material order of concrete houses that are built and dwelled in, as well as houses that are being destroyed. That is, to understand *homes*, we must consider *houses*. It is not simply that talking about *homes* without accounting for 'how many houses were built?', 'where?', and 'how are they shaped and designed?' provides only a partial understanding of how homes are made. It is also not simply that it would be insufficient to count *houses* and analyse their material facets without seeing their human significance (Handel 2019). What we would like to stress is the dialectics between homes and houses in the settler colony, as a movement that works in both ways: from the material to the symbolic as well as the other way around. On the one hand, the notions of home and homeland – be it as a claim for historical belonging, as a mundane form of taking place, as an affectual politics or as claims for private or collective ownership – provide a mode of justification, that is, a way to maintain and normalize the already built houses. At the same time, the urge of dwelling as an existential and political quest for ontological security, alongside the symbolism of home and belonging, 'summons', so to speak, the building of concrete houses and the physical expansion of the various effects of settler colonialism.[3]

Having focused on the symbolic order of home in the previous section, we turn now to think about the materiality of houses. When examining houses, we must consider them within wider *housing dispositives*: houses are part of power networks, built in certain forms and material features, based upon theoretical and practical assumptions concerning good or bad, efficient or inefficient, desired or undesired, given within a legal network that spans from the most local building regulations to regional planning, and to national infrastructure priorities. These interrelated characteristics influence their entire life chain: their dispersion, design, and availability, as well as the human experience of dwelling in them. Whereas these different elements may seem unrelated, they are in fact part of what Foucault refers to as a 'system of relations' that often responds to 'an urgent need'.

Importantly, housing dispositives (and we insist here on the plural) often serve more than one need: they are part of neoliberal market systems as well as of bourgeois family formation; they create radical class divides between propertyless and propertied, as well as between centres and peripheries; and in settler societies they are also geared towards producing and sustaining the divide between settler and native. Since this divide is primarily based on access to land and the possibility of building houses, the symbiosis works in both directions. Settler colonialism must be understood also through and as a housing regime; and the housing

dispositive in settler spaces should be understood as operating also to maintain colonial hierarchies. Thus, land allocations, building permissions, mortgage policies, property laws, urban regeneration zoning, depopulation, eviction, and more stand at the core of the political, social, and economic rationales of settler colonialism. This is not to argue that space appropriation or homemaking technologies in the settler colony are uniformly organized around the settler–native divide. Ethnic and class categories cut through this divide in the operation of the housing dispositives, and we will touch upon this briefly later. However, given the scope of this particular chapter, we focus here on this facet of house-making and homemaking in the colonial space.

Let us look briefly at some of the nodes in this network by once again considering Israel/ Palestine. The *legal facets* of the housing dispositive in Israel/Palestine are multiple, and many work to entrench Jewish settlement in the land. The most fundamental facet of it was a series of legislations that have ordered the systematic taking over of depopulated Palestinian properties after 1948 (Forman and Kedar 2004). It was in the 1948 war and its aftermath that Zionism as a housing regime (see Allweil 2016) became a project of direct replacement, depriving the Palestinian population from their own homes and lands, and not only a project of providing homes for Jewish immigrants as part of building a Jewish homeland. Approximately 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled during the war. Their return was fully restricted, while their homes and properties were taken by the new regime and given to Jewish immigrants, bulldozed to dust, or left to slow ruination (see Akesson, Chapter 15, this volume). The logic of replacement has continued throughout the state's existence, as the structural policy applied towards the remaining Palestinian population in what became the state of Israel is a heavily restrictive housing regime. While since 1948 about 900 Jewish cities, towns, and villages have been established in Israel, the Palestinian citizens of the state have not been given permission to establish new settlements at all, and their legal ability to extend their existing settlements is strictly limited. One of the key tools in this policy of restriction is a policy of non-planning, whereby a significant proportion of Palestinian residents live in intentionally unplanned areas. The lack of building permits and the choice to prevent development by active non-planning lead to tens of thousands of homes in Arab localities in Israel being defined as illegal. This fact threatens basic ontological security and prevents urban and regional development in practice, because it creates both a constant threat of demolition (which is often realized) and a lack of development plans. At the same time, illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank or semi-legal takeovers on Palestinian property are being regularized and secured (see Kotef 2020, chapter 3).

