Disrupting Coloniality Through Palestine Solidarity: Decolonising or Decolonial Praxis?

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Abstract

In this article, I draw upon my activist research with the British based direct-action network Palestine Action, situating it as a concrete solidarity response to the Palestinian BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) call and as a generative site of decolonial praxis in Britain. This theoretically and praxiologically subverts 'decolonising' conceived as a de-territorialised and largely symbolic campaign oriented around the changing of curricula, reading lists, and module structures as is most commonly found in British academia. I argue that such a conception of decolonising works to both strip decoloniality of its material content in social struggle, as well as functioning as a move-to-innocence to obscure the continuing complicities British universities maintain with global colonialism and imperialism today. Rather, I argue, radical social and decolonial theory is developed in the context of social struggles and cannot be detached from them. I demonstrate this with the example of Palestine Action's direct-action campaign against the Israeli private arms manufacturer Elbit Systems, arguing that Palestine Action's solidarity praxis provides a model for re-territorialising decoloniality as a material struggle against coloniality, which gets reproduced through the relations of racial capitalism and imperialism between Britain and the Zionist settler colonisation of Palestine. I conclude with a call for recovering decoloniality expressed as a material force and suggest the methodology of guerrilla activist researcher as a collaborative role in which scholar-advocates can generate decolonial theory and praxis within Britain.

Keywords: guerrilla activist research/er, solidarity, decolonial praxis, decoloniality, decolonising.

Introduction

> In decolonization, there is therefore the need of a complete calling into question of the colonial situation. If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well known words: "The last shall be first and the first last." Decolonization is the putting into practice of this sentence (Fanon 1963, 37).

The adoption of 'decolonization' or 'decolonising'[1] into the vocabulary of the neoliberal university and its academic discourses has increasingly operated to reproduce colonial systems of power, rather than contesting and dismantling them. Increasingly, higher education institutions often deploy 'decolonising' interchangeably with the liberal notion of 'diversifying', emptying the historical context and conceptual meanings of decolonization as rooted in the material struggles for liberation against European imperialism (Robinson, 2019 [1993]). This often takes place alongside a wealth of conferences, books, journals, and reports which reify decolonization as merely a practice of research engagement, with universities proposing 'self-assessment guides' as to where one's research sits on the "colonizer/decolonizer scale?" (@JohnsHopkinsSPH, 2022) – as if decolonization is an identity that can be self-applied within research settings, not a praxis dependent upon engagement in material struggles against colonialism. Despite attempts to challenge the ongoing hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge production, theoretical canons and the reinforcement of social hierarchies within universities, the ongoing materiality of coloniality as a global system is often excluded. In turn, the material systems which underpin the epistemic coloniality that permeates British universities, such as racial capitalism (Lowe, 2015; Robinson, 2000 [1983]), border imperialism (Walia, 2021), internal coloniality (Trafford, 2020), militarised accumulation (Robinson, 2020), and the continuing settler invasion of indigenous territories (Coulthard, 2014; Khalidi, 2020; Wolfe, 2016), often fall from view.

Such exclusions are not accidental. Rather, eliding the role universities play in ongoing material systems of colonial violence, such as their long list of investments and partnerships with fossil fuel and arms companies, allows for the continued symbolic and ideological reproduction of the university, as well as academic knowledge production, as a progressive site removed from these relationships. Decolonising, despite those who employ it with honest intentions, has become the new lexicon in which British universities can continue to obscure their role by diluting decolonization to a practice of academic, teaching, and institutional practices. The common practice of citing Eve Tuck and K. Wayne

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[1] This article differentiates between 'decolonising' as a set of abstract academic practices and 'decolonization', more commonly referred to as decolonial praxis or decoloniality in more recent literature, as a concrete historical process and material struggle against colonialism in its myriad forms as defined by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of The Earth* (1963, 35-37).

