Article

Israeli and Palestinian Settler Colonialism in New Media: The Case of Roots

Magdalena Pycińska

Faculty of International and Political Studies Academic, Institute of the Middle and Far East, Jagiellonian University, Oleandry 2a, 30-063 Krakow, Poland; magdalena.pycinska@uj.edu.pl

Abstract: Israeli settler colonialism, in time, became highly linked to the idea of a state, culminating in an institution that defends the past, present, and future practises maintaining the relations between the "native" and "settlers". Settler colonial ideas and practises sustaining binary opposition between the "native" and the "settler" are reproduced not only by Israeli state broadcasters, but also by settler colonial social media. This article proposes media analysis that goes beyond the usual national and conflict narrative and links "settler colonial common sense" with social media impacts and state ideas/sovereign ideas of property that strive to eliminate native people or transfer them outside Israel's perceived land ownership and sovereignty. This article also shows how Israeli settler colonial politics and narratives are supported by other settler colonial states (especially the United States). New media and settler common sense cannot be disassociated from the Israeli state and global politics, even though some settlers may have their own strategies regarding the relations with native Palestinians. The State of Israel, through massive surveillance technologies and support from other states that view militarisation and population management as crucial to maintaining its power, holds a great deal of influence over how it frames the "conflict" with Palestinians. We witness how both state violence and institutionalised Jewish privilege are recreated on the ground and globally through the new media. This issue is analysed through the "Roots" (a grassroots movement for understanding among Israelis and Palestinians) case study.

Keywords: settler colonialism; Palestine; social media; Israel; settler common sense; state media

1. Introduction

The following article aims at combining contemporary settler colonial research with media and social media analysis to explore Israeli and Jewish[1] settler colonial media production. There is no recognisable "one fits all" Jewish settler media network, but, instead, a plethora of individual social media accounts, non-related information network interviews, short documentaries, and grassroots organisations that develop their own narration, on which this paper will focus. This paper analyses the main discursive frameworks used by various Israeli media outlets that focus on settler experiences and politics. Israeli settler colonialism, in time, became highly linked to the idea of a state, culminating in an institution that defends the past, present, and future practises maintaining the relations between the "native" and "settlers" (of course in an analytical sense, as settlers consider themselves as true natives or as people more deserving of the land they acquired). Supported by José van Dijck's and Thomas Poell's research on social media and their relations with the public space (van Dijck and Poell 2015), this article argues that contemporary Israeli mainstream and social media, despite their globalisation and transnationalisation, retain complex relations with the state. Settler colonial ideas and practises sustaining the binary opposition between the "native" and the "settler" are reproduced not only by Israeli state broadcasters, but also by settler colonial social media. These media, thanks to various state interventions and capitalist interrelations with power brokers (politicians, celebrities, corporations, security institutions, etc.) are not only free from mainstream influence, but, in

many cases, help to prolificate state discourse in ways that Israeli news networks do not. Social media are better equipped to convey settler's sensibilities, their "common sense" (Rifkin 2013), and way of living, normalising them in the eyes of the media consumers. Moreover, by utilising shared settler society sensibilities (the belief in their exceptional links to the land; the ability to transform it according to their will; security concerns regarding the "Other"), Israeli social media tap into the transnational support of other settler societies, and gain approval for their policies (like in the case of Israel, the USA, Canada, Australia, India, etc.) (Atia et al. 2022; Elkins and Pedersen 2005). After glossing research on Israel as a settler colonial state and explaining how media, even social media, despite claims of freedom of expression, are often used to support settler colonialism, this essay will focus on the social media presence of Roots, a grassroots organisation that, though it claims to be aimed at fostering real-world equality between Palestinians and Israelis, is, in fact, supportive of settler colonialism.

2. Main Interpretative Frameworks of Settler Colonialism

The settler colonial paradigm in Israel started to take shape during the decolonisation in the Middle East and Africa in the 1960s (Sabbagh-Khoury 2022). Palestinian, Arab, and Jewish scholars began employing this framework but were not mainstream at the time, and certainly the framework was not employed in Israeli academic research until the last two decades.[2] Settler colonial studies focus on relations between settlers and indigenous people, not on exploitative or administrative colonialism or the relationship between the metropole and colonial administration. Indigeneity is understood as being related to peoples who are being colonised, not to one's origin from time immemorial. Settler colonialism highlights the processes of the institutionalisation of settlers' privileges and the creation of settler colonial states, with the imperial, national, and other components that accompany them (Veracini 2010; Rowse 2014). Settler colonialism is not an event, but a structure (Wolfe 2006), an institutionalised, often legalised, practise of native elimination (in a direct, structural, and cultural way). Settler colonialism in historical Palestine is not limited to Israeli policies after 1967 but also refers to Zionist actions during the existence of the British Mandate in Palestine and after 1948 (Veracini 2013; Kimmerling 1983; Jabary et al. 2012, pp. 1–8).

