The settler colonial city in three movements

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Abstract

This paper traces the trajectory of scholarship on the settler colonial city and argues that this literature could pay closer attention to the dynamic circulations, movements, and mobilities that constitute and sustain urban space. It foregrounds the ways that the movement of commodities, capital, and people must be assiduously managed in order to preserve settler colonial relations in the city and beyond. Building on existing work, it argues that "settler colonial urbanism" operates as a regime of spatial management which is connected to other sites of racial capitalist extraction and accumulation across global space.

Keywords

urban geography, settler colonialism, infrastructure, circulation, racial capitalism, mobility

As recently as two decades ago, it remained possible for eminent geographers to publish a globally oriented study titled *Unsettling Cities* (Allen et al., 1999) without any mention of the urban impress of settler colonization. That such an outcome would be almost unthinkable today exemplifies how the subfield of urban geography has changed. Particularly in the past 5 years, geographers have committed considerable energy to theorizing the relationship between settler colonization and the urban process. Building on earlier studies (Blomley, 2004; Jacobs, 1996), contemporary urban researchers have engaged the question of "settler colonial urbanism" (Dorries et al., 2019) both at the level of generality and in the context of specific urban environments.[1] At its core, this growing literature insists that Indigenous dispossession is the ongoing condition of city-making in settler colonial contexts, and that contemporary urban space must be analyzed as such.

This paper traces the trajectory of scholarship on the settler colonial city and argues that this literature could benefit from a closer examination of the dynamic circulations, movements, and mobilities that constitute and sustain urban space.[2] If we start from the premise that urban space is a dynamic socio-spatial product and not a "motionless thing" (Massey, 1991), as nearly all human geographers do, then analyses of settler colonialism's urban expressions ought to heed the ways in which colonial power is bound up with various forms of productive mobility. In the interest of pushing this line of inquiry forward, this paper demonstrates how a set of contemporary

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geographical literatures that foreground dynamism in their conceptualizations of urban space might be put to work in the service of developing a more robust interpretation of settler colonial urbanism. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a nascent interdisciplinary conversation on settler-colonial regimes of circulation and mobility (Carpio et al., 2022; Clarsen, 2015; Cowen, 2020; LaDuke and Cowen, 2020; Whyte et al., 2019).[3]

The analysis that follows is divided into two parts. We begin in Part 1 with a brief review of how geographers and geographical thinkers have conceptualized the relationship between colonialism and the urban, from earlier work on the colonial and postcolonial city to more recent considerations of the settler colonial city and its relation to wider logics of racial capitalism. Here, we note that, despite the emphasis on transnational mobilities which featured in earlier scholarship on colonial and postcolonial urbanisms, a concern with movement has been less prominent in work that centres the settler colonial analytic. Part 2 considers how key geographical thinking on a series of interconnected movements might be mobilized to take emergent work on settler colonial urbanism in new directions. By drawing from scholarship on critical logistics, financialization, and carceral geographies, we point to three forms of circulation that are central to the production of the settler colonial city: the movement of commodities, capital, and people. We contend that by paying close attention to these movements – all of which must be assiduously managed and secured to preserve settler colonial relations in the city and beyond – analysts will gain new opportunities to understand settler colonial urbanism as a shifting architecture of spatial management which facilitates certain forms of mobility by constraining others. While the interpretive strategy that we propose makes the case for a shift in emphasis, it has the advantage of extending and reinforcing two arguments that anti-/de-colonial urban analysts have been making for some time: (1) that settler colonial urbanism is an inherently unstable political project that requires vigilant maintenance; and (2) that settler colonial urbanism is co-constituted by other forms of racial capitalist power located both near and far. Politically, we hope that by highlighting some of the

ways that settler colonial urbanism is animated by movement, we can add our voices to a broader effort to demonstrate the efficacy of decolonial strategies aimed at disrupting particular forms of circulation while reinforcing the always already existing mobilities of Indigenous worlds (Simpson, 2017; Whyte et al., 2019).[4]

I. Colonial urbanism in geographical research

Since at least the early 1960s, geographical scholarship has contributed to a literature concerned with understanding how imperialism has shaped cities across the globe, particularly in European overseas colonies (Abu-Lughod, 1965; Home, 2013; King, 1976, 1990; Nightingale, 2012; Ross and Telkamp, 1985; see also Hugill, 2017). Much of this work is concerned with the urban effects of "franchise" colonialism, the centuries-spanning process through which a comparatively small group of Europeans relocated to far-off territories with the aim of facilitating the transfer of extracted resources and capital surplus to metropolitan "cores." In such analyses, the "colonial city" is generally theorized as a spatial production that: (i) is shaped by its relation to the "metropolis" and its inferior position within a broader imperial network; (ii) is planned and organized along sharp lines of separation; and (iii) exists in the past, as an urban spatial production that belongs to a bygone historical era (Hugill, 2017). This literature is decidedly relational in orientation. Because its primary analytic objective is to reveal the urban effects of a dynamic and globe-spanning imperial system, its contributors are necessarily concerned with the radical unevenness that animates the movement of people and resources across space which conventional metropole/colony relations entail.

Starting in the 1990s, a diverse geographical literature on 'postcolonial' cities emerged and rapidly expanded (Chandoke, 1991; Jacobs, 1996; King, 2016; Matera, 2015; Varma, 2011; Yeoh, 2001). In this and other geographical writing, the 'post' in postcolonial takes on a range of meanings, functioning variously as a mark of affiliation with a school of critical theory, an attempt to provincialize

European interpretations of imperialism, a temporal designation, and a commitment to tracing the afterlives of empire, among others. Connectedly, the language of postcolonialism has been taken up in urban research concerned with understanding how colonial relations continue to shape specific places, as well as a more abstract networked geography which draws a diverse range of connections between urban sites in formerly colonized and colonizing societies (see for example Driver and Gilbert, 1998). As with the scholarship on the "colonial city" described above, this literature is explicitly concerned with movements and mobilities, albeit in different ways. Where earlier analyses revealed thick circuits of exchange between clearly defined spaces of "colony" and "metropole," postcolonial analyses have often presented a more complex and multi-directional picture of transnational entanglements.