Yang's famous paper 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor' (2012) in academic literature on decolonising has come to act as what I term an academic move-to-innocence in itself, rather than an honest reflection upon academic practices and the institution of the university, particularly in an imperial context such as Britain.[2] Here, I am adapting what Tuck and Yang term a "settler move to innocence": an "attempt to deflect a settler identity, while continuing to enjoy settler privilege and occupying stolen land", (2012, 11) and a deflection from engaging with a material praxis of decoloniality. Applying this to the academic move-to-innocence, there remains a lack of reflection concerning academic practices and the forms which knowledge production takes within universities that operate to reproduce colonial and imperial violence globally through their material investments, student exchange links, careers fairs and the companies and institutions with which they collaborate. This is often justified by appealing to decolonising in the abstract, only dealing with its ideological, epistemological, and theoretical elements, rather than confronting the material complicities and coloniality of our institutions and our geo-political situatedness in Britain as a centre of global flows of colonial and imperial technologies of exploitation, violence, and control across geographies (Lowe, 2015; Trafford, 2020).

These practices of academic moves-to-innocence can be most clearly seen regarding the question of Palestine. Palestine and the struggle for liberation from Zionist settler colonialism has continued to exist in a position of marginal exclusion from broader conversations of anti-racism and decolonising within universities. As Palestinian intellectual Edward Said observed, well-meaning people can oppose racism and colonialism in the United States and South Africa, while tacitly supporting settler colonialism and racism in Palestine (1992, 59). Take books such as *Decolonising the University* (2018). Despite its useful content concerning the conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical possibilities of decolonial praxis within an educational context, the text mentions Palestine only once indirectly, in reference to the solidarity practices of South African students, despite many of the contributors being British based academics (Gebrial, 2018, 32). The point here is not to complain about what is included where, or to target particular books or essays, as this is a broader phenomenon within decolonising literature. It is rather an attempt to problematise and unsettle the dominant discourses of 'decolonising' and uses of decolonial theory in British higher education which somehow manage to take place without mentioning Palestine and Palestine solidarity activism, despite the deep historical and ongoing material complicities between British universities and the Zionist settler colonisation of Palestine.

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[2] I deploy Britain in this article as my geographical term of choice rather than U.K. as a way of actively admitting and acknowledging the ongoing occupation of the six counties of Northern Ireland. This is another site of colonial invasion which often falls from view in abstract decolonial discourses.

According to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), it is estimated that British Universities collectively invest almost £500 million in companies which are complicit in Israel's colonisation of Palestine (PSC, n.d.). These include weapons manufacturers which supply the Israeli military, such as Lockheed Martin, Airbus and Raytheon; construction companies which supply the machinery to demolish Palestinian roads, lands, and homes such as JCB and Caterpillar; and companies which supply technological services for the purposes of maintaining racial segregation and the Israeli military/prison industrial complex, such as Hewlett-Packard and G4S (Ibid). Due to the opaque nature of most university investments and universities' unwillingness to provide information – especially when concerning their relationships with systems of colonial exploitation and apartheid – the PSC has had to make use of estimates, based on Freedom of Information requests and demands from PSC student society campaigns (Ibid).

Many companies involved in the Arms Trade, Fossil Fuel Industry, and the colonisation of Palestine are often invited to careers fairs or are contracted with universities' business and engineering departments. A number of British universities also maintain student exchange programmes with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This university sustains not only an active role in reinforcing and legitimising Israel's military, colonial, and apartheid regime, but also maintains student halls of residence in Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem, declared illegal under international law (Houri and Ramsey, 2020). Due to these ongoing ties of complicity, human rights organisation Amnesty International recently published a report declaring Israel an apartheid regime over the whole of Palestine and stated that British universities are 'actively linking themselves to a whole system of illegality, discrimination and exploitation' (Houri and Ramsey, 2020; Shukla, 2020).