The logic of replacement can be tracked down also through *cultural orders*, specifically, but not merely, architectonic style. In the early days of the state and pre-state, houses were built mostly in line with Western styles (Yacobi and Shadar 2014), as part of a wider effort of reconstructing the land as oriented West-bound (Raz-Krakotzkin 2005). This stylistic mode of replacement has changed later, as Palestinian homes in former Palestinian neighbourhoods in West Jerusalem, Jaffa, or Haifa have begun to be considered more 'authentic', rendering the 'Arab home' a selling point and a mark of real-estate value (Zaban 2017). Thus, the symbolic replacement of the Arab with the Western was itself replaced with a different form of replacement: the replacement of living Palestinians with living Israeli-Jews who come to inhabit the former's homes; be it as part of the more national resettlement after 1948 or as part of processes of gentrification (Monterescu 2015). This act of replacement is again accompanied by the urge to self-indigenize, that is, to mimic local cultures, appearances, and habits (Mendel

and Ranta 2016), not only physically replace the natives but also to take their place as the legitimate dwellers of the single home and the homeland.

Material elements come into play in this process in various forms, for example when local constructing materials are declared to be illegal in order to render indigenous houses demolishable. This is a widespread strategy of colonial administration (Bigon 2012, 2016), and in our context it is used to deem Palestinian houses as non-houses. Thus, for example, when the Jerusalem Municipality decided to demolish a four-decade-old Palestinian Bedouin village located within the city boundaries in 2012, it bypassed legal obstacles related to house demolitions by using a municipal by-law concerning cleanliness to argue that the shacks and tin structures inhabited by the village's 120 residents could not be defined as 'houses' (Hason 2012). But the physical demolition of Palestinian houses rests on many other modes of justification. Hundreds of homes are demolished annually due to lack of building permits, others due to 'security considerations', and others as part of 'punitive' demolitions (Harker 2009; Meade 2011). Most demolitions, however, are undertaken due to military reasons, as a result of actual combat or as part of the strategy of 'exposure'. Demolitions have occurred mostly at night, without any kind of forewarning or with very short notice that doesn't allow to prepare or take any personal belongings. Overall, according to data of the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, between 1967 and 2021 56,500 houses were demolished in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

A particular *regime of labour* also joins this stratification built into houses. Israeli-Jews hardly work in the construction industry. Construction workers are often migrant workers, but most of them are Palestinian workers (citizens of the State of Israel or residents of the Occupied Territories). In Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and the settlements in the West Bank, Palestinians are building homes for Jews, sometimes on land expropriated from their own families.

All this adds up to one 'ensemble', even if 'heterogenous' – to return to Foucault's words – in which elements that seem unrelated to each other interplay to reinforce the main colonial divide concerning access to land and homemaking. The dynamic equilibrium between legal facets, cultural orders, material elements, and regimes of labour makes them part of a dispositive, in which housing and dwelling are components in a strategic network with a 'dominant strategic function' – that is, the underlying structure of settler colonialism.

And yet, a reservation is in order. Whereas the settler/native dichotomy is significant in the organization of settler societies, the insistence on this dichotomy as both essential and clear-cut may not only be politically damaging (Svirsky 2014), but also misses both historical and sociological complexities (Evri and Kotef 2020; Mamdani 1998; Yacobi 2008). The transfer of homes from the native population to the settler one has rarely been homogenous, as different groups within the latter population gained different access to the material benefits of the land overtaken. Oren Yiftachel's (2006) work on ethnocracy provides a way to think about the structure of such stratification by pointing to three main ethno-classes often found in settler-colonial societies: (1) the founding settler group, which gains a dominant status, mainly due to the cultural, political, and economic status it established in the early years of settlement and resource-grabbing; (2) a group of later migrants with an ethnic background different from that of the founders – this group (and more often, groups) undergoes a lengthy process of assimilation 'upwards' into the founding group, but for the most part it remains in an economically, politically, and culturally inferior position; and (3) dispossessed indigenous groups that even when still remaining in the territory become displaceable, and whose houses turn demolishable and unstable. Thus, in settler-colonial societies, the logic of replacement

does not follow the allegedly simple line that divides settlers and natives, as inner gaps among the colonizers have been either exposed or produced (and often a combination of both) in and through the housing dispositive. To return to our context, 'although Zionism claims to provide a homeland for all Jews, that homeland was not offered to all with the same largess' (Shohat 1988, 1). During the 1948 war and soon after, many of the Palestinian depopulated houses were inhabited by Mizrahi Jews (those of Middle Eastern and North African descent). Due to lack of official ownership, however, these houses rarely became an object of real-estate value like the aforementioned houses inhabited primarily by Ashkenazi Jews. Rather, they became sites of long-lasting municipal neglect, which often turned them into slums, and then into a speculative investment playground by construction companies who bought the land with the aim of building new luxury units (hoping that the current, informal dwellers will be forced to leave) (Leshem 2016; Weiss 2011). The social rifts between available modes of homemaking cut across the settler/native divide and somewhat disrupt the settler-colonial paradigm. They fracture lines of alliance but potentially also create alternative lines of solidarity. Nevertheless, the basic division between Jews and Palestinians still dictates the boundaries of the structural dispositive, and indeed most social struggles in Israel revolve around the question of how the material and social benefits of the massive dispossession of 1948 (the real-estate loot) should be distributed among Jews, while not touching at all on the injustice of acquiring these possessions to begin with.