While many of the above-cited interventions are illuminating, they have, at times, proven to be somewhat cumbersome tools for making sense of projects of settler colonization through which colonizers seize Indigenous lands, pursue strategies of "elimination," and seek to establish permanent self-governing "sovereign" polities on stolen territories (Wolfe, 1999). While attempts to interpret "settler colonization" as a distinct political form are now several decades old (see Veracini, 2013), the scholarly effort to accomplish this goal accelerated in the late 1990s and the first years of the 21st century (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1995; Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 1999; Wolfe, 2006). Since then, a diverse body of "settler colonial" analysis has been mobilized to think through the complexities of such societies.

In recent years, urban scholars have drawn on the settler colonial framework to rethink historical and contemporary processes of city-making and related contestations over urban space, yielding several notable contributions. Importantly, this work has drawn attention to the fundamental (yet too often overlooked) fact that settler colonial cities are built upon land that has been stolen from Indigenous peoples, and that dispossession is thereby their condition of possibility (Coulthard, 2014; Dorries et al., 2019; Dorries et al., 2022; Simpson and Bagelman, 2018; Tomiak, 2017). While this

observation might seem self-evident to some, it bears repeating given that it remains skimmed over or obscured in many contemporary analyses of urban origins (including some of those coded "critical"). Indeed, urban analyses frequently omit consideration of the foundational status of dispossession to settler colonial city-making processes as well as the sustained efforts to "expunge urban centers of the Native presence" that has been so central to them (Coulthard, 2014: 174). By contrast, the settler-colonial approach foregrounds these violent foundations and insists that analysts grapple with their enduring potency.

Theoretical work on settler colonial urbanism has also oriented analytic energies toward the myriad ways that the settler colonial relation remains present in urban space. This is true in a temporal sense because one of the starting points of settler colonial analysis is that the dispossessive violence of colonization is not merely the foundation of settler colonial societies but also an enduring feature of their contemporary lives (Dorries et al., 2019; Razack, 2002). The initial process of dispossessing Indigenous people of their "lands and political authority" (Coulthard, 2014) – whether it's called 'primitive accumulation' or otherwise – does not complete the colonial process, but merely inaugurates it. "Original" rounds of accumulation beget future rounds of accumulation, and thus further rounds of dispossession (Glassman, 2006; Harvey, 2005). In settler colonial societies, the colonial relation endures in a structural form to ensure "ongoing state access to the land and resources that contradictorily provide the material and spiritual sustenance of Indigenous societies on the one hand, and the foundation of colonial state-formation, settlement, and capitalist development on the other" (Coulthard, 2014: 7). For this reason, Tomiak (2017: 928) argues that by understanding North American cities as places that are built on "Indigenous, often unceded, territories" as well as sites where the colonial confrontation continues, we can challenge settler mythologies that locate decolonial contestation elsewhere. As she observes, it is critical to recognize that "settler states continue to pursue the violent transformation of Indigenous land into settler property and to police Indigenous place-making and self-determination

particularly aggressively in relation to cities" (see also: Estes, 2019; Simpson and Le Billon, 2021; Tomiak, 2019).

At its best, the settler colonial approach also links with insights from the Indigenous studies tradition to challenge the commonplace assumption that urban space and Indigenous space are geographically disconnected (for a comprehensive treatment of this idea see Tomiak et al., 2019). Indeed, mainstream discursive portrayals of Indigenous geographies often assume their separation from (and incommensurability with) urbanity (for a critical assessment of this thinking see Peters, 1996; Peters and Andersen, 2013), which Coulthard (2014: 175) refers to as *urbs nullius*. Despite the persistent potency of these dubious discourses, Indigenous presence endures in urban areas, defying settler fantasies of extinguishment (Keeler, 2016; Dorries et al., 2019; Peters and Andersen, 2013; Peters et al., 2018; Toews, 2018). As Audra Simpson (2014: 7) argues, settler colonialism "fails at what it is supposed to do: eliminate Indigenous people," and this is as true in cities as anywhere else. Conceptions of urban and Indigenous space being somehow antithetical, or of Indigeneity being inherently tied to "nature" and thus at odds with urban modernity, are as problematic as they are persistent. The dichotomous distinction between urban/Indigenous is troubled not only by the existence of reserves within cities (Barman, 2007; Stanger-Ross, 2008; Tomiak, 2017, 2019), and the fact that most Indigenous people in settler societies now live in urban areas (Peters and Andersen, 2013), but perhaps even more fundamentally by the fact that cities are literally part of Indigenous territories. Urban lands and waters continue to function as components of Indigenous worlds, governed by Indigenous law and protocols, cared for as food systems and kinship relations, and "embedded in broader Indigenous networks and territorial relations" (Dorries et al., 2019; see also: Blomley, 2004; Daigle and Ramírez, 2019; Lawrence, 2004; Simpson, 2017; Simpson and Bagelman, 2018). As various scholars have noted, settler colonial cities are not produced in a unilateral or top-down fashion by states and capital, but as contested spaces where logics of dispossession meet the affirmation of Indigenous lifeways and ongoing anti-colonial struggle (Dorries, forthcoming; Simpson and Bagelman, 2018; Toews, 2018; Tomiak, 2019).

Yet while this analytical frame has advanced understandings of the settler colonial city as a distinct urban form, it has also rubbed up against its own problems, limitations, and shortcomings (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005; Kauanui, 2016; Kelley, 2017; Macoun and Strakosch, 2013; Mawani, 2016; Rowse, 2010; Snelgrove et al., 2014; Tomiak et al., 2019). Not least, critics have called attention to how the settler colonial framework sets up a problematic dichotomy between 'settler' and 'native' categories, which appear to either preclude or uncomfortably assimilate those who Robin D. G. Kelley (2017) refers to as 'the rest of us,' especially those who arrived in settler colonies as a consequence of being enslaved or otherwise forcibly displaced from their own homelands and thereby do not fit neatly into either side of settler/native binary (see Day, 2016). This inadequacy points to the need to develop a more comprehensive account of how settler colonial dynamics relate to other racialized structures of dispossession, displacement, and domination.