When student societies and campaigns have attempted to challenge or end these material complicities, they are often harassed, surveilled, and targeted by university management and security, often with the collusion of pro-Israel lobbying groups. One example is the passing of a BDS (Boycott Divestment and Sanctions) divestment policy by Warwick University's Student Council in 2021. After months of campaigning from student activists on the issue of divesting from complicit investments, the successful passing of the divestment motion was reversed hours later by the university's undemocratic board of trustees, while legal threats were issued against the Students Union by UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI, 2021). Another example is the protest against the platforming of the Israeli Ambassador Tzipi Hotovely at the London School of Economics in November 2021. Hotovely has famously denied the Nakba, the ethnic cleansing of over 800,000 Palestinians from Palestine by Zionist militias in 1948, referring to it as an "Arab lie" (Middle East Eye, 2020). The reaction from both the British government and the opposition party was to support a police investigation against students for

exercising their right to protest the university's platforming of a representative of an apartheid regime (Weale and Wintour, 2021). The university's official statement in response effectively endorsed the targeting of its own students, defending its platforming of the ambassador under the guise of "free speech and freedom of expression" while simultaneously questioning the legitimacy of the protests (@LSEnews, 2021). Despite all the talk of 'decolonising', solidarity and collaboration with students from post-/de-colonial scholars during these struggles has been unfortunately weak on the ground.

Palestine solidarity activism in Britain exists as a crucial site of contestation and resistance from which to recover the co-option and stripping of decolonization from its praxiological and radical content (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, 3-4), as well as sites for generating theory and praxis which recentres concrete social struggles in decoloniality (Fúnez-Flores, 2022). While not a settler colony like its historical imperial offshoots (the United States, Canada, Israel and Australia (Coulthard, 2014; Wolfe, 2016), Britain continues to play a major role within global imperial, settler colonial and racial capitalist relationships beyond the university. For example, the City of London plays a central role in global illicit financial flows from the Global South to the Global North, a continuation of colonialism's model of value-extraction (Monbiot, 2022) and Britain is the second largest arms exporter in the world after the US, with 60% of its military exports and contracts going to the Middle East, specifically Saudi Arabia, alongside growing arms contracts with Israeli military companies (CAAT, 2022).

The struggle for decolonization in Palestine through the Palestinian-led internationalist solidarity BDS movement undermines the premise of 'decolonising' as merely a process of reforming curricula, disciplinary structures and Eurocentric epistemological systems. Instead, it demands engagement in concrete social struggles to dismantle these material relationships of coloniality, settler colonisation, imperialism and militarised accumulation, upon which Britain reproduces its global standing and through which British universities reproduce and benefit themselves and their profits.

The purpose of this article is therefore to subvert such employments of decolonising within British higher education by highlighting Palestine solidarity activism as a generative space from which to articulate decolonial possibilities through place-based decolonial praxis within Britain. This article covers three main areas: firstly, I will recover analyses emphasising the material relationships of the colonial matrix of power within decolonial theory and its implications for generating a decolonial praxis beyond critiquing Eurocentric knowledge systems. Secondly, drawing upon my activist research, I will explore the possibilities for recovering the materiality of decoloniality within a university research setting through the methodological praxis of what I term guerrilla activist research, a collaborative role in theorising and advancing social struggles. Thirdly, from this

approach, I will explore the British based direct action network Palestine Action and its creative and radical engagement with the Palestinian BDS call as a model example to draw upon in developing a geo-politically attentive decolonial praxis, through the network's re-territorialisation of internationalist decolonial solidarity activism in Britain. I conclude by asserting the need for decolonial scholar-advocates across disciplines to embody guerrilla activist research as a decolonial method to recover and re-centre the material disruption of the colonial matrix of power in their research practice.

Recovering materiality in decoloniality

In their co-authored book *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (2018, 23-24) Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh draw upon the work of Peruvian Sociologist Aníbal Quijano in situating decoloniality within ongoing contestations to the colonial matrix of power (CMP), or coloniality. The CMP consists of a set of heterogeneous social relations developed through the reproduction of ideological, epistemic, discursive, and material systems of continuous hegemonic colonial power since the beginning of the sixteenth century (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 23; Quijano, 2000). Dismantling these through decoloniality, or decolonial praxis, is conceived as a reflexive process that requires us to

> … think from and with struggles that think, and thought that struggles. "Thought that does not struggle is nothing more than noise, and struggles that do not think, repeat the same errors and do not get up after falling," say the Zapatistas (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 20-21).

