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# Citizenship as Accumulation by Dispossession: The Paradox of Settler Colonial Citizenship

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## Abstract

This article extends critical trends of citizenship studies and the theory of accumulation by dispossession to articulate how settler colonial citizenship is instantiated through the active accrual of land and resources and how the emerging settler colonial citizenship entrenches both structural subjugation and resistance. The article then examines the reformation of the boundaries of citizenship through indigenous agency. I do so through examining the Palestinian citizens in Israel, specifically centering the Internally Displaced Persons—Palestinians who received Israeli citizenship even as they were displaced from their places of origin. I conclude by asserting citizenship's double paradox in settler colonial contexts: It regulates certain rights and mobilities but simultaneously entraps the indigenous in a structure in which recursive accumulation is constitutive, thus entrenching dispossession and the further loss of collective rights and other claims.

## Keywords

citizenship, accumulation by dispossession, settler colonialism, sovereignty, Israel/Palestine, indigenous, agency

Citizenship is not a neutral social apparatus; rather, it is iteratively shaped by often contentious political processes that classify group and territorial memberships and differentially distribute rights. In this article, I examine citizenship as a governing apparatus of states formed by and operating under a logic of settler colonialism.

First, I take up the theory of accumulation by dispossession to complicate the linkage between settler colonial sovereignty and citizenship—as they are instantiated materially—that has been largely neglected by sociological theory and empirical social research. Accumulation by dispossession (ABD) is well utilized across disciplinary boundaries (Hall 2013). Here I apply the theory to the configuration of citizenship. I demonstrate that in

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settler colonial cases, indigenous citizenship is premised on the process of dispossession, showing settler citizenship derives its function from recursive accumulation. I draw on the case of Palestinians in Israel, and more specifically the Palestinian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), a segment among the “1948 Palestinians” (approximately 46,000 of the 156,000 Palestinians who remained in Israel in 1948) whose towns were uprooted and relocated, their property appropriated, but who were granted Israeli citizenship (Wakim 2001). The case offers an indexical view of the co-constitutive processes of ABD that further enables settler colonial territorial sovereignty.

Citizenship, a classificatory apparatus, is neither solely imposed from above nor individually accepted from below, but dialectically negotiated. And just as citizenship in settler colonial states entrenches the process of settler ABD, it also may enable indigenous challenges to domination. Hence, I explore the ways citizenship is taken up by the indigenous vis-à-vis the settler state’s classification. Audra Simpson’s (2014) *Mohawk Interruptus* shows that indigenous “refusal”—to recognize and be recognized by the settler state—has been one historical path for native peoples subjugated by settler states. Simpson (2014:33) writes of the Kahnawà:ke in North America, “They have the legal status only, it seems, of protected peoples, but it is this status that they use to protect and entrench their semiotic and material resources in light of state encroachment and then refuse forms of recognition if they so choose.” Such an aporetic paradigm—settler state conferral of liberal citizenship rights alongside acts of indigenous refusal—is central to the entrapment of the Kahnawà:ke in Canadian and U.S. systems, Simpson shows, particularly considering their tactics of disavowing settler state sovereignty. Yet refusal is not the sole mode of indigenous relations to a settler colonial state. Arguing that the form of indigenous response depends on the constitution of political actors and their goals, strategies, resources and an array of structural and contingent contexts, I discuss a divergent case, the Palestinians in Israel. I examine how indigenous utilization of citizenship in this case enabled a challenge to settler attempts at replacement. I show how Palestinian “acceptance” of citizenship differs from refusal in the positioning of indigenous subjects within and against an apparatus of domination. Utilizing the Palestinian case, I offer a conceptual framework regarding indigenous sociopolitical agency in general.

In what follows, I interrogate how citizenship within settler states operates not simply as a device for inclusion within the polity (or exclusion from it), but as the mechanism for a bifurcated process of accumulation/dispossession tethering legal and material realms. Drawing on the method of contrapuntal reading (Said 1993), I attend to the accumulatory functions of settlers alongside the dispossession and resistance practices of indigenous people through citizenship. Recentring the study of colonialism in sociology (Adams and Steinmetz 2015; Go 2008; Magubane 2004), I am interested in the state and nonstate actors whose various tactics of plunder, subjugation, and hierarchization lie at the heart of the settler colonial state’s constitution and in the practices, negotiations, and indigenous coproduction that together shape the state and citizenship.

Among the Palestinians in Israel, who were subjected to variegated mechanisms of dispossession and came to hold qualified access to different sets of rights, the IDPs occupy a kind of interim category. They are a group that was fully dispossessed of property and granted citizenship rights and one that resisted with limited success their dispossession through myriad methods, which allows for critical theorization of ABD within the classificatory system of citizenship hierarchies. They exist in an in-between space given the continuum of potential practices settlers and settler states draw on due to territorial insecurity, among them ethnic cleansing, forced labor, displacement, or incorporation. The dynamics of resistance in this case also surface the role of indigenous agents in shaping settler colonial domination. From this case, I theorize the relationship between citizenship and ABD under

settler colonialism in Israel, acknowledging possibilities for extension to other settler colonial cases. I find a double paradox: Accumulation is constitutive for settler citizenship; at the same time, the citizenship granted to the indigenous enables certain privileges and some form of agency in their subjection to settler colonial sovereignty while also facilitating the conditions for their further deprivation and dispossession.

## CITIZENSHIP AND COLONIALISM

Sociological theory has described the nation-state's constitutive exclusion of minorities; here, I show that dispossession and domination (1) constitute the indigenous as an indigenous minority and (2) are central to the formation of the settler colonial state and its dominion over the indigenous population subject to it. Much classical theory largely neglects colonial contexts in theories of state violence, yet settler colonial violence has shaped myriad modern states and should be treated as analytically discrete.

Sociologists generally take citizenship not as a thing-in-itself, but as a social process that is both materially practiced and discursively used (Abu-Laban 2002; Calhoun 2007; Joppke 1999; Marshall 1965; Young 1989). The modern nation-state most frequently constitutes the central agent, wherein citizenship enforces the bounding of a state from "ineligibles" it seeks to exclude through the process of social closure (Brubaker 1992). Citizenship constitutes the state polity not solely as territorially bounded but also as relational. Citizenship both categorizes membership legally and serves as a symbol of social belonging. It is described as a mechanism of political agency and participation to be used from below and as an organizing apparatus imposed from above that mediates rights and entitlements (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008). It is thus a mechanism that can anchor peoples to polities, most often strapping citizens to states to which they were assigned at birth. Citizenship defines nationalist boundaries, whatever their strength (Anderson 1983; Hanafi 2012; Stevens 1999). The sociology of citizenship directs our attention to state formation and its attendant institutions and classificatory needs, alongside the individuals and collectives who become subjected to them.

Colonialism and empire are vast social phenomena entailing varied practices of citizenship across temporalities and spatialities. Scholarship on citizenship and colonialism discusses how citizenship is a mode of colonial population management (Aminzade 2013; Berda 2020; Glenn 2011; Hall and Held 1989; Mamdani 1996; Simpson 2014). Across the history of plantation, extractive, and administrative colonialisms, various practices have upheld and produced differentiated citizenships. I will not offer a thorough review of the literature on colonialism and citizenship (see Hearn and Hobson 2020) but will instead turn to citizenship in settler colonial cases.

One of the central pillars of settler colonialism, according to Wolfe's (2006) account, is "the logic of elimination," wherein the aim to replace natives and to appropriate their land is a key impetus for colonial action. Permanent settlement is the inherent aim of settler colonial projects, differentiating them from extractive or administrative colonialisms. In the processes of settler colonialism, a group of settler immigrants appropriates a space inhabited by an indigenous population, aspiring to shift the demographic balance between the settler population and the indigenous population to favor the former. Mechanisms of dispossession and expulsion, what Wolfe (2006) bundles under the general term "elimination," are often used to ensure the "elimination of the native as native" (Kauanui 2016).

Settler colonizers carry their sovereignty with them; they aim to settle and establish a new social order, not to preserve the configuration of existing sovereignty. Settler colonialism has been studied in cases ranging from Israel/Palestine, South Africa, Algeria, and Rhodesia/

Zimbabwe to North America, Australia, New Zealand/Aotearoa, and elsewhere. No case operates the same, and debates abound surrounding what unites cases of settler colonization (Sabbagh-Khoury 2022). Likewise, citizenship does not operate in homologous forms across settler colonial societies, precisely because of diverging settler attributions of indigenous threat to a colony's territorial viability and permanence. Wolfe (2006) argues that citizenship in settler colonial societies is often (although not exclusively) a strategy of assimilation of the indigenous and thereby the elimination of the native as native. Indigenous "acceptance" of citizenship, as in the case of natives in the United States, is rendered by the settler state as a mode of indigenous acquiescence and a tool for the eradication of indigenous claims to sovereignty.