With that said, however, a host of recent scholarship has responded by bringing settler colonial studies into conversation with theorists of racial capitalism (Bledsoe et al., 2022; Bonds and Inwood, 2016; Bosworth, 2021; Byrd, 2011; Byrd et al., 2018; Daigle and Ramírez, 2019; Day, 2016; Dorries et al., 2022; Gutiérrez Nájera and Maldonado, 2017; Lowe, 2015; McClintock, 2018; Pulido, 2018; Simpson, 2017; Toews, 2018; Walia, 2021). The racial capitalism framework, rooted in Robinson's *Black Marxism* (2000), contends that capitalism has been a racialized system of exploitation since its origins. Robinson (2000: 26) writes that, "the tendency of European civilization through capitalism was […] not to homogenize but to differentiate – to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones." Given that capital accumulation is premised upon the exploitation of land and labour (Coulthard, 2014), the capitalist economic order requires an accompanying ideological system which renders certain types of people (and their lands) exploitable. As Pulido (2017: 527) puts this from a geographical perspective, "Just as uneven space is essential to the unfolding of capitalism, human

difference is essential to the production of differential value." By differentiating people and their lands in accordance with varying levels of exploitability, racial categorizations provide a key rationale required for the naturalization of capitalist inequalities (Robinson, 2000; Kelley, 2000, 2017), thereby creating "ideal environments for capitalism to thrive and function" (Williams et al., 2020: 180). Gilmore (2015) captures this idea succinctly by stating that, "capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it."

On this reading, settler colonialism can be understood as one of the multiple forms that racial capitalism takes as it mobilizes processes of racialization to exploit people, expropriate lands, and extract surplus value. In settler colonial contexts, Indigenous dispossession may be "foundational in establishing processes that separate humanity into distinct groups and in placing those groups into a larger hierarchy" (Bonds and Inwood, 2016: 721), but it must be understood alongside and in relation to broader processes of racial capitalist violence and exploitation.[5] As Lowe (2015) writes, "settler seizure and native removal, slavery and racial dispossession, and racialized expropriations of many kinds are imbricated processes" (p. 7); they are, "distinct yet connected racial logics" (p. 8). Likewise, Day (2016: 19) argues that although the settler colonial analytic "has been tremendously valuable" it must do more to clarify "the role that nonwhite migration plays within such a framework or how it intersects with other aspects of white supremacy." Daigle and Ramírez (2019) note that greater focus on the interwoven racial logics of the colonial present can help to forge the basis of anticolonial solidarity. Drawing from Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's work, Daigle and Ramírez (2019: 5) describe decolonial geographies as "constellations in formation," grounded in the "historical and always emerging relationships across decolonial struggles" of Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities, which can "guide us toward decolonial futures."

Urban geographers have likewise begun to take up the racial capitalist lens to explore how settler colonialism works in conjunction with overlapping and interconnected systems of racialized domination to produce urban space. Dorries et al. (2022: 268) point to Winnipeg to show how "settler colonialism is connected to other forms of imperial activity that extend beyond the border of the nation state," including "the transatlantic slave trade and the anti-Blackness that underpinned it" (see also, Toews, 2018). McClintock (2018: 2) examines how urban agriculture is "entangled in the logics of racial capitalism within the specific context of the settler-colonial city." Heynen (2016: 840) argues that "racial capitalism has always produced urban political ecologies" and calls for abolitionist approaches which draw from theorists of racial capitalism, Indigenous theory, and post-colonial urbanism to develop "revolutionary ideas about how we can recreate urban nature free from white supremacist logics in the future" (2016: 842; see also, Heynen and Ybarra, 2021). Other scholars have shown how property functions as a hinge connecting settler colonial dispossession to anti-Black and anti-Asian racism in the formation of cities, while noting how these structural dynamics continue to play out in current day contestations over housing, gentrification, and the displacement of racialized peoples in the city (see: Safransky, 2014; Bhandar and Toscano, 2015; Addie and Fraser, 2019; Launius and Boyce, 2021; Miller, 2020; Dorries, forthcoming). For instance, Ramírez (2020: 2) discusses how Oakland's current housing crisis is "tied to centuries of colonialism and racial capitalism," and how movements led by Black and Indigenous women are actively resisting these ongoing processes of dispossession by building alternatives to the racial colonial present "in organized, creative, and mundane ways."

II. Mobility and immobility in settler colonial urbanism

Urban geographers and urban political ecologists have long argued that cities are not static entities but dynamic social products that are perpetually made and remade by a diverse range of material and immaterial forces. Contributors to the discipline have mobilized various metaphors to capture this dynamism, likening the city to a body (Pile, 1999), a machine (Amin and Thrift, 2017), a cyborg (Gandy, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2006), and an assemblage (McFarlane, 2011), among other things. Harvey (1982, 1985, 1989), following Lefebvre (1991), captured the ever-changing quality of urban space by

arguing that the city is produced through circuits of capital and capital "switching," as surplus value is cycled around and eventually sunk into the built environment, seeking a spatial fix that can forestall ever-looming crises of accumulation, and producing uneven environments in its wake. Following Cronon (1992), Pile (1999) describes the rise of Chicago "from mud to movement," arguing that it is precisely the movements of people, commodities, and information, both across and between cities which constitute and sustain urban space. Amin and Thrift (2002: 3) present cities as "spatially open and cross-cut by many different kinds of mobilities, from flows of people to commodities and information." Castells (2010: 440–448) describes contemporary cities as "spaces of flows" which serve as vital centers of information exchange in a digitized "network society." Meanwhile, urban political ecologists have emphasized the "metabolic" processes through which materials such as food, water, electricity, fuels, and other commodities are circulated, transformed, and incorporated into the cities' socio-ecological environments as urban space is continuously built and maintained (Gandy, 2002; Kaika, 2005; Kaika and Swyngedouw, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2004, 2006; Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003). Taken together, these diverse approaches remind us that urban geographies are anything but fixed, and that the movement of materials and circulations of capital investment contribute to upholding radically uneven configurations of power in the city.