While a useful conception for changing dominant academic practices, the uptake of decolonial praxis within university settings has tended to lean heavily on the "thinking" with social, anti-colonial and decolonial struggles, rather than participating in them. This provides space for academic moves-to-innocence which allow for, at best, an appeal to the concrete work of decolonial social struggles and, at worst, a stripping of theory generated in struggle from its context. In the latter case, decolonization is abstracted, diluted, and commodified through books, articles and conferences entitled with the formula 'decolonise x'. Take, for example, the uses of Paulo Freire's work (2017) in decolonial pedagogy. Throughout Freire's work, the need for critical and radical pedagogy to move beyond the confines of the classroom and the lecture theatre is often articulated through the recognition that, as C. Dennis describes, "The pedagogic and the political are a continuity" (2018, 199). However, such engagements with Freire's work are rarely situated alongside the anti-colonial thinkers, or within the anti-colonial struggles from which Freire explicitly drew, such as Frantz Fanon in the Algerian Revolution and Amílcar Cabral in the anti-colonial struggle in Guinea-Bissau (Malott, 2021; Tricontinental, 2020). Freire's conceptions of education and

conscientizacao (critical consciousness-raising) emerged directly out of these anti-colonial and military struggles against French and Portuguese colonialism and the establishment of schools and hospitals in the liberated zones (Malott, 2021). We should therefore be mindful of conflation.

What happens to theory generated in the context of anti-colonial and social struggles when it geographically and temporally traverses from its original sites of production to the university in Britain? Can, or should, the development of decolonial pedagogy and practices within universities be presented as 'decolonising' outside of the praxis of social struggles to transform social reality? As mentioned, much decolonising literature intervenes in pedagogical practices and curricula to subvert dominant pedagogical practices *within* institutions but remains largely confined to these spaces (Sefa Dei and Lordan, 2016). While not negating the uses of such engagements within their contexts, by conceptualising decoloniality and decolonization as processes that can exist outside of social struggles committed to resisting coloniality in its myriad forms – be that imperialism, settler colonialism, the arms trade, and so on – such literature operates to dilute the radical potentials of decolonization as a historical necessity of liberation and reinscribes the coloniality they seek to subvert. Decoloniality within education should not be presented as a stand-in to decolonization as a material and historical force. Rather than 'decolonising', we should seek instead to engage in a decolonial praxis. If, as Somdeep Sen (drawing on Fanon) describes (2020, 129-130), liberation in the context of colonialism continually ebbs and flows after the formal expulsion of the coloniser, then we should situate our decolonial praxis as an ongoing process of collaboration in concrete social struggles that seek to materially, as well as epistemically, subvert, disrupt, and build an otherwise to the CMP. Decolonial praxis in British universities, and Britain more broadly, then, must commit to an ongoing collaboration in materially contesting, disrupting, and subverting the systems of colonial and imperial violence Britain continues to reproduce across the world, and which inevitably circulate back to be used on migrant, racialised and poor communities here (Halper, 2015; Trafford, 2020, 12).

Within academic contexts, the first priority for decoloniality should consist of identifying and disrupting the material relations of coloniality woven into our universities, such as the investments already described which operate to maintain colonial divisions the world over. Otherwise, what is the point in engaging with knowledges re-asserting themselves from the peripheries of the colonial world-system, if they do not inform struggles against that world-system which maintains them as peripheral? As decolonial thinker Boaventura de Sousa Santos states:

> because of the centrality of the struggles, epistemologies of the South are effective and flourish in the social fields where the struggles take place and thus outside the sites of academic debate. Of course, such struggles can

also occur in the academic world and can even be very violent. Given the nature of academic knowledge as a separate practice, however, such struggles, seen from the point of view of the epistemologies of the South, will end up having little epistemological relevance if they fail to cross the barriers separating them in order to join other social struggles (2018, 117).