For instance, Kantrowitz (2020:31–32) describes Civil War–era citizenship amendments in the United States as "technologies of native disappearance" intent on "dispossessing Native people of most or all of their land, dissolving their collective political bonds, and over time transforming them into functionally indistinguishable members of settler society." This notion is complicated when we examine two divergent indigenous responses to the subsequent Indian Citizenship Act (1924) decades later, which granted U.S. citizenship to Native Americans: accept U.S. citizenship to preserve political identification with indigeneity or reject citizenship to protect discrete tribal sovereignty (Bruyneel 2004).<sup>1</sup>

In the case of Canada, Simpson (2014) argues to a similar end: Citizenship classifications by the Canadian settler state are a liberal mode of toleration and recognition that seemingly extends democratic inclusion to the indigenous yet allows settlement and dispossession to continue. In the face of prevention of indigenous sovereignty, many indigenous members of the Mohawk Nation practice "refusal," as Simpson's (2014) ethnography reveals, rejecting identification with the settler state (e.g., by using a tribal passport).

And in apartheid-era South Africa, which I and others categorize as a settler colonial society, citizenship was used as a tool of spatial concentration and demographic engineering that ensured the durability of white-black stratification and separation, maintaining rule by a settler minority (never more than 20 percent of the population). The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 (No. 26) revoked national citizenship and attendant rights for people categorized as black, assigning them to citizenship in one of the racially segregated Bantustans (Welsh 2009). In many cases, nonwhite individuals were made citizens in Bantustans in which they had never lived or visited, solely on the basis of an ascribed "ethnic" or "tribal" identity. One way to read this is by understanding the white regime's fear of universal (although not equal) citizenship—which until then all South Africans held—as a potential tool for decolonization and democratization. National citizenship was repealed for Africans and replaced with Bantu citizenships because of the apartheid regime's desire to argue, internationally as well as internally, that there were no "second-class citizens" in South Africa, only equal citizens and labor migrants holding equal rights in their own (alleged) places of origin. Because citizenship allows one to contest discrimination and oppression (i.e., second-class citizens), the National Party in South Africa devised the Bantustan system.

Settler colonial citizenship is defined by the history of native dispossession and subjugation. Citizenship, nearly all settler colonial cases show, does not indemnify historical violence merely through the extension of membership and liberal rights. Neither are indigenous subjects merely passive recipients of state power. Settler colonial citizenship regimes across contexts demonstrate elements of (1) settler domination, assimilation, elimination and (2) variable native strategies of acceptance, rejection, refusal, negotiation, and preservation.

## THE PALESTINIANS IN ISRAEL

In the case of the Palestinian citizens, settler colonialism as an effort to accumulate territory and sovereignty has long undergirded state practices (Shafir 1989). For Palestinians in Israel, their citizenship in a settler state ostensibly renders them entrapped. The Palestinians who remained in what became the State of Israel seemingly “accepted” Israeli citizenship (Jabareen 2014), one fundamentally settler colonial in form (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2014). But I argue that their dynamic practices have contested and redrawn the contours of this citizenship. I examine the apparatus of state classification with an eye toward the convergence of the material reality (presence and land) and the symbolic terrain on which meanings are negotiated and produced.

The Zionist movement entailed the migration of European Jewish settlers to a territory populated by Palestinians, the appropriation of indigenous lands through myriad tactics (land purchase, coercion, expropriation, force), and the marginalization of the indigenous people (Abdo and Yuval-Davis 1995; Sabbagh-Khoury 2022). In its early stages, the project was based on the acquisition of land, a process that accelerated with the conquest of Palestine by the British Empire and the imposition of new legal land-tenure configurations. Zionist settlers often resorted to force to expel Palestinian cultivators from the land on which they lived and labored, either with the assistance of the British governor or on their own. Palestinians, in turn, often resisted colonization (e.g., by burning fields, forcibly reclaiming possessions, combatting settlers; Sabbagh-Khoury forthcoming).

However, the process and terms of land acquisition under the British Mandate required that compensation be given to the indigenous who lived on the land and whose consent was to be obtained prior to their evacuation. Consequently, takeover was gradual. Around 70 Palestinian villages “disappeared,” physically and discursively, prior to 1948, as a direct result of Zionist colonization (i.e., by settlers and settler institutions; Sabbagh-Khoury forthcoming). Even so, by 1948, the Zionist movement had acquired less than 10 percent of the territory of Mandatory Palestine (Yiftachel and Kedar 2000). The 1948 War provided the opportunity for the establishment of Jewish sovereignty over a large part of the territory and the mass expulsion of its Palestinian population. The combination of warfare, expulsion, the prevention of the return of the displaced Palestinians, and the use of state sovereignty and its legal apparatus to organize ostensibly legal land expropriation completed what the previous acquisition practices had begun. After 1948, the Zionist movement established a sovereign capacity to act without imperial interference and constraints (Sabbagh-Khoury forthcoming).

The citizenship regime in place between 1918 and 1947 did not grant full political supremacy to Jewish settlers (and the British extension of immigration permits by “absorptive capacity” significantly limited mass Jewish migration; Banko 2016), but it prepared the ground for the 1948 takeover by offering settlers the easiest path to obtaining territorial rights. Mechanisms of Israeli governance of the Palestinians, explored next, demonstrate how displacement and coercive population management constituted a new configuration of settler colonial citizenship.

### *The Case of the IDPs*

The case of the Palestinian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs),<sup>2</sup> whose paradoxical citizenship rights alongside the prevention of return became constitutive features of their citizenship, instantiates the tethering in settler colonialism of citizenship to ABD.

The category of IDP in Israel includes two groups: The first are those driven from their homes by Zionist militia forces before the foundation of the State of Israel starting in November 1947; the second encompasses those displaced after the inception of the Israeli

state in May 1948 through internal transfer operations or expulsions (often beyond the “borders,” or armistice lines, of the state; Masalha 1997). Palestinian Bedouins, some of whom settled in villages “unrecognized” by the Israeli state, make up a large portion of the latter group (Badil 2003). The former group constitutes the majority of IDPs who remained inside Israel. Israeli displacement of the IDPs took multiple forms. Generally, Palestinian city-dwellers were subject to urban ghettoization, and village inhabitants were subject to rural concentration. Forced expulsion and displacement operations, alongside “voluntary” fleeing, did not occur only in the context of the 1948 War or end in 1948; the protracted attempts to remove Palestinians from desired space extended beyond the 1949 Armistice Agreements.

The IDPs—individuals who were displaced from their original homes as a result of forced expulsion or fleeing—were largely prohibited from returning, dispossessed of their land and means of production, and subjected to capricious Israeli martial rule.<sup>3</sup> Yet under the Israeli Nationality Law of 1952, most were granted Israeli citizenship (although not wholesale rights of return). These rights protected them from future expulsion (Jiryis 1976)—despite the threat of transfer looming over Palestinians—because the absence of Israeli citizenship rendered a Palestinian subject to deportation.<sup>4</sup>

Appropriation of the IDPs’ land and property was implemented through legislative decisions as well as martial practices. The Emergency Regulations (Absentees’ Property) of 1948 and the Absentees’ Property Law of 1950 were the primary mechanisms of legalized dispossession (Knesset 1950). The law authorized the Custodian of Absentees’ Property to manage property deemed absentee and expel individuals residing on it; the state was considered the owner of these properties unless the “absentee” owner could prove their status was not that of an absentee.<sup>5</sup>

Given the new legal regime in the wake of war, this was a nearly impossible task (Jiryis 1976; Masalha 2003). Although the Israeli Nationality Law of 1952 made most IDPs entitled to Israeli citizenship, mobility restrictions (mainly a system of pass permits) ensured their systematic prevention from returning to their original place of residence and recovering property. The law did not grant “absentees”—refugees or IDPs—the right to recover property; rather, it prevented IDPs, who were Israeli citizens, from returning to their villages, cities, and homes so the state could appropriate their land and properties (Sabbagh-Khoury 2011). Despite having remained in their homeland, Israeli law considered IDPs “present-absentees”—that is, present for political purposes and absent for property purposes—by arguing that they vacated their villages and cities in the 1948 War and hence irreversibly lost their rights to these properties. This designation applied regardless of motivation for leaving their places of inhabitation. The temporality of the lawfare—the specific designation of absentee status *in time*—established settler property rights.

Following the 1948 Nakba, three distinct phases defined the IDPs’ actions. From 1948 to 1951, the IDPs searched for safe places of refuge, with many migrating between villages (Al-Haj 1988).<sup>6</sup> Most IDPs settled in towns and villages located close to their villages of origin. From 1952 to 1956, there was a period of waiting: The IDPs conceptualized their situation as temporary and anticipated an eventual return to their villages (see e.g., Kabha and Barzilai 1996).<sup>7</sup>

In 1957, a new phase of resettlement began, during which some IDPs purchased land in the towns and villages where they had taken refuge. Like the refugees, the IDPs dealt with their new situation as if it were temporary and waited to return. Like other refugees, they also received assistance from the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, until aid was discontinued in the early 1950s. This discontinuation was intended to render the IDP issue an internal Israeli matter. The Israeli government then allocated a budget to ensure this population gained employment in some of the Palestinian cities and villages that were still standing following the establishment of the state (Kamen 1987).