For their part, scholars that deploy the settler colonial framework have sometimes been less attentive to mobilities than their geography counterparts, though a handful of analysts have recently set out to correct this oversight (see Carpio, 2019; Carpio et al., 2022; Clarsen, 2015; Cowen, 2020; LaDuke and Cowen, 2020; Whyte et al., 2019). While the removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands and waters has remained a consistent (if not successful) feature of settler colonial projects, various scholars have noted how the techniques and logics through which dispossession is pursued have changed over time. Wolfe (2006) notes that the elimination logic of settler colonialism "transmutes into different modalities, discourses and institutional

formations" in different historical and geographical contexts (p. 402), suggesting that more explicitly violent forms of genocide gradually gave way to a range of "softer" assimilation strategies (p. 401). Likewise, Harris (2004) argues that although an initial period of settler colonial dispossession involved direct acts of state violence, the use of physical force later "moved into the background," while "disciplinary strategies associated with the management of people, nature, and space, came to the fore" (p. 174). Coulthard (2014: 3–4) also observes a "decisive shift in the *modus operandi* of colonial power" over recent decades from "the deployment of state power geared around genocidal practices of forced *exclusion* and *assimilation*" to "policies geared toward the recognition and so-called 'reconciliation' of Native land and political grievances with state sovereignty."

Despite the attention directed to transformations in the tactics and strategies deployed by settler colonial regimes, however, the subfield of settler colonial studies has paid less attention to how these changes require an associated reworking of the ways that things and people move across space. While earlier scholarship on the "colonial city" did more to capture the importance of transnational movements to the production of urban space, this emphasis has been much less prominent in analyses of settler colonial urbanism. Indeed, the language of "settlement" itself lends to an impression of spatial fixity, which Carpio et al. (2022:5) have recently described as the "great lie of settler colonialism," noting that settlers themselves migrate to the lands they colonize and, upon claiming those lands as their own, create conditions for further mobilities (for a robust treatment of the transience of settler colonists, see Veracini 2021). Notably, too, it has become something of an article of faith among adherents of this framework to insist that settler colonization ought to be interpreted foremost as a "structure." Of course, Wolfe's (1999) well-known deployment of this idea was never intended to imply stasis (in fact, it was intended to imply precisely the opposite), but we wonder if the routine usages of core ideas that emerge from the settler colonial tradition (Wolfe's often mobilized suggestions that settler colonization is a "structure not an event" and that settler colonists are

people "who come to stay," for example) might have the inadvertent effect of assigning a degree of rigidity and permanence to what is in fact a more contested, fluid, and contingent set of arrangements (for different but related critiques see: Alfred and Corntassel, 2005; Dorries et al., 2019; Macoun and Stakosch, 2013; Rowse, 2010; Snelgrove et al., 2014).[6]

This point seems especially pertinent to analyses of settler colonial urbanism(s). In our view, many contributions to these debates could do more to explain how the governance of movements of commodities, capital, and people (as well as the associated infrastructure required to facilitate and restrict such movements) is of vital importance to sustaining settler colonial power in the city and beyond. In making this point, our objective is not simply to reiterate the well-rehearsed point that cities are dynamic entities. It is, rather, to suggest that the political nature of that dynamism is worth interrogating and can inform strategies of anti-colonial resistance. In our view, a robust theory of settler colonial urbanism must interrogate the ways that the production of urban space is enabled by an inequitable politics of spatial management, which facilitates certain forms of mobility by constraining others. To contextualize this idea, we turn now to a more direct discussion of how movements of commodities, capital, and human beings animate processes of settler colonial city-making.

Movement I: the circulation of commodities

It is well established that settler colonial cities are spatial formations that depend upon the extraction of wealth and resources from Indigenous lands and waters that extend far beyond the city itself. With that said, relatively little attention has been devoted to the matter of exactly how these extracted resources are physically moved across settler colonial and global capitalist space to the city, nor to the elaborate transportation infrastructures that make these movements possible. Of course, some promising research in this vein has been produced in recent years. Cowen's work has been especially groundbreaking on the question of how infrastructures of circulation underpin racial capitalist and settler

colonial orders while contributing to the production of urban space. Building on her earlier work on the logistics revolution, Cowen (2020: 471) demonstrates that infrastructural spaces of commodity circulation and associated conflicts are "predicated on a much longer-term imperial and infrastructural project that is itself fundamentally tied to the making of urban space" (see also LaDuke and Cowen, 2020). She illustrates this point by demonstrating how the Canadian Pacific Railway enabled the expansion of the Canadian state into unceded Indigenous lands which had previously remained beyond the reach of colonial incursions, and gave rise to the city of Vancouver at this intercontinental railway's terminus (on railroads and colonialism, see also Karuka, 2019).

In addition to Cowen's influential contributions, several other recent case studies have foregrounded how infrastructures of commodity circulation contribute to the production of settler colonial cities. Needham's (2014) work on Phoenix's emergence as an urban node in a "high energy society" tells a story that extends beyond the familiar confines of the metropolitan scale and its "crabgrass frontier." By following extra high voltage power lines from central Phoenix to their points of origin in the Colorado Plateau, Needham shows that Phoenix's postwar development was not only contingent on the metabolization of far-flung resources but also explicitly achieved at the expense of Navajo communities. Perry (2016) offers evidence of a similar pattern in Winnipeg, chronicling how the provision of water in that city has long been marked by a cruel colonial irony, where the construction of the principal aqueduct that delivers water to Winnipeg worked to isolate a First Nations community on an artificial island where access to clean drinking water has been profoundly limited. Simpson (2022) demonstrates how fossil fuel infrastructures in Vancouver are being reoriented to accommodate shifting geographies and political economies of oil, and how this infrastructural realignment extends settler colonial logics in the city while nevertheless offering strategic opportunities to resist these logics and bring about structural transformations of a different kind. Curley (2021) demonstrates how Phoenix and Tucson were built and sustained by dams, power plants, pumping

stations, and cannels which diverted water from the Colorado River to those urban regions to the determent of the Navajo Nation and its own rights to that water. Collectively, these case studies reveal not only how infrastructures of commodity mobility connect the city to outlying regions metabolically, but also contribute to ongoing production and reproduction of the settler colonial city itself, thereby challenging ideas of colonization as something that happens at a geographical and temporal distance from the city (Tomiak et al., 2019).