ACTIVE DWELLING, OR HOME AS RESISTANCE

If settler colonialism works through the home – both as a symbolic order and as a concrete housing dispositive – it should not be a surprise to discover that homes are also an important tool of resistance to the very same regime. When the colonized home is structurally deprived, destroyed, or endangered, the insistence on building homes and dwelling in them is in direct opposition to the settler-colonial rationale and modes of operation as described above. The Palestinian notion of *sumud* may manifest it best. *Sumud* is the Arabic word for 'adhering' or 'stubbornly standing' (Abujidi 2014; Hammami 2005; Shehadeh 1982), manifested in cultivating the land despite the uncertainty and frequently threatened possibility of expropriation; in refusing to emigrate despite the difficulties of the occupation; in reviving the memories of the ruined villages of 1948; and in building houses without permission despite the constant threat of demolition. The insistence upon building houses despite the risk of demolition, and especially the rebuilding of demolished houses, has been considered throughout the years of occupation as one of the core features of *sumud*. One can draw a straight line between this practice and the memories of the ruined villages and refugeehood after the 1948 war (Jamal 2009).

Accordingly, while building is a basic human need, it nonetheless holds an important symbolic role. Since it is also through the house and home that Palestinians are exposed to structural and direct violence, control, and uncertainty, the very act of building in and of itself serves to restate Palestinians as individuals controlling their lives and as part of a collective adhering to their territory. *Sumud*, says Abdel Fatah Abu Srour, Director of the cultural non-governmental organization al-Ruwwad in 'Aida refugee camp,

is continuing living in Palestine, laughing, enjoying life, falling in love, getting married, having children … Building a house, a beautiful one and thinking that we are here to stay, even when the Israelis are demolishing this house, and then build a new and even more beautiful one than before – that is also *sumud*. (Quoted in Rijke and van Teeffelen 2014)

Building houses and dwelling in them is simultaneously a matter of daily life (itself ranging from survival to comfort) and a performative act re-establishing both subject and national identity. In this sense, the physical *house* that is being built and inhabited re-establishes a *home* in its deeper sense as a mark of identity and permanence (Easthope 2014). Paolo Boccagni (2017, 2022) refers to the concept of *homing* as the potential to attach a sense of home to people's life circumstances, according to certain cultural and social standards. This concept allows us to examine the agentic cultivation of an emotional and relational experience (feeling-at-home) as well as the orientation of social practices (homemaking). Different studies show how everyday practices of house modification and beautification enable people to establish a sense of home, as well as to construct a clear sense of self and agency (Tanner et al., 2008). Parsell explains that 'control over a space is important to people's understanding of what it means to be at home, because this control over a space also means the ability to exercise a degree of autonomy over their lives' (2012, 160). And in contexts wherein one's home is being constantly threatened as part of a political project, such acts establish not just individual modes of belonging but also collective and political ones. Thus, even an investment in one's private home can be seen as an act of *sumud*. The ontological security of the house is therefore not a binary mode of have/have-not, as it is not a binary mode of private/public. It is rather an active process of making the home a home, and through this, making and remaking identities, agency, and power.

In this sense, these various modes of homemaking are performative acts (Butler 1990). They create self and national identities through repetitions that allow the home to emerge and re-emerge. Some of these repetitions are meant to close the gap between the promised ontological security of the home and the actual location and function of the house, such as when refugee camps are reconstructed, or when indigenous communities use small, mundane acts of homemaking practices as a mode of 'altering the house to restore the home' (Heywood 2005). Other repetitions rather dwell precisely in this gap, in order to create new forms of belonging and claims to stolen land (for example, in cases where refugees insist on their dual belonging: to their current home in the diaspora and the land from which they were exiled (Salih and Richter-Devroe 2018), or when communities highlight the possibility of having a home across borders, or even having the border as a home (Ghanim 2010)). In both ways, active dwelling (Handel 2019) emerges as a political act of resistance to the settler-colonial logic of replacement and forced homelessness.