It is therefore crucial to centre, in both our praxis and conceptions of decoloniality, Quijano's original conception of the CMP that was conceived as a set of heterogeneous relations of power emerging from material systems of racialisation and patriarchy which underpin the colonial capitalist world-system and its regimes of accumulation, colonisation and imperialism (Fúnez-Flores, 2022, 6-9). As Jairo Fúnez-Flores articulates:

> Drawing on the work of dependency theory, world-systems theory, and philosophy of liberation, Latin American decolonial theory advances three interrelated concepts to understand the social totality reconceptualized as the modern/colonial capitalist world-system. The primary concept is the coloniality of power, defined by Quijano (2007) as a matrix of domination constituted by the systematic control of labor, sex, subjectivity, and authority. These interconnected structures of domination are expressed globally in Eurocentric political, economic, social, and cultural institutions (e.g., racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, Eurocentric rationality, and liberal democracy). (2022, 17).

It was the codification of these systems of power, the racialising and gendering of populations for the purposes of capital accumulation through the emergence of contemporary patterns of colonial domination, dispossession and exploitation, where coloniality as a system of power came to be foundational to modernity and global capitalism as a material expression of colonialism on a global scale (Benzi et al, 2021; Bhambra, 2021; Quijano and Wallerstein, 1992). In fact, decolonial thinker Ramón Grosfoguel (2021, xv-xvi) argues that Quijano's conception of coloniality, the mapping of the colonial and racial structure of the capitalist world-system, is a particular terming of what Cedric Robinson (2000 [1983], 2) referred to as Racial Capitalism. That is, the development, organisation and expansion of capitalist society as expressed through race, racial subjection, and racial differences (Lowe, 2015, 149). These processes of colonisation, accumulation, and racialisation operate co-constitutively with the development of the coloniality of gender, which are the ways through which gender and sexuality came to carry specific work functions under capitalism and therefore exist as an expression of class relations within the CMP (Federici, 2014; Lugones, 2008; Mies, 2014). As Françoise Vergès argues *in A Decolonial Feminism* (2021), the question "who cleans the world?" exposes both the systems of racial capitalism and heteropatriarchy upon which global accumulation depends, as well as the struggles of racialised, often migrant, overexploited women against them (Vergès, 2021, 2-3). The coloniality of who cleans our university halls and lecture theatres is an enduring struggle for university cleaners throughout the country (Brent, 2021).

With this in mind, the purpose of decolonial scholarship should be to advance the "dialectics between theorization and decolonial advocacy" (Salaita, 2016, x). In other words, an interaction between decolonial theory and material advocacy in the university can constitute the generative terrain for a decolonial praxis. What is being articulated here is that every idea or system of ideas, even those of coloniality, white supremacy, and patriarchy, exist somewhere and are entangled with socio-historical circumstances and processes (Said, 1992, 56). Importantly, I do not endorse an ontological separation between material praxis as more significant and theoretical or epistemological critique as less. My point is the opposite – to emphasise that decolonial scholarship ought to be conjoined *with* decolonial advocacy through material praxis, as the epistemic and material are inseparable. The myriad relations of domination and exploitation reproduced through coloniality, racial capitalism and patriarchy, are intimately connected; in order to disrupt the coloniality of Eurocentric knowledge production within and outside the university, we must disrupt the material systems which continue to reinforce them.

As the philosopher of liberation Enrique Dussel details, the foundations of modern/colonial western thought, specifically the Cartesian ontology ("I think therefore I am"), was prefigured and preceded by 150 years with "I conquer therefore I am" (2005, cited in Grosfoguel, 2013, 77). Specifically, modern western thought emerged out of slavery, witch hunts, colonial conquests and epistemicide, the murder of other ways of knowing and being (Federici, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2013; Santos, 2014). Therefore, if the CMP and its epistemological systems and subjectivities emerged out of these material systems of racialised and gendered violence, exploitation and dispossession, it must be understood that the continuing systems of settler colonial invasion, imperial war-making and racial capitalist accumulation which British universities and institutions are implicated in, also work to sustain these systems. Hence, Eurocentric colonial knowledge systems and theoretical canons cannot be understood as sustained only by traces of a colonial past, but instead as sustained by the material systems of the colonial present. So long as coloniality is reduced to a passive continuation of historical colonial domination – rather than understood as a set of globally diffused relations which continue to underpin racial capitalism, colonialism and imperialism across global geographies – decolonial interventions will continue to fall short of Fanon's call in this article's epigraph to make "the last [the colonised and oppressed of the world] first [liberated]".