Movement II: the circulation of capital

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx explains that the circulation of commodities and the circulation of capital are intimately tied in the capitalist economy. And, indeed, Cowen's (2020) insights into the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway point to the importance of the circulation of not only commodities, but also to the circulation of capital as a key mobility contributing to the production of settler colonial space and its intimate entanglements with other racial capitalist regimes across global and historical geographies. Cowen discusses how the financiers of this railway were also invested in slave plantation economies of Louisiana, from which they were handsomely profiting and sinking their accumulated capital into the railway and other imperial infrastructures across the world, thereby setting up future rounds of racial capitalist exploitation and accumulation. Cowen's research thereby demonstrates how investments in the infrastructures that enable dispossession, extraction, and city-building in settler colonial societies such as Canada are connected through financial flows and investments into "violent economies of enslavement and dispossession here and elsewhere" (2020: 471). Other scholars have made similar points about railroads, and infrastructure more generally. In his study of "railroad colonialism," Karuka (2019: 40) notes that, "Railways enabled the circulation of colonial commodities throughout the imperial core, and even more importantly, they made the large-scale export of financial and industrial capital to the colonies a central feature of global capitalism." Additionally, Mitchell (2020) remarks that, "While the building of

infrastructure may be justified by a need to move people or supplies, their main purpose is often to provide vehicles for another kind of movement: the flow of finance." Mitchell argues that circulatory megaprojects require massive fixed-capital investments to materialize in the first instance, but also provide a promissory note of future returns on investment.

Financial capital is notoriously opaque, presenting immense methodological difficulties for those attempting to track its trajectories. Nevertheless, following these often obscured or otherwise invisibilized flows discloses different spatial and temporal scales of settler colonial city-making and contestation. As Cowen (2020: 471) puts it, the "here and there" and the "now and then" become blurry, overlap, and interpenetrate. Tracing the pathways of financial capital brings into focus how the city is built with wealth accumulated from projects of racial colonial extraction across the globe which becomes fixed into the urban built environment. These mobilities reveal longstanding transnational linkages between what might otherwise seem like disparate racial colonial projects, including Indigenous dispossession, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, imperial incursions, military interventions, and resource extraction across the globe. Uncovering the linkages between these projects promises to expand our historical and geographical understandings of how the settler colonial city comes into being and how settler colonial power operates. Moreover, following the flows and fixity of financial capital offers a corrective to the often-disproportionate focus that settler colonial studies has placed upon the state, and the methodological nationalist tendency of this subfield to center it analysis strictly within the geo-political borders of the settler nation itself, thereby reifying the precise object that this analysis is intended to critique (see Walcott, 2014; Tomiak et al., 2019).

Cowen and Lewis (2016) remark that, "Empire today is profoundly financialized and anchored in the urban." Arguably, the financialization of the settler colonial city has been most forcefully demonstrated in literature on the racialized forms of displacements associated with gentrification. Smith (2002, 2005) famously described how the circulation of financial capital through cities, in the form of real estate

speculation exploiting 'rent-gaps,' repeatedly re-shapes the urban built environment. He noted in the early 2000s that global financial capital had already filtered down into the local scale, sinking into even "modest, neighborhood developments" (2002, p. 441), resulting in "the generalization of gentrification as a global urban strategy" (2002, p. 437). Sassen (2012) describes how this "financializing of non-financial domains" (p. 75) was extended even deeper into the fabric of the city later that decade as global capital opened up new circuits of capital investment by reaching into "modest-income households" (p. 76) and transforming their housing and mortgages into financial instruments, which ultimately resulted in the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis and its widespread foreclosures and evictions. Sassen (2012: 77) identifies the resulting dislocations as consistent with larger pattern of "systemic expulsion" which open new sites of extraction and accumulation and likens this to Marx's primitive accumulation and Harvey's accumulation by dispossession.

Other scholars foreground the racial, colonial, and imperial dimension of such urban displacements which result from the unfettered financialization of urban space. Chakravartty and Ferreire da Silva (2012: 363-4), for example, call for us to "read the subprime crisis through a dual lens of race and empire," drawing parallels between the predatory lending and debt mobilized to exact profits from poor and racialized homeowners on the one hand, and the neoliberal structural adjustment programs that were used to transform the political economy of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the 1980s and 1990 on the other (see also Fields and Raymond, 2021). Similarly, Barker (2018) argues that the subprime mortgage crisis must be understood within the longer history of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in the Americas. Bledsoe and Wright (2018) argue that the gentrification of historically Black neighborhoods exemplifies how capital is reliant on anti-Blackness to devalue Black space, treating these spaces as not legitimately occupied and thus displaceable, thereby reserving Black space as open and available for future rounds of appropriation, dislocation, and accumulation. On these grounds, they maintain that "there exists an unquestionable connection between the colonial logics inaugurated centuries ago and today's capitalist agenda" (p. 3). Walia (2021: 26) likewise states that "[t]he representation of Indigenous people in inner-city homeless populations is, after all, a crisis of colonial dispossession and displacement scaffolded by settler property relations under racial capitalism." Others have emphasized the continuities between the contemporary mechanisms of urban displacement and processes of settler colonial dispossession, in some cases going as far as calling gentrification "the new colonialism" (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005; Wharton, 2008). For instance, Safransky (2014) notes how the discourses, imaginaries and motifs of settler colonialism are mobilized to develop the "new urban frontier" of postindustrial cities, while Lanius and Boyce (2021: 1) note that gentrification and "contemporary patterns of urban change" exhibit a "structural continuity" with settler colonialism. Importantly, however, others have pushed back against the tendency to draw equivalencies between these distinct forms of displacement (see for instance, Wakíŋyaŋ Waánataŋ, 2017). Regardless of whether one chooses to draw parallels between process of gentrification and settler colonial dispossession or affirm that they are distinct phenomenon, the manner in which the circulation of global financial capital gives shape to the contemporary settler colonial city raises important questions which warrant further consideration related to the scales at which settler colonial dynamics operate, the tactics with which these dynamics of financial capital may be resisted, and the forms of solidarity to which they give rise.