When it comes to the history of settler colonialism and Zionism, not only did Zionists ask for British assistance and develop their organisations according to the colonial needs, like the Colonial Trust Company (bank) and the Department of Colonization, but also every law and social relation with Palestinians was driven by the idea of Jewish Zionist land ownership (Halbrook 1972). This settler colonial framework did not treat Palestinian–Israeli relations as a conflict between national movements but transcended the events of 1948 and 1967 to focus on the relational character of the politics of elimination, disposition, and the development of Jewish privilege. As Fayez Sayegh noted, "colonization would be the instrument of nation-building, not the by-product of an already-fulfilled nationalism" (Sayegh 1965, p. 2). After the establishment of Israel, the state developed a model of settler colonial citizenship, and, until 1966, the Palestinian population was under military control. A year later, after the so-called Six-Day War, Israel started the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (and also the Syrian Golan Hights and Egyptian Sinai Peninsula). To manoeuvre its various strategies both in its recognised international borders and in occupied and colonised territories, Israel deployed different strategies, from colonisation to separation (Gordon 2008), or from an ethnic cleansing policy to an assimilationist one (Gordon and Ram 2016).

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui's notion of "enduring indigeneity" (Kēhaulani 2016) takes into account the dynamism of not only settler social and political processes, but also of how native peoples are striving to restore their place in the land, its history, and self-determination. It must be noted that indigeneity is understood as being relational: it is related to peoples who are being colonised (in the relation colonised–coloniser) and does not refer to one's origin from time immemorial or to having the same lineage between certain people of a region. Until the settlers stop the policy of maintaining their privilege at

the cost of the elimination of the indigenous people, they will have to engage in constant security mode to assure their position, as settlers base their presence on the land by eliminating and subjugating the still-present native people (Veracini 2014). Contesting this relation is interpreted as a denial of their right to the land and even their very existence. Different methods to approach this issue create variations of Zionism, which accommodate Palestinian resistance in different ways.[3] That is why this article argues that a specific relation between peoples makes a settler and a native, not a particular ethnic origin, lineage, or identity. Therefore, not all Jews are settlers on the land, as there were already Jewish societies present in historical Palestine, and they had different relationships with the rest of the inhabitants.

Settlers maintain the notion that land must be subjugated to them, transformed by them, so that the natives will not be able to claim any rights to that territory (Blomley 2003; Home 2003; Kamel 2014). The idea of making the desert bloom, draining the swamps, planting trees is part of that logic. In Israel's case, nature has been used not only to show their idea of proper land use but also to dispossess Palestinians and cover up the villages that were destroyed by Jewish forces (Jaber 2019), to block the Palestinians from returning (Yacobi and Milner 2022). The idea of the desert or "empty" land and the sacralisation of the land was used by many settler colonial societies and states to justify the appropriation of native land (Gersdorf 2009; Stephansen 1995; Newcomb 2008; Williams 1962). Jewish settlers voice that logic in their own projects and cast Palestinian inhabitants and their land-use culture as inferior and Palestinians as unfit to live on the land (Bhander 2018).

As scholars of settler colonialism have recognised, settlers are not ordinary immigrants; they bring their own sovereignty with them, and they create their separate political systems (Mamdani 1998). Settlers, unlike colonisers, strive to obtain as much independence from the native expertise of the land as soon as possible (paradoxically, in the beginning, often they need their help on the land). Their goal is to have a separate labour force, administration, education. They may be aware of the native existence but will avoid any meaningful relationship with them unless the circumstances demand it. The settlers define themselves, paradoxically, in opposition to the natives, while at the same time appropriating their culture, representation, and practises to connect themselves to the territory, replacing the natives and transferring their symbolical and material culture to them (Zureik 2015; Lentin 2018; Novic 2016; Davidson 2012; Mamdani 2012; Galtung 1990; Greenland and Göçek 2020; Veracini 2010, pp. 33–52). This process had its consequence when local Jewish societies and other Jews from the region were not, from the beginning, part of the Zionist project (Daniele 2020), as they reminded the European Jews of their distinctiveness from the region. The "Arab" component of the Mizrahi Jews was to be eliminated or minimised as much as possible to maintain the settler idea of the special relations between European Jews and the native land (Shohat 1999, 2017).