The immediate post-1948 experience was an integral component of the Palestinian experience of loss. Even though the IDP population physically remained in their home land, they experienced loss in a traumatic yet distinct spatial manner relative to those who were expelled outside the boundaries of the new state. For the IDPs, the 1948 rupture fomented unprecedented traumas (Sabbagh-Khoury 2011). Like other Palestinian citizens of Israel, the IDPs found themselves subjects of a foreign sovereignty that materially, symbolically, and politically casts them as internal enemies. They bore witness to the conquering of their home/land by settlers, experiencing the demolition and Judaization of their villages and cities and the theft of their properties. The military and Israeli government often dealt with Palestinian possessions as if they were war spoils, redistributing dispossessed properties to Jewish citizen-settlers and to new immigrants, many survivors of the Holocaust in Europe, others Jewish immigrants from Arab or Islamic countries. The initial mode of relations between the settler state and its dispossessed citizen-subjects was thoroughly traumatic (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2014), and multiple mechanisms shaped this dispossession: citizenship, land law, martial rule, and practices of resistance.

### *Military Rule as Population Management: Inscribing Settler Accumulation*

The defining relationship between the “1948 Palestinians” and the Israeli state developed between 1948 and 1966, when the majority of the remaining Palestinian population, from the north to the south, were placed under the jurisdiction of a military government. Settler state sovereignty facilitated dispossession through the enactment of laws of appropriation, combining direct violence, fines for violations of military rule orders, imprisonment, and the forceful prohibition of return for the IDPs (Sa’di 2014; see also Kimmerling 1977). The military government’s legal backing was derived, inter alia, from the British Mandate’s Emergency Defense Regulations of 1945, which the Provisional Council of State and the Knesset later adopted.

Out of 162 Mandatory Emergency Regulations, the military government implemented five to control Palestinian mobility. Three of these (Regulations 110, 111, and 124) allowed the military governor to limit or prevent the movement of citizens, and the other two (Regulations 109 and 125) enabled the military governor to prevent the entry of citizens into “closed” areas (Jiryis 1976). These regulations entailed the authority to restrict movement, to detain any person suspected of incitement, to deport and administratively detain people, to impose curfew, and to declare certain areas closed or restricted for military purposes (Jiryis 1976; Nasasra 2020). These regulations were unilaterally imposed. Approximately 90 percent of the 156,000 Palestinians living under the jurisdiction of the Israeli state, including most IDPs, were subject to this military rule (Robinson 2013:39).<sup>8</sup>

The population management of Palestinian IDPs after 1948 reveals the principal momentum of settler colonial power wielded by the Israeli government: namely, the erasure of as many Palestinians as possible from desired space through the securing and normalizing of new methods of statist domination, first through ethnic cleansing and then by containment in the remaining Palestinian villages and specific enclaves in the cities. Despite common assumptions that the 1948 War concluded the displacement of Palestinians, the Israeli state waged a direct and protracted war against Palestinian citizens through the apparatus of military rule, wherein the dispossession and control over the remaining Palestinians constituted Israeli sovereignty inasmuch as procedural “democratic” institutions were being built for Jewish-Israeli citizens. Violence was not an anomalous factor, nor were the ghettoization and displacement of Palestinians in Israel isolated incidents; rather, they became institutionalized.

Even though the Israeli state granted citizenship to Palestinians who remained within the 1949 armistice boundaries, the population management apparatus was informed by a logic of hierarchy and difference. The state considered remaining Palestinians an obstacle for the full implementation of a Jewish ethno-national project. In its first years, the Labor government tried to displace as many remaining Palestinians as it could and appropriate maximal territory (Masalha 1997). The massacre of nearly 50 Palestinian citizens of Israel at Kufr Qassem by Israeli police in 1956 offers an example of one attempt to instill fear among those who remained, to encourage them to acquiesce to state and military demands (Manna 2011; Raz 2018). This is but an extreme case; the population management of IDPs within Israel presents an example of attempts to secure sovereign territorial contiguity by prohibiting the return of indigenous inhabitants.

The declared aims of the military regime's siege were to enforce Israeli law for "security purposes" (Masalha 1997). However, the military regime acted out of undeclared motives. First, the military sought to prevent the return of refugees and IDPs to their cities and villages of origin. Those who returned were labeled infiltrators (*mistanenim* in Hebrew; *mutasalilīn* in Arabic) and often faced violence or death. It is estimated that between 2,700 and 5,000 "infiltrators" were killed in "border wars" (Morris 1993). Still, some 20,500 "infiltrators" who entered between 1948 and 1953 obtained citizenship (Cohen 2010:95). Military rule authorized commanders to proclaim Arab areas as "closed zones," following Article 125 of the Emergency Regulations, which required Arab residents to obtain mobility permits to enter or exit their zones (Masalha 2003). The prevention of their return was achieved through the systematized demolition of Palestinian homes and villages and appropriation of urban space, the settlement of some Jewish immigrants in the homes of displaced persons, and the establishment of Jewish cities on the lands of destroyed localities (Kamen 1987; this had implications for ethnic-based stratification among the Jewish population). Particularly large destructions of villages occurred in 1948 and in 1965 by the Israeli Land Administration (Shai 2006).<sup>9</sup> Second, the military sought to evacuate displaced persons from semidisplaced Arab cities and villages to more concentrated areas. Third, it sought to reduce the number of IDPs who remained in Israel by expelling some beyond the borders of the new state. And fourth, the military imposed a surveillance regime on its Palestinian subjects to quash dissent (Masalha 1997, 2003).

As archival evidence has been declassified, practices of state control throughout the 1948 War and period of military rule have emerged. Newly declassified sources reveal the extent to which Israeli officials conspired to prevent IDPs from returning to their homes (cf. Berger 2019). This included forestation efforts, fencing land, and further weaponizing the Absentee Property Laws. Similarly, it is now better documented (although always known by those who experienced it) how the Israeli military enforced temporary ghettos in certain cities during the 1948 War (Raz 2020). During military rule in Jaffa and Haifa (as well as Lydda, Asqalan, and Acre), Palestinian citizens were gathered, separated according to religious affiliation, and concentrated in specific areas (sometimes in refugees' homes) that were often surrounded by barbed-wire fences. Exit from the security zones (often referred to as "ghettos" in the primary Israeli archival sources) without proper permits was prohibited; permits were generally offered only to those who labored in Jewish fields. These ghettoized Palestinians were prevented from returning to their original homes and, out of economic precarity, were often made to cultivate land newly transferred to Jewish-Israeli control (Algazi forthcoming). These examples concretize Palestinian dispossession as both material and symbolic/affective.<sup>10</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1948 War, the new settler state reconfigured an already uneven political economy in which Palestinian property and the surplus value produced through

Palestinians' labor was co-opted by the state or by Jewish-Israeli citizens-settlers' economic endeavors. In some places, Jewish landlords and company owners benefited from the labor of Palestinians who became dispossessed from subsistence agriculture and were forced into the labor market, where their wages would be the lowest among workers (Nuriely 2019).<sup>11</sup> The military and supporting Israeli civilians enforced the dispossession of these Palestinians by occupying land, looting, restricting access, and confiscating property (land, foodstuffs, and livestock). Palestinian "docility" as a marginal labor force in the new settler colonial economy accompanied their disconnection from the wider Arab world.

Military rule and attendant government policies toward the Palestinians, especially the IDPs, were constitutive features of "displacement, exclusion, and repression" that defined the new "liberal settler state" (Robinson 2013:8). The provisional government established military rule to ascertain the conditions for full accumulation, and it had the effect of stymieing Palestinian reclamation and repressing dissent. This settler colonial government also established its governmentality, in part, by offering remaining indigenes individual—as opposed to collective—rights in the form of citizenship.

The period of military rule officially ended in 1966. It was dismantled, that is to say, its formal legal arrangement, because it achieved (if only partially) the goals of territorial appropriation, settlement, and the prevention of return. New mechanisms of population management for the Palestinians in Israel were instituted in the form of police control, and in 1967, another Israeli military regime came to regulate the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which continues to this day.

The practices and function of the first military rule are linked to subsequent forms of Israeli territorial and demographic control and to prior British imperial techniques.<sup>12</sup> At different times and in different places, state practices have included checkpoints, detention, immobilization, expulsion, curfews, permits, land closures, and blacklists. Today, East Jerusalem's noncitizen Palestinian residents, Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, and Palestinian citizens in Israel are governed by divergent classificatory and material circumstances.