Movement III: the mobility of people

While maintaining that the flows and circulations of capital and commodities through space is crucial for the production and reproduction of racial colonial capitalist systems of domination, Cowen (2014: 173) reminds us that "the very premise of protecting those flows from disruption entails new forms of political geographic enclosure." Following Cowen, we want to emphasize that racial colonial capitalist logics operate not only by way of facilitating certain types of flows and mobilities, but equally by prohibiting and preventing certain other types of movements,

thereby ensuring immobility and containment. We must be careful not to overstate the smoothness of capital and commodity flows through settler colonial space as though the social and environmental landscapes through which these movements occur are pre-constituted in a manner that renders them already open for investment and circulation. Indeed, Whyte et al. (2019: 326) note that securing settler claims to territory and associated settler mobilities requires "the *containment* of Indigenous mobility." Similarly, Veracini (2010: p. 28) reminds us that a characteristic feature of settler colonialism is the segregation that it establishes between the "abject other" whose mobilities are constrained, and the settler who enjoys "unfettered mobility."

However, it is not just the movements of Indigenous peoples that are constrained by settler colonial regimes. Settler colonial political economies depend on securing both Indigenous lands and exploitable labor (Coulthard, 2014; Carpio, 2019; Carpio et al., 2022; Day, 2016; Pulido, 2017). Consequently, as Carpio (2019: 10) demonstrates, "the process of white settler colonialism included Native containment and the management of racialized labor," including that of "arrivants" (Byrd, 2011) from around the globe who came to inhabit Indigenous lands under coerced or non-voluntary conditions, often displaced by acts of imperial dispossession in their own homelands. Carpio (2019: 5) argues that maintaining the racial hierarchies that settler colonialism relies on is achieved (in part) through the governance of "everyday mobilities," which includes the use of seemingly ordinary techniques such as traffic checkpoints or bicycle ordinances. When thinking of the types of movements that constitute settler colonial space and power in the city, it is thus crucial to think not only of the ways that certain types of flows are facilitated to the benefit of some while doing harm to others, but also the ways in which the movements of racialized peoples are policed, prohibited, and confined, as carceral and bordering logics are extended further into everyday urban life (Shabazz, 2015; Carpio, 2019; Heynen and Ybarra, 2020).

The literatures on carceral geographies and abolition offer key insights for making sense of how the facilitation of some mobilities is achieved by constraining others. Of central importance here is the work of Gilmore (2007), which examines the apparent paradox of the explosive growth of prisons and incarceration, especially among the racialized working poor, at a time when crime rates were already on the decline. Gilmore (2007: 26–27) explains this paradox as a type of spatial fix seeking to stabilize a structural crisis of racial capitalism rooted in "surpluses of financial capital, land, labor, and state capacity." In subsequent work, Gilmore (2017: 227) argues that criminalization allows processes of "extractive activity to unfold," whereby a profit is accumulated by prison employees, venders, utility companies, contractors, debt servicers. Gilmore (2017: 227) writes that, "prisons enable money to move because of the enforced inactivity of people locked in them. It means people extracted from communities, and people returned to communities but not entitled to be of them, enable the circulation of money on rapid cycles."

While the prison may epitomize racialized logics of captivity and immobility, scholars of carceral geographies emphasize how carceral logics stretch far beyond the prison walls. Story (2019) argues that "the prison is more than just a building or the numbers of people inside that building" (p. 5), noting that it extends to a broader "set of relationships dispersed across a set of landscapes we don't always view or conceive of as carceral […] from the sites of criminalization, arrest, and conviction to the landscapes of building construction; from zones of immobility and social control to the spaces deployed for the forced circulation and transfer of bodies" (p. 6). Story refers to the dispersed geographies and power relations which are bound up in structures of confinement, immobility, and dispossession broadly as "carceral space," (p. 4) and argues that it is through these carceral spaces that "the state's capacities of containment, displacement, and dispossession are put to work for 'racial capitalism'" (p. 6).

Other scholars emphasize how the prison is not the only institution to employ carceral forms of power. As Gilmore (2017) states, "[t]he modern prison is a central but by no means singularly defining institution of carceral geographies in the United States and beyond." Shabazz (2015: 2) discusses how "mechanisms of constraint" built into the

urban environment of Chicago's South Side have effectively "prisonized the landscape," forcing Black communities to confront "daily forms of prison or carceral power" such as policing, surveillance, and other forms of social control in their neighbourhoods. As Shabazz (2015: 4) notes, the containment of Black people in these ways "happens in a surprisingly ordinary fashion" (see also Bonds, 2019; Camp and Heatherton, 2016; Comack, 2012; Maynard, 2017). Cowen and Lewis (2016) emphasize the role of police violence plays in making way for private capital and rendering urban spaces available for investment, noting examples where aggressive policing has been employed in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, and linking this to growing rates of incarceration and anti-Black violence (see also Kelley, 2007; Lewis, 2020). Other scholars emphasize how the surveillance, control, and violence directed at Black and Indigenous peoples extends to other state institutions including those related to immigration and border enforcement, social service agencies, and child welfare systems (see for instance: Comack, 2012; Maynard, 2017). Others still emphasize how this racialized state violence is gendered, often directed at Black and Indigenous women, transgender, and Two-Spirit people (Dhillon, 2015; Holmes et al., 2015; Hunt, 2016; Maynard, 2017; Razack, 2002; Simpson, 2016; Simpson, 2017), while also structuring the performance of masculinity in specific ways (Shabazz, 2015). As Heynen and Ybarra (2020: 2) sum up, "carceral geographies of detention, incarceration, policing and deportation are *not* exceptional, but everyday spaces where people of color struggle to live, work and play."