Security and the politics of fear create a form of "security theology" that, thanks to modern technology, has been amplified and internationalised to the point of being the source of state income and prestige in the international arena. Israel is one of the leading producers of weapons and surveillance technology in the world (Assaf 2022; Frantzman 2022; Lakoff and Collier 2008; The New York Times Magazine 2022). To secure its global standing, it cooperates with media establishments to censure Palestinian voices, with regards to mass state violence and settler colonialism (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015). As Ahmad H. Sa'di puts it, the Israeli surveillance industries are very influential and linked into the international surveillance market (Sa'di 2021). Israel managed to combine its settler colonial system with neoliberal, information-based, globalised capitalism (Al-Haq 2019; Goodfriend 2022). The state then developed a "politics of fear", which resulted in the "security theology", which feed each other in a relentless cycle of fear and violence (Moses 2021; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015, pp. 1–20). Settlers fail to and even do not want to see in the natives their human counterparts, but rather see them as an obstacle to normal life on the appropriated land. As Marcelo Svirsky argues, because this logic of elimination translates into the native logic of resistance, resistance should be analysed as part of settler social

formations. Svirsky suggests that Zionism historically was shaped through the process of the "double elimination" of indigenous life and shared life (Svirsky 2017).

Considering that settler colonialism refers to a particular relationship between conquerors/immigrants and the people already living on the land, the article examines whether Roots, as a joint Jewish–Palestinian nonviolent grassroots movement, embodies the main settler common-sense knowledge and practises or effectively manages to go beyond them. Their main media discourses, images, and videos are studied to showcase their attitudes towards land subjugation and transformation if they lay a privileged ownership claim over the area vis-à-vis Palestinian land ownership. The article examines what land history, culture, and political rights are being promoted by the movement, what is seen as the basis for coexistence, and whether there are any barriers given to the level of social integration between the two peoples. The notion of security, both on a social level and political level, is one of the factors that determines that aspect of their relation: whether only one group is privileged to receive state protection or whether there is a viable idea of a shared life between them, without the "security theology".

3. Interrelations between Settler Colonial Societies and Media Production

Before showing how they frame their discourse through various media forms, it is crucial to explain how media enable both the settler state and settlers to control, reframe, censure, and create a safe sphere for their projects and practises. First, Sara Evans and Harry Boyte write about "free spaces", which refer to "areas between private life and large institutions, in which citizens can act with dignity, independence and vision" (Evans and Boyte 1986, p. 17). Free spaces are supposed to be excluded from the control of the dominant authorities and therefore give subjugated groups a chance to organise and resist. The concept of free spaces refers today not only to specific physical places but also to online areas. Additionally, conventional wisdom in contemporary media studies views the phenomenon of globalisation (economic, political, technological, and cultural) as a process that diminishes the role of the nation-state. Globalisation and the digital turn are often seen as being interconnected and developing "networked individualism", which gives rise to hybrid identities, which undermine both mass communication media and nationally based media (see Appadurai 1990; Taylor 1996; Hepp and Couldry 2009).

But as Flew and Waisbord indicate, media structures are still constrained by the politics of nation-states (Flew and Waisbord 2015, p. 623). Media corporations still need to respond to legal policy frameworks on a national level, which might encourage homogenisation among various media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Waisbord 2016; Sparks 2016). Globalisation has served to reinforce the local political status quo. Local and transnational businesses, international organisations, and NGOs have been co-opted into media systems that conflate the role of the government and the state and offer little space for alternative discourses.