The legacies of military rule continued to shape the conditions of sociality for the Palestinians in Israel following 1966. Although generally understood as a permanent social fact, their fragile citizenship remains under threat, namely, by border change plans that advance the revocation of citizenship (see e.g., U.S. President Donald Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" plan [White House 2020] or efforts by Israeli politicians like Ephraim Sneh to "transfer" Palestinian citizens out of Israeli jurisdiction [Zureik 2003]), a renewed Schmittian adversarial politics, and the collusion between settler colonial groups and the state that perpetuates colonization in the form of urban land-grab and extrajudicial violence in Palestinian urban localities (Sabbagh-Khoury 2021).<sup>13</sup>

Understanding the relation between the Palestinian citizens and Israeli governmentality entails consideration of the contingent historical developments between them, beginning with settler colonization that preceded the state's inception and continuing through statecraft and bureaucratic population management. Citizenship is not a fixed thing in itself, but an institutionalized historical process.

## CITIZENSHIP AND SOVEREIGNTY

Citizenship is inherently imbricated in processes of ABD in this case and others. Dispossession constitutes the prerequisite for Israeli citizenship granted to Palestinians, most of whom did not conceptualize the new settler state colonial as their own and whom the state did not conceive of as members of the national (Jewish) "demos" (ethnos; Bishara 1993; Peled 1993).

Displacement prefigured the Palestinian IDPs' recognizable status as citizen members. And yet it also enabled, at least by law and for as long as the Jewish sovereign wills, their protection from further expulsion or "transfer" from the home/land.

In Israel, citizenship is a political status that takes on the contentious politics of territorial access. Bishara (2017:140) contends, "[W]e can conclude that there are two kinds of citizenship in Israel: One is *incidental* citizenship, given to Arabs who happened to remain in Israel after the Nakba. The other is *essential* citizenship, given to Jews as Jews." Sultany (2012:197) qualifies Palestinian citizens of Israel as "occupied citizens." Palestinians with Israeli citizenship are largely excluded from territorial belonging, land acquisition rights, return, and immigration and naturalization (the Law of Return of 1950 is a capacious mechanism that enables world Jewry Israeli naturalization, but not Palestinians). An "internal frontier" has subjected them to continued spatial control, wherein municipal and infrastructural services are unevenly controlled by the Israeli government (Yiftachel 1996).<sup>14</sup> For Shafir and Peled (2002:117), such divisions encapsulate the three concatenated dynamics—colonialism, ethno-nationalism, and democracy—that define the Israeli citizenship regime. Their framework of citizenship is cognizant of colonialism, delving mainly into the settlement that prefigured the Israeli state before 1948, and delineates the colonial project's results on post-1948 Palestinian economic mobility. However, they do not further explicate how colonial accumulation enduringly structures the post-1948 citizenship apparatus, as I seek to do here.

Citizenship for the Palestinians has already been discussed as a mode of exclusion and domination (e.g., Dallahseh 2015; Ghanem and Khatib 2017; Lustick 1980; Pappé 2013; Robinson 2013; Rouhana 1997; Tatour 2019; Yiftachel 2011); here, I dialectically articulate settler colonial citizenship to further understand how Palestinians have engaged citizenship-as-domination. Citizenship has not guaranteed full rights; classification was established on an imposed hierarchy of settler and indigene that sought maximal accumulation through the latter's dispossession. The exclusionary citizenship apparatus for the Palestinian IDPs, whose citizenship did not grant them the right to return to their homes, paradoxically engendered a form of struggle against domination, one that endures into the present.

In sociology and social theory, citizenship is primarily rendered vis-à-vis a relationship to political liberalism, that is, as a set of liberal rights granted to individuals who make up the nation and withheld from those who do not. Arendt (1973) seemingly broke suit in her analysis of European totalitarianism, proffering the inextricable ties between Europe and its colonies. For Arendt, an imperial impulse for land acquisition fed the totalitarian regimes inside European countries; "external" processes were always already internal to Europe and thus threatened democratic structures. As Shenhav (2012:21) explains, the "initial gap between the legal status of citizens in the home country and the 'subject races' in the colonies, which were never permitted to exist as fully fledged citizens," led Arendt to theorize the connection between European totalitarianism and imperialism. Arendt recognized that imperial and colonial processes abroad constituted an empire's despotism at home and necessarily shaped the condition of statelessness.

Extending this thought to the case of Israeli settler colonial citizenship offers a useful analytic. Just as Arendt (1973) theorized that the gap between European citizens and colonial subjects corrupted liberal democracy in Europe, so too can one assert that the gaps between Jewish-Israeli citizens and indigenous Palestinians (in all the multiple levels of subjugation devised by the Israeli regime: those under military rule from 1948 to 1966, and the East-Jerusalem noncitizen residents and West Bank and Gaza noncitizens who have remained under occupation since 1967) constitute governmentality writ large. Yet one key revision is needed here: The exclusivist ethno-national sovereignty has never mirrored Arendt's vision of a prior "democratic" European culture but, instead, *from the beginning*

took a hierarchical form. Ultimately, citizenship needs to be theorized in relation to settler colonial territorial and population management, not as external to the state, as Arendt argued, but as constitutive.

The early years of the Jewish state can best be grasped by attending to the ways political structures were prefigured through settler colonial state-making. Palestinians who remained in Israel, although granted official citizenship rights, immediately were positioned in contradiction to the national Jewish citizenry governed by the newly established procedurally settler democratic institutions. Military rule lasted for nearly two decades and severely restricted the mobility and political mobilization of a population who faced social disintegration. Rather than reflect a universal democratic structure of Israel, the granting of citizenship to Palestinians at that time contributed to the settler regime's geopolitical framing of the state as a democratic entity, that is, to its international legitimation and acknowledgment.

Mechanisms of emergency regulation and military rule set out the practical conditions under which dispossession could be sustained (Jiryis 1976), and the juridical system drew the contours of confiscation under which law perpetuated warfare by other means (Sabbagh-Khoury 2012). The multifaceted process was committed both officially (i.e., by the state apparatus, including the parastatal Jewish National Fund) and by individual Jewish citizen-settlers who inhabited depopulated houses or controlled formally Palestinian land in the frontier. Past research has focused on the Israeli state apparatus (Lustick 1980), but it is equally important to consider settler "agency," or the beneficiaries of ABD. Moreover, focusing solely on the national component of dispossession—that is, the loss of potential Palestinian national self-determination—neglects the economic and material impoverishment of the predominantly agrarian Palestinian society in which land was the primary means of production (Zureik 1979).

No less important is to draw attention to those who benefited most from this configuration: Jewish citizen-settlers, military leaders, and the political elite—mainly Ashkenazi Jews of European descent—and their newly established economic endeavors (Algazi forthcoming; Bernstein and Swirski 1982). Jewish-Israeli settler possession of land and resources was configured through an accumulation process within socialist (collectivist) terms, wherein the Jewish collective denied Palestinians access to property and collective sovereignty as land was nationalized. After inception of the Israeli state, Palestinian landowners were replaced with Jewish settlers, effectively turning most remaining Palestinians in Israel into an "unskilled workers" class by depriving them access to their own lands. Zureik (1979) termed this "internal colonialism"; I classify such practice within the wider, albeit fissured, whole of settler colonial population management.

The transformation of Jewish settlers to owners and land cultivators mirrored that of other settler colonial groups that claimed territory to constitute sovereignty. In Palestine, encroachment transformed forms of Palestinian land tenure (including *musha'a*, collective) to exclusive Jewish property (see Al-Hazmawi 1998; Hadawi 1988; Kedar 2000). The practical effect and historical outcome of Zionist collective accumulation and the concomitant dispossession of Palestinians was systematic.

Yet it is crucial to complicate the universalizing trope of "elimination of the native" that Wolfe (2006) characterized as a dominant feature of settler colonialism. For example, some Zionist settlers in the kibbutzim actually subleased land to Palestinians beginning in the 1950s, even to some who had previously owned the same land (Algazi forthcoming). This practice seemingly negates the premise of elimination. In this case, subleasing was done mostly out of practical need: Zionist settlers simply could not manage property in the frontier, and the indigenous often knew how to care for the land. While the wider Zionist political project sought the replacement of Palestinians on as much land as feasible, Palestinian presence and embodied knowledge shaped the settler colonial frontier.

Despite the citizenship regime granting IDPs incidental membership to the Israeli state, state and Jewish-Israeli civilian agents were able to enact ABD against them. The citizenship regime, determining membership to territorial belonging, instilled a structure of fear into Palestinians. For the dispossessed Palestinians granted citizenship by the settler colonial state, to demand return or repossession of property could have threatened their very right to remain by exposing oneself to the “arbitrary governance” and “bureaucratic aloofness” (Shenhav 2013) of the settler colonial state’s imposed martial law. For the indigenous, it was citizenship *manqué*, one that did not guarantee the full set of liberal and collective rights but still subjected Palestinians to being recognized and classified by the state. Paradoxically, citizenship enabled both the capacity to remain *and* the durability of dispossession. However, as I discuss next, despite the structures of prevention and risk, the citizenship regime and its attendant dispossession were contested in myriad forms.