Borders and bordering practices are also carceral technologies which serve to uphold the racial colonial capitalist order by selectively constraining people's movement. Walia (2021: 5) argues that borders "operate through a shared logic of immobilization containing oppressed communities" as police and prisons. She describes the border as an "ordering regime" (p. 2), which assembles (and is assembled by) racial colonial capitalist relations. Drawing on the example of the southern US border with Mexico, Walia demonstrates how borders severed Indigenous territories, while serving as a

method of controlling and regulating the movement of Black people. She argues that the border helped to solidify racial hierarchies introduced by settler colonization, genocide, slavery, and indentureship, each of which were the conditions of possibility for the foundation of a self-governing white settler polity (p. 6). Today borders are enforced not only at the imaginary lines where the territories of two sovereign states meet. Rather, "the border is elastic, and the magical line can exist anywhere […] the border is mobile and can be enforced anywhere within the nation-state" (Walia, 2021: 84), including, of course, in cities where migrants live under the continual threat of detention or deportation. What results is a racialized workforce subject to differing degrees of precarity and exploitation by capital: "The free flow of capital requires precarious labor, which is shaped by borders through immobility" (Walia, 2021: 6). Drawing on the example of Oakland, Ramírez (2020) argues that the colonial and carceral policing of borders extends right into urban space, differentiating forms of belonging and disbelonging in gentrifying cities where racialized communities experience and resist the violences of dispossession.

The carceral logics encountered in prisons and other state institutions in urban neighbourhoods are also found in the forms of spatial domination most closely associated with the foundations of racial colonial capitalism – namely the plantation and the reservation. McKittrick (2011) argues that the plantation is the historical antecedent of both the contemporary prison and the destruction of Black urban neighbourhoods (a form of "urbicide"). McKittrick discusses how transatlantic slavery was a system of spatialized domination and violence targeting Black bodies and attempted to annihilate a Black sense of place, centered around the plantation but also the associated architecture of the slave ship, "the auction block, the big house, the fields and crops, the slave quarters, the transportation ways leading to and from the plantation, and so on" (2011: 948). McKittrick (2011: 955) argues that "the logical extension of the plantation and acts of racial violence, as well as urbicide, is the prison industrial complex" (see also: Mbembe, 2019; Shabazz, 2015). Similarly, Nichols (2014) draws linkages between the prison system and the colonial reserve system,

describing each as intertwined "archipelagos of spatial containment" (p. 454), which serve the settler colonial project of dispossession and undermine "indigenous practices of self-government by severing peoples from their historical relationship to the land" (p. 452; on the formation of the reserve system, see also Harris, 2002). Whyte et al. (2019) add that bording and residential schools in the US and Canada, "stripped Indigenous children of their language and knowledge, which often encoded traditions of mobility and ecological knowledge." Taken together, this ensemble of institutions and practices – including but not limited to the plantation, the reservation, residential schools, the prison, the border, property, and traffic checkpoints – amounts to a regime of mobility governance which serves to produce and uphold the racial hierarchies that racial colonial capitalism requires by enabling the free movement of some while restricting the movement of others.

Conclusion

The considerable volume of geographical research on the settler colonial city published over the course of the past half-decade has yielded exciting new insights into the production of urban space. Building on earlier work on the colonial and postcolonial city, scholarship on the settler colonial city foregrounds the distinct dynamics of urbanization in contexts where colonial occupiers build cities upon stolen Indigenous lands with the intention of making these cities their permanent home. Recent work has attempted to push beyond the limits of the settler colonial analytic by considering how the city is structured in ways that negotiate and serve to uphold multiple interlocking logics of racial capitalist power and dispossession. However, while scholarship on settler colonialism has emphasized how distinct strategies of dispossession are employed in different historical periods (for instance, oscillating between strategies of state violence, assimilation, and the politics of recognition), some of the existing scholarship has been less attentive to the ways in which these strategies entail associated mobilities that play out in the making and remaking of urban space. We argue that the spatial dimensions of settler

colonial power are drawn into sharp relief when we fix our gaze upon the movements of people and things across settler colonial geographies and beyond.

Specifically, we have pointed to three broad types of mobilities that contribute to the making and remaking of space and power in settler colonial cities (though surely there are others). First, tracing the movement of commodities along supply chain infrastructures helps to tie settler colonial cities to sites of dispossession and resource extraction elsewhere (Cowen, 2014, 2020; LaDuke and Cowen, 2020), but also reveals how cities themselves serve as transit hubs within neoliberal global production networks, built to facilitate the passing through of commodities on their way to global markets in ways that extend logics of colonial dispossession and impose even greater socio-environmental risks upon unceded Indigenous lands and waters (Simpson, 2022). Second, attention to the circulation of global capital, which is accumulated through various sites of dispossession and extraction across time and space before being "fixed" into the urban built environment brings into clearer focus the interconnectedness of what might otherwise appear to be distinct projects of racial colonial capitalist domination. Third, settler colonial power depends upon managing the movement of people, permitting some bodies to move freely while constraining the movements of others using carceral logics including not just prisons, policing, and the criminal justice system, but also reserves or reservations, residential schools, social service agencies, borders, citizenship, and the entire nexus of governmental institutions that employ state violence and surveillance to police and constrain the movements of Indigenous peoples and people of colour (Carpio, 2019; Estes, 2019; Gilmore, 2017; Heynen and Ybarra, 2021; Shabazz, 2015; Simpson, 2014; Story, 2019; Walia, 2021). While we have treated these circulations separately for the purpose of organizing this paper, they are undoubtedly related. For example, the circulation of capital and commodities through cities in ways that benefit some undoubtedly requires the dispossession and the immobilization of others (Cowen, 2014). Settler colonial power thereby relies on the ability to both enable and constrain movements selectively.