Jewish settlers, the State of Israel, and the new media create their own sphere where they can conduct their various strategies of settler colonial "common sense". The Israeli state has been, for years, working on silencing Palestinian activism both offline (European Parliament 2021) and online. Its experience in online surveillance is being utilised on the international stage as a selling point of the effectiveness of its system. For instance, Project Nimbus, an Israeli government-supported initiative to create secure local cloud computing sites for the country's public sector and military, chose Amazon Web Services and Google for more than USD 1 billion to run the project. The project will keep information within Israel's borders under strict security guidelines. Hundreds of workers from Google and Amazon signed a letter calling for their employers to pull out of Project Nimbus and cut all ties with the Israeli military (The Guardian 2021; Jewish Diaspora in Tech 2021; No Tech For Apartheid 2021). In early September 2022, Google and Amazon workers staged protests around the United States against technology that could be used for facial recognition and "sentiment analysis", in which the machine will learn how to determine someone's feelings by studying their face and speech (Nieva 2022; The Times of Israel 2021). Ordinary citizens

are now also using these technologies for their own monitoring of Palestinians. Social media apps are used by right-wing Israeli Jews to coordinate attacks on Palestinians in Israel (for example, via the Telegram app) and share fearmongering anti-Palestinian messages (Ward 2021). As well, Israel announced that their surveillance will be more automated, creating a so-called "intelligence mapping"—on Palestinian homes (Amer 2021). For example, the Blue Wolf initiative blends a smartphone app with a database that contains profiles of practically every Palestinian in the West Bank, including photographs, family histories, and a security rating. Another app, called White Wolf, has been developed for use by Jewish settlers. A right-wing Israeli publication admitted to its use in 2019. Settlers officially cannot detain people, but the security volunteers can use the app to scan a Palestinian's ID card before that person enters a settlement (Dwoskin 2021).

Israeli-censoring social media go beyond the Israeli and Palestinian blogosphere. Israel National News reported that the Israeli Justice Minister Benny Gantz met with Facebook and TikTok executives and demanded that they take action against pro-Palestinian accounts, imploring them to remove content posted by "extremist elements that are seeking to do damage to our country" (Kempinski 2021; Werleman 2021). Many platforms do censure narratives or actions that support Palestinian resistance or advocacy. 7amleh, The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, a nonprofit organisation that advocates for Palestinian digital rights, prepared a report that documented 500 cases of digital rights violations of Palestinians between 6 May and 19 May, 2021, when Israel escalated its brutal crackdown on Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem, triggering a conflict with Hamas, during which the besieged Gaza Strip was bombarded for 11 days until a ceasefire came into effect on 21 May 2021. 7amleh also observed an increase in "Geo-blocking" on Facebook, which is when social media companies determine the geographical location from where content was published. From 6 May 2021, social media companies started removing Palestinian content from platforms, often without clear reasons or violations (7amleh 2021).

Israeli media allow ordinary settlers to represent the main aspects of their actions. An interview titled "Who Are You Calling a Settler?" contains the main features of "settler common sense" (Berger and Hasson 2017), giving a sympathetic view of young settlers' lives, normalised and quite isolated from Palestinian inhabitants. Settler violence is dismissed in order to deny its integral part in keeping them on the occupied land. This notion is in tension with the mainstream government's stance that separates Israel from Palestine, as otherwise it would entail granting those Palestinians in the West Bank Israeli citizenship, voting rights, etc. (Gordon 2008; Kashti 2022). The interview presents the settler youth as just ordinary teens who just happen to live in a territory to which other people lay claim. One teen, for instance, says he works with Arabs but "Nobody can stand them, to tell the truth. I suspect them all the time. On the other hand, as human beings they're good people. Respect him and suspect him. It's contradictory, but that's life" (Berger and Hasson 2017). The interview with settler teens also includes their ideas about a "desired solution" including a Palestinian state: "I don't want their 2.5 million votes in the Knesset", another teen says, "but it would be very, very problematic to create a totally autonomous state for them. The problem is they also need to recognize we have a right in this country".

Roots' media strategy is examined according to the above main ideas: that is, how they present their media content to showcase their "common sense" (Svirsky 2022), everyday lives, and interactions with Palestinians; what they focus on and what pictures and videos they publish to engage with their audience; in what way their various platforms (Facebook, main webpage, YouTube) allow them to represent their actions and main ideas of a desired solution to the conflict; to what extent they allow interaction between them and their audience and whether there are opposing opinions to their own if they engage with them or not.