## CITIZENSHIP AS ANTICOLONIAL TOOL

Focusing on structural dispossession and settler colonial sovereignty’s dislocations may elide indigenous agency. Despite domination, it is essential to comprehend the ways social actors used alternative means of political resistance to settler colonial sovereignty. I bring forth five types of cases to explore how citizenship became a mechanism for anticolonial politics, even as it served as a mode of settler colonial domination and ABD. Elsewhere, I have explained how Palestinian resistance practices gradually constituted the “return of history” (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2019), that is, the ascription and reinvigoration of new political meaning to 1948’s foundational violence.

First are the protracted sagas of Iqrit and Bir’im. The Israeli military forcibly depopulated these two Palestinian villages *after* the state’s inception (part of the uniqueness of these cases), but IDPs from these two villages intended to return using the tool of citizenship to contest their dispossession (Kimmerling 1977). The public legal struggles of these villages’ inhabitants was initiated immediately following their removal, when village committees mobilized to request government officials permit their return. They believed that, being evacuated by the military *after* the state’s inception, they should be guaranteed return. The committees sent numerous letters to the Minorities Ministry and the military governor on a range of quotidian matters. They raised claims of property damage, requested permission to hold ceremonies and holiday celebrations in their displaced villages, and requested fair labor arrangements. They also protested the improper treatment of their women and expressed concern regarding acts of violence committed on village lands (Ozacky-Lazar 1993). Myriad legal battles ensued, often with contradictory rulings (Ryan 1973).

In the case of Iqrit, a July 1951 ruling found the village’s original evacuation illegal, permitting return. Yet months later, on Christmas Eve, the military demolished the Christian village, save the church and cemetery. More legal battles ensued, reaching the Israeli Supreme Court. Village inhabitants were permitted only to pray in the church and bury the dead in the cemetery. In the case of Bir’im, after village appeals to the courts, a 1953 Supreme Court ruling challenged the military’s expulsion, yet the military further destroyed the village. In these cases, citizens used social protest against state dispossession; they mobilized to access return through multiple legal avenues and accentuated the legal exceptionalism of their cases *vis-à-vis* those of other internally displaced persons. Inhabitants of these two villages and other displaced villages have since used citizenship to practice a symbolic return (see, e.g., Image 1 of a return Easter celebration at the displaced village of Ma’alul) --to this day—to this day, they hold celebrations and social, religious, and political activities in the villages—even as the bureaucratic and legal

restrictions remained unresolved. Israeli governments continuously rejected the IDPs' ability to return out of "security-factor justifications," citing the potential precedent any permission to return would bring and the unrest it would foment among other Palestinians (Kimmerling 1977:163–64).



**Image 1.** Easter celebration at the church of displaced village Ma'alul, April 18, 2022. Photo by Sameh Damouni.

The cases of Iqrit and Bir'im, archetypes of the state's dispossession and ambivalence, exemplify ways Palestinian citizens sought to utilize their citizenship classification (through their mobility and presence and petitioning through a discourse of legal rights) to seek redress, albeit narrowly. In these cases, appeals to settler sovereignty were not entirely successful. Yet these IDPs brought a great deal of attention to their dispossession at the hands of state bodies and through their resistance demonstrated the fissured nature of the concatenated Israeli state, which does not operate coherently. In the words of Esmeir (2014), their symbolic return practices demonstrated that "life . . . cannot be recorded through the prism of ownership or coded by the law."

The second type of case demonstrates a form of indigenous agency, nominally within the boundaries of citizenship, that is collectivist in nature and disclaims the depoliticizing atomization wrought by settler colonial citizenship. As an example, in 1998, threatened by an Israeli military order of the closure of al-Ruha land (near the Palestinian city of Umm al-Fahem) on which Palestinians cultivated, nearly 700 Palestinian citizens held sit-ins to protest land confiscation, organized the Popular Committee for the Defense of al-Ruha Lands, and thwarted confiscation. The military closure was reversed after months of tension and police and military violence due to Palestinian citizens' mass protest. This is one of few cases in which the mobilization of Palestinian citizens prevented land confiscation.

Third, we see the dialectical nature of citizenship across myriad other Palestinian responses to domination. As I trace elsewhere (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2014), Palestinians have utilized the formal parliamentary political system to attempt to contest oppression. The most prominent attempt was through the Communist Party in both its early and later incarnations (in 1977, the party aligned with other groups and became the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, or *al jabha* in Arabic). Through the party, Palestinian politicians worked with a few Jewish-Israelis to oppose state policies of dispossession, exclusion, and welfare abandonment through the prism of class politics. In the early decades of the state, the Communist Party was the primary organization for indigenous Palestinian political and social activism, and at times, it defended civic demands of the Palestinians in Israel. Yet in spite of its forum of contestation, the party faced entrapment.<sup>15</sup>

The party's acceptance of UN Resolution 181's partition plan following the Soviet Union's official acceptance (Budeiri 2010) alongside its participation in the Israeli political system (Adiv 2018) delimited its structural capacities. Post-1948 until the 1990s, the Communist Party was dominated by Jewish members in the central committee and the Political Office (Kurzum 1993); party members articulated struggle within a conflict they rendered national rather than one between settler colonizers and an indigenous population. The party accepted the Israeli state's legitimacy upon its founding, and thereby the legitimacy of its citizenship regime, rather than withdrawing from the political system. It was also the main channel upon the Israeli state's founding through which Palestinian citizens could protest discrimination using the parliamentary system outside avowedly Zionist parties. The party "accepted" citizenship as the embodiment of rights in the new Jewish nation-state: Members saw political incorporation as a pragmatic method through which change could be enacted. Following 1967, the party's view of the conflict sequestered national struggle beyond the Occupied Palestinian Territories and class struggle within the territory occupied in 1948. Even from 1948, the party did not articulate its struggle as one against settler colonial rule. Party leaders proffered a paradigm of equality between the Jewish majority and Arab minority (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2014), rather than an anticolonial struggle for decolonization, and they envisioned a separate Palestinian state through a two-state resolution. Although the party saw citizenship as the tool that enabled Palestinians the juridical basis for remaining in the homeland (*baqa'a*) and certainly fought against violations of Palestinian rights, its capacity for political transformation was stunted by the confines of military rule and the shadow of the traumatic events of the 1948 Nakba. The party, even if it constituted an oppositional wing bolstering indigenous dissent, helped legitimate the Israeli settler colonial state.

It is not incidental that one of the most crucial Palestinian political projects defying the exclusionary nature of the "Jewish State" was articulated through a citizenship discourse campaigning for a "state for all its citizens," and thereby the acquisition of full citizenship rights. The Palestinian National Democratic Assembly (NDA, *al-tajamo'a*),<sup>16</sup> a political party, sought to democratize the function of citizenship in Israel upon its launch at the end of the 1990s. Its project of democratization of a settler colonial state, presented through the language of a multicultural liberal democracy, sought the decolonization of a state apparatus that privileged one group over another.<sup>17</sup> Still, such efforts to appeal to the colonial political system also reflect the nature of entrapment within a settler colonial political system. To be sure, Palestinian citizens' resistance practices have never been unified around a coherent goal. The NDA and its paradigm of a state for all its citizens, for example, despite its widespread dissemination, struggled to take hold, remained underrepresented among Palestinians, and attracted the Israeli government's disdain (exemplified by the harassment of party leadership and designation of party activity as "subversive" [Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2014]).<sup>18</sup>

Fourth, other practices have been largely symbolic but no less important. This includes, foremost, memory practices that perform an active refusal to forget the foundational violence in the Nakba and to assert the continuity of Palestinian *baqa'a* (remaining in the home/land). Palestinians have practiced symbolic return to destroyed villages or, for younger generations, those of their ancestors (see Image 2 of a return march). In the first years of military rule, Palestinians visited/temporarily returned to depopulated villages on Israeli Independence Day, the only day they were permitted to move without permits. In the wake of the Kufr Qassem massacre in 1956, the Land Day commemoration in 1976 took off as a popular practice of social protest against domination, conspicuously refusing the erasure of the state's constitutive violence from Palestinian and Israeli consciousness (Ghanem and Mustafa 2018; Sorek 2015).



**Image 2.** March of Return to al-Kabri village, May 2, 2017. Photo by Maria Zreik for Activestills.

Collective return to family villages to commemorate the Nakba continues, refusing a delinkage from dispossession by using the rights of citizenship (mobility and territorial presence) to preserve a demand for decolonization. Through such embodied practices, the demand for a return of land and the negation of exile (especially for IDPs) is sustained despite decades of governmental suppression of a history of constitutive violence. Returns in 2021 to the displaced villages of al-Bassa', Iqrit, Suhmata, Hitin, Saffouri, and al-Lajjun are another recent manifestation of the practice of collective contestation through memorialization.