Our aim is not to suggest that a focus on the circulations of settler colonial power is the singularly *correct* lens through which to analyze and understand the urban process in settler colonial societies. We do maintain, however, that by orienting our analytical attentions on the multitudinous ways that movements are organized and managed in the settler colonial city we can begin to see it as an architecture of power which operates by enabling some movements while constraining others in ways that seek to secure and extend Indigenous dispossession, giving shape to structural inequalities in the city and beyond. Centering the mobilities and immobilities of settler colonial urbanism also helps draw linkages between the settler colonial city and other sites of extraction and dispossession in ways that hold onto both the connectivity and distinctiveness of diverse forms of racial colonial capitalist domination across space. Thinking of settler colonial urbanism in this more relational way challenges us to extend our geographical and historical thinking of what constitutes the settler colonial city, how it comes into being, and how its power is sustained, while also raising questions about the limits of the city itself as well as the limits of the settler colonial analytic. Of course, to conceptualize settler colonial space as a mobility regime is also to acknowledge its fragility – if settler colonial power is dependent on securing certain circulations while prohibiting others, then the disruption of these circulations poses a serious threat to this power. Attending to the mobilities that thread together sites of struggle across diverse geographies suggests opportunities for building powerful solidarities that extend across geographical difference, pointing to anti-colonial or decolonial strategies that seek to obstruct colonial mobilities, abolish carceral logics, and create spaces were Indigenous mobilities can thrive (Byrd, 2011; LaDuke and Cowen, 2020; Simpson, 2017). This was made clear by the #ShutDownCanada actions of February 2020, for example, when Indigenous peoples and their allies across the continent, in cities and beyond, responded to Canada's paramilitary-style invasion of the Wet'suwet'en *yintah* by blockading highways, bridges, ports, and railroads. It's certainly no coincidence that these actions targeted the infrastructures of circulation, bringing the mobilities that buttress settler colonial power to a standstill.

Spice (2018: 52) argues that to halt the flows of "invasive infrastructures" is to threaten to dismantle settler colonial spatial formations, while also creating space for the flourishing of Indigenous infrastructures – those "human and non-human networks that have supported Indigenous polities on this continent for tens of thousands of years." Indeed, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017: 197) reminds us that Indigenous peoples have "always moved throughout our territories and through the territories of others with the practice of diplomacy, moving with the consent of other nations." Simpson argues that when Indigenous people navigate space in these ways, this can be understood as "an expression of agency and self-determination" which provides a potential "flight path out of settler colonialism and into Indigeneity." For example, Audra Simpson (2014: 115) discusses how Iroquois communities assert their treaty rights and move across the colonially-imposed US/Canada border in ways that refuse the jurisdiction of settler states, affirm Indigenous sovereignty, and "enact their understandings of history and law." If, as Whyte et al. (2019) argue, settler colonialism can be understood as "a disruption to the mobilities of Indigenous peoples" (p. 328), then it follows is that "resisting settler colonialism is about resisting containment" and re-asserting Indigenous mobility networks and traditions (p. 327). Crucially then, it must be emphasized that just as the settler colonial project has failed in its objective of elimination, so too has it failed to contain the longstanding mobilities of Indigenous worlds, which defy settler enclosure and endure despite the constrictions imposed by the spatial formations of racial colonial capitalist power.

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Notes

1. For a sample of this work see: Barraclough, 2018; Barry and Agyeman, 2020; Blatman-Thomas, 2019; Blatman-Thomas and Porter, 2019; Bledsoe et al., 2022; Cowen, 2020; Crosby, 2021; Daigle and Ramírez, 2019; Dorries et al., 2019; Dorries et al., 2022; Dorries, forthcoming; Edmonds, 2010a, 2010b; Estes, 2019; Hugill, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2021; Grandinetti, 2019; Kipfer, 2018; Lanius and Boyce, 2021; Mays, 2016; McClintock, 2018; Miller, 2020; Milner, 2020; Perry, 2016; Porter and Yiftachel, 2019; Ramírez, 2020; Simpson, 2022; Simpson and Bagelman, 2018; Tedesco and Bagelman, 2017; Toews, 2018; Tomiak, 2016, 2017, 2019; Veracini, 2012.

2. We deploy the language of "movement" in this paper to refer to the circulation of commodities, the circulation of capital, and the mobility of people which animate both settler colonial and other forms of urbanism. However, we also think that the language of "movement" works effectively here as a musical metaphor. We are compelled by Day's (2016: 17), suggestion that the "music of settler colonialism" has a "moving spirit," at once "repetitive" but "without predictable rhythm," and we might extend this metaphor to the settler colonial city by adding that the *composition* of urban life is likewise constituted by a range of components (or *movements*) that generate the urban totality.

3. One objective of this article is to bring scholarship on the settler colonial city into a productive conversation with literature from the sub-field urban geography. It is important to acknowledge that the adjacent field of critical mobility studies has made vital contributions to related conversations, even if such contributions are beyond the scope of what we take up here. For helpful introductions to this literature see: Sheller and Urry (2006); Cresswell (2006). It is also worth noting that mobilities scholars have begun to engage directly with settler colonialism, with special issues in *Transfers* (Clarsen, 2015) and *Mobilities* (Carpio et al., 2022).

4. As we argue in this paper, geographies of racial co-lonial capitalism express differently across time and space. Consequently, the locations from which we attempt to understand these dynamics inform what we see. We write as settler academics from North America, and this undoubtedly influences the literature we read, the insights that we foreground, and, ulti-mately, the way that our arguments are presented. With that said, we hope our emphasis on the movements of settler colonialism goes some way in revealing the limits of the 'national container' as a scale of analysis by contributing to broader efforts to demonstrate how distinct geographies of racial colonial capitalism are always shaped by "relations with elsewhere" (Massey 2007: 20).

5. For a discussion of the "tensions" and "affinities" that exist between the settler colonial and racial capitalist frame-works, see Dorries et al. (2022).

6. We find Carpio et al.'s (2022: 5) notion of "settler anchoring" (which hinges on the idea that settlement is not so much an "end point" as a "point of orientation" from which an incessant process of "securing, claiming, and occupying" can be undertaken) to be particularly generative in this context.

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