To take up such a task through a decolonial praxis must mean shifting from a focus that deals only with relationships inside the university or academic knowledge production, to one which requires a praxis of "changing the world while constantly reinterpreting it" (Santos, 2018, viii). What could decolonial praxis look like in Britain's geo-political context, particularly within its universities? For

those implicated in and connected to the coloniality of global imperial and colonial relationships due to our geo-political position in an imperial site such as Britain, the task of decolonial praxis in our context must be to generate oppositions to Britain's position as the second largest arms exporter in the world, one which British universities play a role in reproducing, and the exportation of its racialised and colonial models of militarism and policing to sites from Colombia to Palestine (Dempsey and Harding, 2021; Hall and Kennard, 2021). A decolonial praxis should make cracks in these relations, in collaboration and solidarity with forces of opposition in the Global South that come to face them more directly (Desai and Tabar, 2017, vii; Fúnez-Flores, 2022, 2; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, 82). One of the most prominent examples of such praxis is the growing Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS) throughout Britain and its university campuses. The BDS movement operates broadly to target companies and institutions which help to supply, reproduce, or perpetuate Israel's violations of international law, its system of colonial military occupation, and its apartheid regime (BDS Movement, 2022a). The practice of BDS, in forcing complicit institutions, such as British universities, to divest and boycott companies and products, and to suspend academic and student exchange links with Israel, is that which decolonial advocacy should support and draw strategic inspiration from. Generating a decolonial praxis out of such a strategy in the building of international solidarities, what Mignolo terms "de-linking", can become not only an epistemological move, but a praxis of material disobedience (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, 106). This radical subversion works to disrupt the relations of coloniality throughout our universities that reinforce and legitimate geographies of settler colonialism today, such as in Palestine, and the global regimes of accumulation, militarism and imperialism which it engenders.

Having critically argued for the centrality of material praxis for decolonization, I will now develop a model based on a synthesis of decolonial thinking, the Black radical tradition, and my activist praxis-research that I term guerrilla activist research, suggesting that this is a way decolonial scholar-advocates can engage with decolonial praxis. I will end by elaborating on how my own engagement with grassroots network Palestine Action is generative of, as well as one way which I strive to embody, guerrilla activist research.

Guerrilla Activist Researcher as space for Decolonial Praxis

A decolonial methodology as praxis must begin with the recognition that radical theories of social transformation emerge most forcefully out of concrete social struggle. As Robin Kelley details in his project to envisage the Black radical imagination:

> Social movements generate new knowledge, new theories, new questions. The most radical ideas often grow out of a concrete intellectual engagement with the problems of aggrieved populations confronting systems of oppression. For example, the academic study of race has always been inextricably intertwined with political struggles (2002, 8).

The stripping of decoloniality from its roots in the material struggles of African, Indigenous, women's, anti-imperial, and national liberation movements (Santos, 2018), therefore has negative consequences for both knowledge production as well as physical practice by limiting engagements with contemporary social struggles – where radical knowledges are emerging most forcefully. Specifically, perspectives and strategies of resistance are forged, as well as the re-invention and re-assertion of old forms, marginalised and excluded from dominant orders of knowledge (Escobar, 2004, 224; Mies, 2014, 36). These encompass what Santos terms epistemologies of the south: resurgent forms of knowledge, silenced by the Eurocentric epistemologies of the north, which "emerge from social and political struggles and cannot be separated from such struggles" (Santos, 2018, 2). Radical decolonial theory should therefore not seek to merely interact with social struggles but emerge dialogically through and in response to them.

A decolonial praxis is not the application of decolonial theory to struggle, but the continuous movement of action, reflection, and theorising through action within the process of social struggle itself (Freire, 2017; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, 7). It is this process which scholar-advocate Chris Rossdale (2021b), drawing from bell hooks and the radical theory and praxis of the Black Panther Party, terms "struggle as method":

> Panther tactics, and the responses they elicited from the authorities, were designed to make clear the true nature of US society, to unsettle dominant categories of understanding, and to generate new concepts and social relations. As much as they were deeply practical, directed towards addressing the manifold insecurities of daily life for Black Americans, they were also intimately theoretical, adopting, circulating, and reshaping a conceptual framework directed towards survival and revolution. Attention to the theoretical qualities of political struggle, to 'struggle as method', can be a powerful lens through which to understand both the contours of power and the possibilities for new political formations (2021b, 2).