Fifth, meso-level dynamics, or mediating institutions, have shaped the management of the Palestinian minority. ADRID (the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced), which beginning in 1998 organized return marches to depopulated villages, became

central to the “return of history.” The High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, the National Council of the Heads of Arab Localities, Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Mossawa – the Advocacy Center of Arab Minority in Israel, and others serve as meso-level actors that draw on citizenship as a legal and political discourse for reform. Many of these institutions organize around the decolonization of settler colonial citizenship—that is, the redistribution of power and rights.

These practices present a just a few forms through which Palestinians redraw the boundaries of citizenship, even under conditions of domination.<sup>19</sup> The classification the state ascribed to Palestinians (citizenship) has become the grounds for their struggle against the legitimacy of colonization and the institutions erected to perpetuate it. Citizenship, in one sense, is held as a strategic asset for anticolonial social movements. I find, across most mobilization against state domination, the cultivation of a *habitus* of *sumud* (steadfastness)—a cultivated set of dispositions, learned habits, embodied understandings, and a skill set for navigating the violences of domination—wherein Palestinians have phenomenologically encountered and learned ways of living amid frequent violence. Settler colonial citizenship seeks to strip the indigenous of their native-ness, rendering them subjects of a settler state who bear no special rights for redress from displacement and dispossession. Yet the legal, material, institutional, and symbolic displays of indigenous objection to erasure demonstrate the paradox of citizenship. Citizenship, I argue, is both a social classificatory mechanism used from above to ascertain the conditions for continuous accumulation and an instrument of anticolonial dissent used by the indigenous from below.

Despite being displaced or dispossessed, the attribution of political opportunity to the classification of citizenship, these cases demonstrate, has allowed Palestinian citizens the capacity to remain in their home/land, although not always in their home villages or cities. Without citizenship, they could not have appealed to the legal regime to seek restitution or possess the spatial mobility to access village lands in the first place. Still, citizenship classification also enmeshes them within a legal apparatus in which to seek redress they must ultimately subject themselves to the bureaucratic apparatus operated by those who claim not to represent them and who in fact constitute members of the same state apparatus that dispossessed them.

Moreover, these cases delineate a form of indigenous agency that does not simply accept purely individual rights offered via settler governmentality but seeks cracks and opportunities to assert and, to an extent, effectively deploy self-sovereignty. This agency operates between the rejection and entrapment of citizenship and seeks to reconfigure the opportunities opened by citizenship’s relative protection and qualified provision of rights.

The Israeli state is shaped and articulated by indigenous resistance practices and organizations. The Knesset’s 2018 “Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People” and the 2011 “Amendment No. 40 to the Budgets Foundations Law” (known colloquially as Nakba Law) can be read as reactionary responses to Palestinian citizens’ aggrandizement. State responses to indigenous resistance practices seeking to dismantle the colonial order underscore the strength of indigenous social action. Resistance reframes the state’s perpetuation of settler colonial war by other means against the Palestinians. This assertion—that Palestinians’ displays of agency engender reactionary and oppressive state responses—risks being read as if the Palestinians are to blame for their own subjugation, but I am instead emphasizing the nature of settler colonial governance: It is responsive to indigenous agency.

## ACCUMULATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND SOCIAL AGENCY

In some accounts, primitive accumulation models the material conditions that generated the conditions for the implementation of wage labor (Marx 1978:431–34). ABD, however,

describes the more contemporary crisis of the overaccumulation of capital (Harvey 2004), with imperialism being a spatio-temporal fix for the need to garner additional land, resources, and markets. ABD is an extension of primitive accumulation, a temporal reconfiguring that deems accumulation not as “primitive” but as reconstituted in different forms. ABD is said to be a product of the modern crisis of neoliberalism, that is, how states continuously seek accumulation through global and unequal dispossessory processes. To appropriate land and resources for further capital accumulation and market access has become the primary function of modern imperialism. How does Harvey’s (2004) generative concept of ABD fit into the constitution of settler colonial sovereignty?

The particularities of capital are not the focus here, but I am concerned with the systems of hierarchy inherent in materialist processes, especially as they pertain to ownership over the means of production (land and resources). By attending to the materialist realm, I aim to show how ABD is a characteristic feature of citizenship that has specific dynamics and logics in settler colonial cases.

In imperial/colonial contexts, Hart (2006) notes, racialized material practices of dispossession and concentration constitute the “land question.” The question I and others (see Coulthard 2014; Hall 2013) pose is how to apply Marx’s and Harvey’s theories not only to economic capitalistic accumulation but also to settler colonial contexts where citizenship regimes can enforce differential territorial membership and land possession (exclusively for one ethno-racial group).

Zionist colonization was not a spatial fix for capitalism. Despite the Israeli state’s purported socialist ideologies and practices, capitalism played a role in its development (Silver 1990). The dispossessed land in Palestine was instrumental in the construction of Israeli territorial sovereignty (Yiftachel and Kedar 2000). It is crucial to distinguish Zionism from other settler colonial cases; the reason for settlement cannot be regarded as *solely* economic, or national, or religious, or as motivated by the actions of a single metropole. Moreover, the presence of empire is central; British imperial rule paved the way for Zionist accumulation despite discordance between Zionists and the British (who, for instance, did not easily facilitate land transfer through mechanisms of force but insisted on legal purchase; Sabbagh-Khoury forthcoming). My aim is to keep hold of the centrality of land, of the materiality of dis/possessions of resources, in identifying how settler colonial sovereignty and supremacy were constructed and are preserved through differentiated citizenship. In extending a materialist argument about the centrality of land, I pose that settler sovereignty in this case and others is constituted through ABD. Citizenship is upheld by two interdependent forms: one premised on accumulation and one premised on dispossession.

ABD in the Zionist case did not take the form of capitalist privatization, as in other settler colonial cases, but instead collectivist privatization that served the Jewish national body (often following an ethno-socialist ideology). Zionist accumulation exclusively prioritized Jewish (mainly European) populations over Palestinians. The earlier pre-Zionist process of land expropriation from Arab landowners had not generated a mass expulsion of the peasantry from the land. Transformations in ownership of Palestinian land were enabled by gradual privatization and legal reforms under the Ottoman and British regimes, particularly the privatization and concentration of Arab estate owners’ land under the British Mandate (see Al-Hazmawi 1998; Khalaf 1997; Yazbak 2000). This concentration produced the conditions for liquidity through which Zionists garnered territory (Khalidi 1997:95).

Such transformations continued at the turn of the twentieth century, when the expulsions began with Zionist land purchases. These land purchases prior to 1948 initiated the dispossession of Palestinians, generating loss of land and labor at a much smaller scale than what would come in 1948 (Sabbagh-Khoury forthcoming). Post-1948, the Jewish state used the

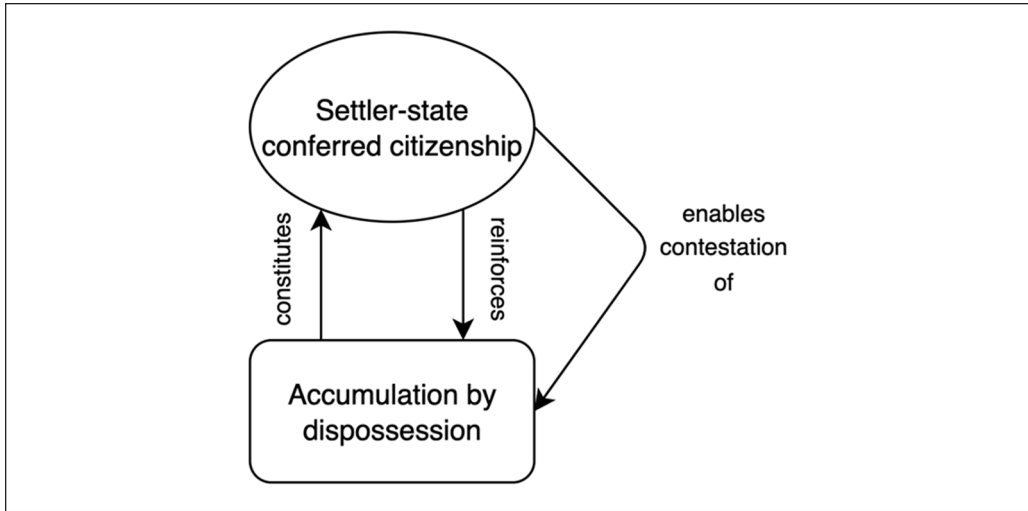
pretext of “national need” for territorial confiscation. The accumulation of wealth, or the means of production, was a settler colonial mechanism of expansion, providing land, resources, and labor to the Jewish population while dislocating the Palestinians. In the Zionist case, dispossession was not a means to an end of the creation of a new labor force, despite enduring needs for labor, but constituted Jewish territorial sovereignty.<sup>20</sup> “Accumulation” identifies how loss was a prerequisite for constituting exclusivist Jewish sovereignty in Palestine, not that it had to be such, but that historically the Zionist project rendered the process zero-sum. Displacement, encroachment, and expulsion allowed for the continuation of the accumulation process, encapsulated in the shift from British imperial and Zionist settler colonial semisovereignities to the Israeli sovereignty that now foments further accumulation/dispossession.