4. "Roots" Framework of Settler Colonial Sensibility Promoted through Social Media

Aside from occasional interviews with settlers, media also highlight several bottom-up settler initiatives that try to transcend the usual discourse. One of them is Roots, which

is a joint settler and Palestinian movement that is gaining more and more domestic and international recognition thanks to their founders. In 2014, Ali Abu Awwad, a Palestinian community activist, with his brother Khaled and settler Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger, along with others, formed "Roots" to foster a "grassroots movement of understanding, nonviolence, and transformation among Israelis and Palestinians" (Roots-Home 2022). Roots is not the only Israeli–Palestinian cooperation initiative, as their own members were part of other movements in the past. Ali Abu Awwad, together with his brother Khalid and mother, became a member of the Bereaved Families Forum (established in 1995). Ali Abu Awwad is a prominent Palestinian peace and nonviolence activist and founder of Taghyeer (Change), a Palestinian national nonviolence movement. He was granted participation in the Synergos' (a global nonprofit organisation) "Arab World Social Innovators Program" in Palestine (Synergos 2023). His brother Khaled is the head of the Bereaved Families Forum and Chairman of Al-Tariq (the Palestinian Institution for Development and Democracy). For the promotion of nonviolence, he was awarded the 2011 UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize. Khaled was also nominated for the "The Muslim 500", 2024 edition (The Muslim 500 2023). Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger serves as the Director and Community Rabbinic Scholar for the Jewish Studies Initiative of North Texas. He is also a coordinator for Faiths in Conversation, which facilitates Muslim–Jewish–Christian interfaith dialogue.

Roots is part of a registered nonprofit association in Geneva called "B8 of Hope", which backs a dozen grassroots efforts in Israeli and Palestinian societies. Roots is one of their beneficiaries. The collaboration was inspired by Ali Abu Awwad's work (B8ofHope 2023). In June 2023, Ali Abu Awwad received the Luxembourg Peace Prize, after being nominated by B8 of Hope. In 2019, Roots was also awarded by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs for the best ongoing project on the cross-cutting topic of environment and interculturality (B8ofhope-Roots 2023). Both B8of Hope and Roots have extensive media platforms and international recognition, with multiple international guest appearances and public lectures (B8ofhope-Media 2023; Roots Media 2023; Roots-Articles 2022).

Roots' goals focus on managing the situation on the spot by "1. Building and expanding our network of five local associations of Israelis and Palestinians committed to Roots' values; 2. Addressing injustice by: (A) Providing reactive support after acts of violence; (B) Advocating against separation, violence, and inequality, 3. Creating openings between religious and ideological camps that were previously seen as the obstacles to peace" (Roots-About 2022). But the group does not address the settler colonial system itself, as they try to rather work within it, so that settlers can remain on the land without any consequences of how they got there in the first place. Most telling, their website claims that both the Palestinians and settlers "envision a social and political reality that is founded on dignity, trust, and a mutual recognition and respect for both peoples' historic belonging to the entire Land" (Roots-Home 2022). The site aims to create equality on both sides, with settlers not relying on the very violence they condemn to remain on the land. They recognise that "Despite living so close to each other, Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank exist in almost complete separation, and both sides have little knowledge of each other's lives or humanity" (Roots-About 2022). But it is the Palestinians who have to prove their humanity, as Jewish settlers do not have that default recognition of the Palestinians. As rabbi Hanan Schlesinger argued in a 2016 interview with Haaretz, "The way to undermine the occupation is to show us your humanity, to demonstrate to the vast majority of Israelis who dream of peace that the vast majority of Palestinians dream of the same thing. That is a message that Israeli society simply won't be able to resist" (Friedman and Schlesinger 2016), which is that it is not the structure of the Israeli state that needs to change, but for Palestinians to accept that system, and not work to undermine it.

Roots uses various social media (their own website, Facebook, YouTube, and numerous interviews in mass media) on which they outline the reality in a paradoxical manner, trying to reframe the conflict as mostly a religious and narrative issue (Ben-Dor 2022). Only after both sides accept their versions as equally truthful will the political strategies follow suit.

Their activities are maybe helpful on a surface level, but they do not confront the everyday normalisation of state and settler colonial power. They work within it, and do not intend to change it. As their website claims, "Our projects include a wide range of formal and informal activities and action, from interreligious discussion groups to a summer camp for children to community-wide meals" (Roots-About 2022). They purposefully reframe the reality on the ground to avoid facing their own state-backed privilege, to instead support it and claim that their presence in Palestine is religiously justified and cannot be questioned. Indeed, the representatives of the movement are invited to various meetings and discussions on an international level (Friends of Roots. Facebook 2022b). Palestinians are left with one important task: to accept the Jewish narrative about the land, which will prove their humanity and therefore enable them to live alongside Israelis.