Building on Kelley's insight about the Black radical imagination, the Black Panther's method complements decolonial approaches to praxis and/as radical or "militant" scholarship (Gilmore, 2020, 174-175), a mutually constitutive process at the level of engagement in research through collaboration in social struggle. This is further evidenced in the work of Guyanese Pan-Africanist and Marxist historian Walter Rodney, whose approach has been termed "Guerrilla Intellectualism" (Adeleke, 2000; Benjamin and Springer, 2019). For Rodney, the domination of white, Eurocentric histories and epistemologies which worked to subjugate Africa

and Black peoples required the praxis of intellectual and academic subversion to reinforce social struggles against white supremacy, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism (Adeleke, 2000, 41; Rodney, 2019 [1969], 63-73). Interdisciplinary scholar Jesse Benjamin and independent researcher Devyn Springer (2019) outline Rodney's conception of the guerrilla intellectual in three ways:

> first is to mend the binary dichotomy between "revolutionaries" and "intellectuals." Second, to subvert, transform, and ultimately challenge the legitimacy of bourgeois knowledge which is held within white institutions. And thirdly, the production of knowledge and scholarship which can be coupled with action and used in the service of Black liberation. The intended guerrilla intellectual must first tackle the divide between revolutionary/activist and intellectual (2019, 215).

As a process of "struggle as method", guerrilla intellectualism (or being a militant scholar) requires not only the recognition that authentic knowledge and radical theory also emerge outside academic institutions; but also, emphasises that the role of intellectual work in relation to social struggle is not to direct it, but to collaborate with and supplement it. In this spirit, Santos (2018, ix) calls for "rearguard theorists", rather than the traditional "vanguard intellectuals" to play a role in the collective development of theory and praxis within social movements. I synthesise these insights from Black radical and decolonial forms of praxis by coining the term guerrilla activist research, conceived as an approach for dialectically and dialogically bridging the gap between being a scholar and a revolutionary activist. That is, generating knowledge about the world and how to intervene in it through the social struggles in which decolonial scholar-advocates embed themselves.

Having initially developed my conceptualisation of guerrilla activist research from Black radical and decolonial thinking and praxis, I will now introduce the ways I seek to embody and develop this through Palestine solidarity activist research. My own engagement with, and material development of, guerrilla activist research has been through using my position as a PhD student to support Palestine Action's BDS orientated direct action campaign. This has broadly consisted of making banners, transporting protest materials, being involved in direct actions and using my research skills to write up reports on Elbit Systems, its production, its role in settler colonialism in Palestine and the global breadth of its military supply-chain for use by the network. Most importantly, however, I have conducted research interviews with activists, understanding these as dialogical spaces for knowledge production, theory-making and processes of consciousness raising which Rodney referred to as "groundings" (2019[1969]). In relation to his engagements with Black Power struggles in the Caribbean, Rodney described this dialogical process as "a sitting-down together to reason, to 'ground' as the brothers say. We have to 'ground together'" (Ibid, 67).