CONCLUSION

Palestinian author Raja Shehadeh refers to his life in the West Bank as that of an internal exile – that is, a person who lives on their land but without the stability of a home. Asking when this exile will end, Shehadeh suggests: 'perhaps when we, Palestinians and Israelis, living on this land, succeed in scraping away all the nonsense about the exclusive meanings we attribute to our small territory and our lives in it … When Palestine/Israel come to mean nothing more to their people than home' (Shehadeh 2013, 96). Simple as it may sound, Shehadeh's call to

make Palestine/Israel a home for both populations is a radical one, as it necessitates a deep change in the political and social structure of the region (Busbridge 2018). The question at stake is thus how can one decolonize a settler-colonial space? Veracini writes that 'there is yet no language of decolonization pertaining to settler colonial contexts' (2007, 7). Our decolonial imagination is captured within classic colonialism, where decolonization results in independence and national self-determination coupled with a mass leaving of all or most of the colonizing group back to their countries of origin. However, the generations' long settler-colonial structure in places such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or Palestine/Israel entails that not only the colonized but also the colonizers do not have any other place to go. It is practically, even if not equally, the only home both populations have in the world. These limitations on the ability to imagine the end of settler colonialism further emerge from its tight and structural links to the questions of home, homemaking, and territorial belonging. The settler-colonial structure (and thus, its potential destructuring) is not only about (difficult) questions of legislation, resource allocation, historical narrative, or even land ownership. It is also about the intimate structure of attachment, identity, and ontological security.

Being trapped on the same land while accepting that neither of the populations is about to disappear opens two options. The first is maintaining the structural violence, that is, an antagonistic clash over concrete houses, over the homeland and over the very sense of home and dwelling. The second is making the land a shared home in which both populations have access to homes as well as both personal and collective sense of place and a right to homemaking.

Therefore, decolonizing one's home and homeland opens a set of material, symbolic, and affective questions along the lines we reviewed above. These are questions concerning both the more material facets of the housing dispositive and the symbolic and affectual facets of home. Should such decolonization be satisfied with granting equal access to land and homes from now on, or should it evacuate inhabitants from the colonizing group and give back the houses to their original dwellers? What happens when, after three or four generations, it is no longer possible to identify the original dwellers (and when the house's current dwellers are not those that took over the original place, but rather families who bought the asset decades later)? And what about places in which the original homes were destroyed long ago? When a high rise with dozens of flats stands in the place of a single-family house? Are there questions of real-estate value or affectual ties at stake? And how can the latter be measured? How can one compensate for generations of loss, and how not to create evil in an effort to correct a past evil? Will recognition of the past be enough to break the structural division between settlers and natives? What kind of transitional justice should be applied to acknowledge and compensate for the loss of original homes and the generations of 'internal exiles'? The question of homes and houses thus stands at the heart of all visions of decolonization, precisely since it is fundamental to the structure of settler colonialism.

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NOTES

1. With the emergence of 'settler-colonial studies' there has been much debate concerning the relevance of this framework to the Israeli/Palestinian context. Some have treated it as a clear case of settler colonialism, if not one of the primary players in the comparative playing field of the discipline. Others pointed to the historical attachments of Jews to the region to argue that a return to one's historical land of origin cannot be regarded as colonialism. However, these debates stress the emphasis we put on settler-colonial *practices*, rather than on questions of precedency or authenticity.

2. While some settler-colonial societies seem to neglect the inherent violence altogether, others are more open to challenging dominant historical narratives. Thus, in New Zealand or Australia it is now not uncommon to find references to indigenous place names and to the local history of elimination and replacement (Merlan 2014; Pelizzon and Kennedy 2019), while Canada attempts to face its past violence towards indigenous populations through truth and reconciliation committees (Eisenberg 2018; Stanton 2011). Whereas these are often criticized as empty gestures or modes of normalization in and of themselves (Corntassel and Holder 2008), they open possibilities for further contestation. Generally speaking, however, settler-colonial states find it easier to accept past evils that can be seen as closed 'events' and relegated to history than acknowledge structural presents. Hence, even if in some geopolitical contexts settlers begin to come to terms with their past violence and may offer a set of symbolic compensations, these rarely take the form of a material redistribution of stolen resources, and certainly not land. As long as the structure of settler colonialism is not deconstructed, the home of the settlers remains stable.

3. Israel is a telling example in this regard, as in this context the notion of 'national home' clearly preceded the national project and its expansive real-estate projects. But Israel is not unique in this regard. If one examines narratives of homeland in many other settler-colonial contexts, there is often a narrative of a home that awaits those who come to inhabit (and build) it.

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