In 2020, the organisation stated that they intend to spread "the message about Roots including hosting groups, pre-military academies workshops and visiting schools" (Khaled and Judel 2020). On their Facebook page, they list various meetings with pre-military youth, during one of which they addressed the Israeli military: "Of course, we all pray and are working for the day when there will be no army in Israel/Palestine. But one of Roots' core values is to work in a broken reality without accepting it—to know that there is profound value in the difference we can make, even within a broken system" (Friends of Roots. Facebook 2021).

The contradiction of their statement was highlighted by a comment under the thread asking "Why not advocate for conscientious objection?" Again, what Roots states is that, in reality, they want to work within the system. The idea of working within a broken system and at the same time not accepting it represents mutually exclusive goals. Other activities developed by the organisation comprise the "Jewish-Muslim House of Study" (Roots-House of Study 2022), "Saskia Keeley Photography Workshop" (Roots-Saskia Keeley Photography 2022), "Ramadan Support for Palestinian Peace-Builders" (Roots-Ramadan 2022), and other initiatives on the ground, like the Interreligious Exchange, Women's Group, Summer Camp, Youth Group, and after-school program (Roots-Initiatives 2022). The focus on interreligious dialogue intends to preserve Jewish privilege on the land, as the narrative is based on an idea of an ancient Jewish ownership of the land, leaving the Palestinians as mere occupants of the land. A Facebook thread from 28 April 2022 claims that "Roots is built upon the presupposition that religion can be—and must become—one of the foundations of reconciliation between us [...] We are still living in a powder keg, in societies that are separated and divided as ever, each living within their particularistic historic calendars and parallel news cycles that never meet". A reply under the thread disagreed, arguing that "This conflict isn't about religion [...]. This conflict has to do with the theft of land and the atrocities surrounding these sordid events". There were others that countered the post's claim about Muslim violence asking about Palestinian victims of Israeli state policies, which again Roots did not address, but covered in a general statement about victims on both sides (Friends of Roots. Facebook 2022a).

Even though Roots recognises that there are divisions in religious discourse, they still view religion as both one of the main reasons of and solutions to the conflict. This is evidenced by the pushing aside of the issue of political, social, and land rights for the Palestinians in order to force the narrative of Jewish ownership of the whole land and their right to reside wherever they want. The host of the YouTube discussion "A Land For All", Shorashim Judur, argues that he, as a Jew and Israeli, has a deep historical, legitimate, religious, and cultural connection to the whole land, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean (the same goes for the Palestinians), and that both sides deserve the whole land. Judur therefore naturalises Jewish settlers' link to the land, claiming a legitimate ownership that was created for them by both colonial British power and the State of Israel after 1948, while rejecting the Palestinian claim to the land at the same time. Because the Jewish legal claim to the land is based on denying it to the natives, it is then hard for him to envision Palestinian land and political rights in Israel. Despite the fact that he sees a paradox, he opts for a confederation model that will protect the distinctiveness of Jewish Israeli and

Palestinian identities and politics. Moreover, the two-state solution, as he claims, steals from him, as he does not want to be limited by a future Palestinian state with regards to his right to the land. This begs the question as to how he understands any Palestinian right to the land and what it entails if a complete one-state solution with equal rights is also not regarded by him as a good resolution. Even his open borders confederation solution leaves the two peoples separated. It is telling that while he expresses confidence that, as a Jew, he will have it all, both a state that represents his identity and the whole land within the confederation, he only "thinks" that Palestinians will experience the same. Judur (2020) recognises, quite unintentionally, that there is an imbalance of powers (despite his official narrative of "equal both sides"). He still knows that there will be problems, but he does not elaborate on them, knowing that the questions of stolen land and Palestinian property rights in Israel will not be easy to solve. He then expresses, perhaps inadvertently, the typical settler colonial common sense: that it is, in the first place, the settlers who have legal, moral, and historical rights to the land, without any consequences regarding how they obtained it, and the natives are supposed to be satisfied with what is left and permitted to them. The comments under the YouTube film are turned off.