ABD in Harvey’s (2004) terms entails the forceful expropriation and redistribution of land and resources to *capital*. In the case of settler colonialism, redistribution flows to the racially defined settler group (even amid internal divisions) and is buttressed by the state, whose ability to exist in the colonial space depends on forceful accumulation and the classificatory apparatus of citizenship. This is why settler colonialism, as Coulthard (2014:58) argues, is “a form of structured dispossession.” ABD is a dyadic process in settler colonial cases, where land and resources are appropriated for the exclusive redistribution to the settler colonial group. This accounts for appropriation of land in obtaining the means of production, constituting the conditions of social relations (including citizenship), and inhibiting the capacities needed for indigenous sovereignty when faced with usurpation. If we reverse the aphorism to *dispossession as accumulation*, we can recenter what the production of settler supremacy and enduring loss entails for indigenous social reproduction.

In the case of Israel, it is not just that the state apparatus, through absentee property laws and martial rule, accumulated the capacity to claim ownership over the means of production, but that the processes of dispossession constituted exclusive settler sovereignty to rule over natives and to dispossess them of institutional and political capacities to rule themselves. As Figure 1 shows, ABD constitutes a settler colonial citizenship regime—a hierarchy determining who can remain, under what conditions of spatial and social mobility, and with what privileges—and the citizenship configuration facilitates further accumulation/dispossession as it also structures spaces of opportunity to resist it. “Citizenship,” as a bifurcated analytic concept, allows us to articulate agency alongside the state practice of classification, more precisely pinpointing a mechanism of population management and responses to it.

Returning to Simpson’s (2014) theory of indigenous refusal, in the case of the Palestinian citizens and the IDPs, citizenship is received divergently. Refusal describes a denial to recognize and to be recognizable. For the Palestinian citizens, phenomenological proximity to the Israeli state, starting with the period of military rule, consists of daily interactions with the state apparatus wherein the need to recognize and participate in state governance is nearly unavoidable.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Palestinians in Israel rely on citizenship as their means of territorial belonging, even as they may contest the arbitrariness of the state’s classifications. For the indigenous, the struggle for naturalization and citizenship is also the struggle for existence in the homeland.

Citizenship and indigenous responses to it are not Manichean. In the Palestinian case, citizenship entails the legal right of territorial access, that is, the right to remain. This is not so in all settler colonies. The determination of indigenous threat to settler permanence, temporality, and the construction of alternative collective structures (e.g., tribal governance) are three factors that contingently shape responses to settler citizenship classifications. Citizenship categorizations and resources are differently useful in divergent temporalities, under different conditions, and according to specific goals (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008).



**Figure 1.** The relationship between accumulation by dispossession and citizenship.

In the case of the Mohawks, refusal of the classification of settler citizenship and the envisioned goal of indigenous self-determination prompted an internal mobilization of resources to establish alternative collective forms of governance. For Palestinian citizens of Israel, identifying political opportunities in citizenship—the ability to contest and somewhat constrain dispossession and confiscation, to identify cracks in the colonial state apparatus—constitutes an agentic response to domination. One counterfactual usefully delineates this phenomenon: Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem, who lack Israeli settler citizenship, are more vulnerable to the municipality’s and national government’s dispossession practices because they lack mobility and suffrage and are most exposed to potential residency revocation and deportation (Ghanim 2017).<sup>22</sup>

Indigenous use or rejection of settler citizenship—the range and type of agency vis-à-vis citizenship—do not occur in a vacuum. Contextual and contingent factors shape the goals, strategies, and tactics of dominated groups. Internally, indigenous forms of collective action, culture, and sociopolitical structures shape what is imaginable, attainable, or enacted. These factors structure the evolving range of possible forms of action within a dialectic, given dynamic settler colonial state policies and practices that often diverge. Externally, a shifting transnational context of mobilization around indigenous rights also shapes the resonance and appeal of various indigenous strategies vis-à-vis settler colonial citizenship.

As in Simpson’s (2014) case, settler colonial citizenship in Israel renders the Palestinians as liberal subjects whose very indigeneity—as a relational subject position rather than identity—is thereby erased and depoliticized. For the Palestinians, this is a process of disappearance that aligns with consistent government desires to erase the Palestinians as Palestinians and deindigenize claims to land and sovereignty. But whereas the Israeli state seeks to retain the Palestinians’ ethno-cultural distinction from Jewish-ness, the Canadian state seeks to integrate the indigenous to the dominant culture (through residential schools and other tactics).

Citizenship has turned the Palestinians into strangers in their own home/land: They hold citizenship to a state that does not recognize their indigeneity as belonging to the national ethnos. The citizenship regime constitutes the indigenous as strangers, and it essentializes the Jewish settler-citizens as hierarchically superior. Israeli citizenship rationalizes accumulation mired by dispossession by stripping the indigenous of their status as a people whose

very position as indigenous emerged only from colonial encounters. The case of the IDPs illuminates this type of citizenship: The IDPs were granted settler colonial citizenship but cannot access dispossessed lands. The rights of citizenship are thus inadequate: They do not compensate for dispossession or indemnify constitutive loss. Instead, citizenship obfuscates the state's emergence *from* appropriation. Yet it is citizenship that enables Palestinians' ability to remain in the homeland and to challenge governments that perpetuate colonization.

Citizenship as a concept, when derived from the ongoing history of ABD, must be articulated as a social process more complex than the conferral of membership (inclusion or exclusion), a reciprocal relationship of responsibility, or the bestowal of certain rights. Settler colonial citizenship atomizes collective *political* indigeneity, individualizing the indigenous as nonpolitical (rather than anticolonial or counternational) subjects. It also paradoxically produces the conditions for their survival within the settler state. Settler colonial citizenship is aporetic: It is at once necessary to guarantee qualified civil and human rights (e.g., mobility), but it sets up an entrapment in a limiting political system within which the settler colonial state is always already dominant (see Kauanui 2018:194–201).

That the project of erasure and replacement is not complete, as Simpson (2014:12) argues, holds true in Israel and nearly every other case of settler colonialism. The case of Palestinians in general and the IDPs in particular illuminates how citizenship is not a unitary apparatus but, rather, the concatenation of state and indigenous practices.

This analysis lends credence to contemporary citizenship debates in Palestine. First, the precarity of legal classification for noncitizen Palestinians across the territory raises contentious questions. Most East Jerusalemites are suspended in a gray zone, lacking access to national rights and sovereignty (Salem 2018). Is settler colonial citizenship the only practical assurance in the short term, given the enduring expulsions and encroachments by organized settlement? What are the risks of incorporation into the settler polity through citizenship? Second, can the recent “ultra-nationalist” turn of contemporary Israeli politics be read through a historical lens, drawing on Arendt (1973) and seeing the connection between settler colonial ABD and governmentality? This does not mean framing recent state and settler violence as inevitable but, instead, as contingent on a broader history of institutionalized gaps between native and settler. Third, the apartheid analogy has been used to examine citizenship in the Israeli-Palestinian case both for Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship (see, e.g., Adalah's [2018] petition on the Nation-State Law; Greenstein 2019; Zreik and Dakwar 2020) and for those without citizenship in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem (Greenstein 2015). When centering materiality—dispossession of land and resources—as the foundation for citizenship in a settler colonial society such as Israel, apartheid becomes not merely an analogy but a legal-cum-analytic prism through which the structures of separation, exclusion, and domination are understood as key mechanisms for enabling and preserving settler accumulation (Amnesty 2022:18, 63–68; B'tselem 2021:2, 3, 7; Shakir 2021:8, 17, 48–50). What is the relationship between apartheid-as-strategy and settler colonialism? Fourth, what form of citizenship best lends itself to decolonization? Should Palestinians advocate a new form of citizenship that appeals not to the existing settler colonial state but to a decolonized state for all? Should this citizenship be universal or differentiated?

## CONCLUSION

In a 2004 interview, the Israeli historian Benny Morris postulated the following:

If [David Ben-Gurion] was already engaged in expulsion, maybe he should have done a complete job.... If Ben-Gurion had carried out a large expulsion and cleansed the

whole country—the whole Land of Israel, as far as the Jordan River. It may yet turn out that this was his fatal mistake. If he had carried out a full expulsion—rather than a partial one—he would have stabilized the State of Israel for generations. (Shavit 2004)

The mere existence of the Palestinians in Israel, alongside their continued political praxis, signifies both the incomplete nature of the settler colonial project's attempts of erasure *and* the agentic labor of Palestinian citizens who because they are partially incorporated into the polity, challenge erasure. Zionist epistemic violence, exemplified here by Morris, may point to the unfinished remnants of an expansive project of replacement, but such pronouncement of the failure of settler colonialism to eliminate the natives is counterintuitively indicative of indigenous persistence. In this way, my analysis of the Palestinian citizens of Israel may centralize attention on structural erasure, leading to a conception of a totalizing settler colonial project. However, the case of Palestinians in Israel, and more specifically the IDPs, offers a more complex understanding of indigenous presence and agency. In other words, the existence of remaining indigenes, despite their deracination, challenges settler colonial path dependency. The case of the Palestinian citizens offers one way in which settler colonial sovereignty is constituted through contestation. It also challenges liberal conceptions of citizenship, pointing to the centrality of ABD in settler colonies.