The limited nature of the settler vision of coexistence is evidenced by how they describe the issue of the Palestinian presence in settlements. For example, in an article about Roots and settler–Palestinian dialogue, we can read "Toward the end of the evening, several of the Israelis chimed in and mentioned the supermarket as evidence that coexistence had already begun to take root. But Abu Awwad insisted that true coexistence would only come about when Palestinians were business partners with Israelis and not just their employees, when they realised they could benefit from being on an equal footing with Israelis" (Leshem 2015). The settlers, even in a discussion about coexistence, still view its basis as Palestinian subjugation.

5. Conclusions

New media and settler common sense cannot be disassociated from the Israeli state, even though some settlers may have their own strategies regarding the relations with native Palestinians. The State of Israel, through massive surveillance technologies and support from other states that view militarisation and population management as crucial to maintaining its power, holds a great deal of influence over how it frames its "conflict" with Palestinians. When it comes to settler common sense and how they naturalise the settler colonial discourse and practises in their everyday lives, we witness how both state violence and institutionalised Jewish privilege are recreated on the ground. The state uses settlers as justification for land grabs, which leaves them also somewhat isolated from the rest of Jewish Israeli society. Their hegemonic position in relation to Palestinians is so much taken for granted that the state colonial structure is never questioned; at the very most, they want to work within the system to make symbolic gestures. The idea of being both together and yet separate replicates the settler colonial idea of native elimination in modern times, as complete elimination cannot be fully achieved. This idea of accepting certain relations only when they do not contest their Jewish privilege on the whole land is conveyed in various media interviews, podcasts, websites, and social media outlets. They want to paint settlers as ordinary people who just want to live their lives on the land, considered theirs from time immemorial, relegating Palestinians to either the necessary "Other" or to neighbours that must first prove their humanity to the settlers to even be considered tolerable on the land. Social media, once considered a free space for counterpublics and dissidents and a marketplace of ideas, are still very much dependent on, intertwined with, and helpful to states. The various social media activities of Roots, for instance, demonstrate the practise of naturalising state main-settler policies, by humanising the settlers and their lives on the occupied land, and rendering the "Other", in this case the Palestinians, as mere inhabitants of the land, without any agency, sovereignty, or political value.

While the media activities of such organisations like Roots are viewed, especially in the United States, as a model for future conflict solutions, and gather some attention, they

represent the same framework of state settler colonial logic. Palestinians will have to first affirm the Jewish claims to the land and defend their privilege in it, and only later will they be able to showcase their point of view, which, in that case, will already be moot. Settler colonial logic is internationalised and therefore the media, which are produced by them, will not create an alternative framework without massive international support for decolonisation. Moreover, their framework is gaining more traction, as can be seen in the United States discussion about the southern border, the immigration of the racialised "Other", and in critical race theory. In the European context, we witnessed the so-called refugee crisis and the different treatment of Ukrainian refugees to those from the Middle East and other non-European countries. The level of the securitisation of people and narrations and the justification of the racialisation of people, deeming certain groups as inherently dangerous and less desirable to host, are also maintained through various social media (like Facebook and Twitter). The proliferation of settler colonial discourse on the international stage, its acceptance, and its subconscious consumption is evidenced in how both mainstream Israeli and grassroots Jewish settler media production is often accepted and rarely seriously challenged by the dominant international state powers.

Notes

[1]   On 19 July 2018, a Basic Law was passed titled "Israel—the Nation State of the Jewish People", by the Twentieth Knesset. The law determines, among other things, that the State of Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish People and that the Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, in which they realise their natural, cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination, and that exercising the right to national self-determination is unique to the Jewish People. It is important though to note that Israel, of course, has non-Jewish citizens, and therefore the state itself cannot be conflated only with its Jewish citizens. Because Jews are seen as the only national group with the right to self-determination and the state realises politics that prioritise Jewish interests, this article will highlight that Israel's settler colonial policies are intended for the benefit of its Jewish citizens and not for all of its population.

[2]   See Edward Said (1979), Fayez Sayegh (1965), George Jabbour (1970), Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and Abu-Laban (1974), and Maxime Rodinson (1973). It is important to stress that the settler colonial concept is not monolithic but is an interpretative framework that is able to show how various historical and modern experiences of settler colonialism have many familiar resemblances when it comes to structure, discourse, and logic, but are not frozen within their conceptual boundaries.

[3]   Example: French settlers in Algeria, and settlers in Australia or in the United States and Canada. John O'Sullivan (1985) coined the term Manifest Destiny for the United States.

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