The impetus of this article was to explicate how citizenship in settler colonies has been historically constituted. I have done so by examining the concept of ABD by way of the IDPs who remained within the new Israeli state and were granted citizenship and by linking dispossession to state classification. I argue that the dialectic of dispossession and accumulation is manifested in the political realm in terms of citizenship, and thus citizenship *ipso facto* becomes a form of property available to settler colonial groups at the expense of hollowing out the indigenous group's material and symbolic claims. By tethering territorial dispossession typical to settler colonies to the legal configuration of citizenship as an institutionalized process, I highlight in the former political dimensions and in the latter material dimensions.

This analysis illuminates the utility of settler colonialism as a sociological analytic: I have extended the classical sociological framings of citizenship as a membership category by posing a case where such apparatus is a mechanism of exclusion and of agentic response. My undergirding argument—that it is crucial to discern citizenship in settler colonies by dissecting its relation to the accumulation of territorial sovereignty—is also a historical assertion attentive to the interplay of context and contingency. Settler colonial citizenship does not redress foundational loss—of sovereignty and land—fomented through accumulation. Citizenship is fragile; indigenous citizens have been and remain subject to the whims of settler colonial states (population transfer, repealed citizenship, displacement) that have seen and may still envision their elimination as configuring the realization of a viable new social order. But indigenes also organize, mobilize, and often reconfigure state priorities.

More specifically, the case of the Palestinian IDPs helps theorize the link between accumulation, dispossession, and incorporation into the polity (whether through citizenship or other classifications). All are mutually constitutive.

This article asserted three sequential arguments. First, settler colonial citizenship is prefigured by ABD, which entails a twin maneuver: settler accumulation and indigenous dispossession. The classification of citizenship in settler colonies operates within an appropriative apparatus in which the displacement or dispossession of indigenous citizens becomes a foremost concern for ascertaining settler territorial sovereignty *through accumulation*. Second, citizenship, a tool for the enduring exclusion of settler governmentality, enables further dispossession of material and symbolic assets and atomizes collective

political indigeneity. And third, settler citizenship is necessarily articulated by—which is to say shaped, negotiated, and contested through—indigenous practice. Citizenship is not only a top-down process practiced differently within a fissured state, but it is also practiced from below, enlivened by contradicting and often incohesive desires.

Citizenship is dialectical. It is at once premised on settler colonial dispossession and accumulation but also shaped iteratively by indigenous practice. It is not a unitary apparatus of domination or simply a tool of indigenous resistance, which itself depends on resources, attribution of opportunity, endogenous and exogenous conditions, and the intended target and strategies. Rather, citizenship presents many confounding processes and structures that coalesce into a strategic apparatus. Citizenship embodies settler colonial state logics, but also the diversity, and disunity, of indigenous desire. Tracking this history of the constitution of settler colonial citizenship is to ask how the social order in settler colonies could be decolonized.

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## NOTES

1. While I jumped from the 1860s to 1924, during which, for instance, the Wounded Knee massacre and purported “pacification” of the indigenous took place, this case opens up opportunity for future studies considering the dialectics of settler colonial citizenship in the United States. The settler state’s acknowledgment of the indigenous as assimilable does not work the same in the Israeli case, where Palestinians cannot “become” Jewish.
2. Under international human rights law, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are distinguishable from refugees because they remain inside a home country’s boundaries and are not expelled beyond it. The case of the Palestinians is complex because the displacement and the creation of the boundaries of the new Israeli state occurred simultaneously. Even as some may colloquially use the appellation “refugee” to describe the IDPs, I use IDP in this article in alignment with both the legal terminology and the label by which displaced persons name themselves (*muhajarīn*).
3. Complete demographic data on the IDPs is lacking. In 1950, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees estimated the number of IDPs to be 46,000 people, 30 percent of the 156,000 Palestinians who remained in Israel during that period (Wakim 2001; see also Al-Haj 1986:654). This estimation refers only to those who were displaced in 1948 and not to Palestinian citizens who were internally displaced after 1948.
4. IDPs were granted temporary identity cards that necessitated renewal every three months, conditional to the recommendations of the military ruler and police (Berda 2020:12).
5. For example, Israel declared 300,000 dunams of IDP land “absentee property” (Masalha 2003).
6. The places in which IDPs took refuge were determined by Zionist military incursions, geographic proximity of their villages of origin to safer villages, the number of residents displaced, and whether displaced persons from other destroyed villages sought refuge in identical towns or villages (Kamen 1987). Most of the safer villages were found in the northern area of Israel/Palestine (Wakim 2001).
7. The 1956 “Tripartite Aggression,” in which Israeli forces invaded Egypt, prompted the defeated, remaining Palestinians to perceive the Israeli state as a *fait accompli*, encouraging some IDPs to (at

least temporarily) halt their itinerant wait.

8. The other 10 percent of Palestinians lived in “mixed-cities” with Jewish-Israelis, where military rule was not in place for the same length of time (Masalha 1997).
9. Some Israeli military actions in this regard parallel the “cleaning” of “Black Spots” in 1950s and 1960s South Africa to make segregation more complete (Beinart 2001:211); I thank Jonathan Alschech for pointing out this parallel.
10. The ghettoization of Palestinians in cities and villages endured through urban and economic planning following the military rule.
11. For example, see Nuriely (2019) on the labor camps in Ramleh and Lydda, to which the Ministry of Minority Affairs transferred about 1,000 Palestinians from the Galilee in 1948, or Kabha and Awadeh (2013) on prisoner labor.
12. The treatment of Palestinians as suspicious and dangerous, produced by the fear that they may *become* political agents capable of reversing Israeli accumulation, stemmed from British imperial bureaucratic management (Berda 2020).
13. Backed by the Israeli police and some lawmakers (e.g., the Minister of Public Security at the time, Amir Ohana), civilian-settler-militia attacks in Lydda, Jaffa, and other “mixed-cities” during the May 2021 violence, where some Palestinian citizens were brutalized, alongside imposed emergency regulations and martial law (including curfews), demonstrate enduring precarity for Palestinian citizens into the present.
14. This exclusion is manifested in the Citizenship and Entry to Israel Law (Temporary Order)-2003 that prevented family reunifications for Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and family in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) (and later from additional Arab countries; Masri 2017).
15. Prior to 1948, the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) was primarily Jewish, including Arabs, and at times held antiimperial and anti-Zionist views (Budeiri 2010). In 1943, the group split between Arab nationalists, who formed the National Liberation League, and the Jewish communists who remained in the PCP. After 1948, the two parties merged under Maki, the Israeli Communist Party.
16. See the Political Program of the National Democratic Assembly: <http://www.altajamoa.org/%D9%86%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B5-%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%B3%D8%B3%D8%A9/2017/03/29/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A>
17. Although party leaders and activists did not use the framework of decolonization until recently, the party’s ideology and its discourse helped diffuse the framework.
18. Fanon’s (1963:148–205) discussion of the native bourgeoisie’s alignment with colonial national consciousness is relevant in examining the political practices and discourses among some Palestinian elites.
19. The approximately 13,000 Bedouin Palestinians in the Naqab under military rule offer a further example of four interwoven processes: the incidental nature of citizenship in the early years of the settler state, the capricious state classification practices that determine remaining in the homeland, the ways Palestinians utilized citizenship to resist, and the relation of entrapment. Many Bedouins returned to the territory within the 1949 Armistice boundaries after expulsion; their practices of resistance (e.g., skillfully traversing the geography and sneaking back in and then seeking restitution through legal means) shaped the military rule itself, according to Nasasra (2020).
20. The ethno-racial logic of providing jobs to Jews trumped the practicality of hiring cheaper skilled laborers. Such willingness to suppress economic rationality to racial priorities is paralleled by the willingness in apartheid South Africa to limit and even stymie economic growth in the name of racial priorities.
21. My argument is not to elide the forms of refusal, such as efforts against “normalization,” that are frequently found among Palestinians in Israel. The *Abnaa el-Balad* (Sons of the Land) movement, for instance, does not participate in parliamentary elections in Israel. Refusal is also widespread in East Jerusalem (e.g., the refusal to vote in municipal elections). My point is that the Palestinians in Israel do not solely utilize refusal and withdrawal as political tactics but instead also practice various forms of coproduction.
22. The refusal of the majority of Palestinians in East Jerusalem to acquire Israeli citizenship raises the range of tactics of refusal and opposition deployed by the Palestinians.

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