This methodological and praxiological framing of groundings is the approach through which I conducted interviews with Palestine Action activists, many of them friends but also both organisers and activists, with whom I had undertaken collective action against Elbit Systems. These interviews-as-groundings centred on a collaborative discussion amongst ourselves around Palestine Action, the network's theory, strategy and practice, and how we can work to improve them further towards meeting the goals of the BDS Movement and the Palestinian solidarity struggle in Britain today. In carrying out guerrilla activist research, similar to what Bejerano et al (2019, 37) describe, decolonial research requires the recognition that there are no 'objects' or so-called 'research subjects' to be analysed and deconstructed, but rather those with whom we generate active knowledge about the world who remain thinkers and researchers in their own right. Therefore, the method I have carried out with Palestine Action has been less so a form of 'participant observation' when attending workshops, meetings, protests and direct actions with activists, and more so playing a collaborative role in generating knowledge, concepts, theory, and strategy for the network which I have then attempted to relay back to activists through developing a theory of Palestine Action's praxis. In Rodney's conception, these spaces of groundings operate as ongoing moments throughout my research and have been conditioned by the collective intellectual process of myself and activists collectively making sense of both our own and others' oppressions through material advocacy and campaigning. In this case, making sense of Palestinians under Israeli colonial military occupation and others oppressed by social forces facing the brunt of Elbit's weaponry around the world, in order to challenge and overcome those oppressions through what Paulo Freire termed a critical intervention in reality (Freire, 2017, 54). My material engagement with Palestine Action, then, contributed to my development of guerrilla activist research alongside a theoretical engagement with Black radical and decolonial thinking.

Guerrilla activist research with and for Palestine Action is where and how I situate my own decolonial praxis geo-politically within the relationality of Britain's global colonial and imperial relationships. Namely, contributing my intellectual and academic work, as well as myself, to help collectively articulate with fellow activists the radical theory and praxis generated within our struggle for the purposes of materially strengthening solidarity with the Palestinian BDS call in Britain. By materially disrupting the supply chain of Elbit Systems, Palestine Action works not only to resist Israeli settler colonialism in Palestine, but also the increasingly militarised world-order of racial capitalism and its global reaches of imperialism which Israeli occupation reinforces and prefigures (Collins, 2011; Halper, 2015). Only through disrupting the material relations of coloniality globally, in which the settler colonisation of Palestine maintains a central role, can we contest and dismantle the symbolic, ideological and epistemological

systems of Eurocentrism and the 'white academic power structure' of which Walter Rodney spoke.

Guerrilla activist research thus embodies a double move of de-linking. Firstly, de-linking epistemologically from the dominant orders of Eurocentric knowledge under colonial modernity – orders which mystify the histories and global relations of coloniality underpinning racial capitalism's contemporary modes of accumulation and violence under neoliberalism (Lloyd and Wolfe, 2016; Mignolo, 2011). Secondly, de-linking materially from the relationships that reproduce settler colonialism in Palestine and imperialism as constituted by the military-industrial complex, signified most clearly by the international arms trade (Amin, 1990; Desai and Tabar, 2017). For it is the single move to de-link only epistemologically which allows for academic 'moves-to-innocence' of decolonising in the abstract, at the expense of the double-move that delinking requires. As Mignolo details:

> epistemic de-colonization runs parallel to [Samir] Amin's de-linking. A delinking that leads to a de-colonial epistemic shift and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics (2007, 453).

Forging spaces for theory and praxis resisting coloniality can therefore only be generated with and through social struggles to de-link (Rossdale, 2021b; Santos, 2018; Vergès, 2021). In our geo-political context in Britain, material de-linking efforts for supporting Palestine should consist in supporting student campaigns to force universities to boycott and divest from Israeli apartheid; community organising that pressures local institutions and businesses to divest from the arms trade, or forcing them out of the area altogether in the establishment of "Apartheid Free Zones"; and direct action campaigns through which the material links reproducing settler colonialism in Palestine and elsewhere can be directly targeted, disrupted and dismantled from their sites of origin. It is engaging with and for these struggles that theoretical critiques emerge. Drawing from my own guerrilla activist research materials, I will now show how such a geo-politically situated model of decolonial praxis is being developed and taking root in Britain today, and what role decolonial scholar-advocates should play in reinforcing this.

Re-territorialising decolonial solidarity

In 2005, as Israel continued its settler colonial expansion over the whole of Palestine, including the construction of the annexation wall in the West Bank,[3] 171 Palestinian civil society organisations collectively formed the BDS Movement and called for international boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel for its crimes against the Palestinian people (Baroud, 2013, 17; BDS Movement, 2005). The

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[3] The wall was declared illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004.

BDS movement has explicitly drawn from the South African Anti-Apartheid campaign in building an international solidarity movement focused on pressuring countries and global institutions to implement international law in opposing Israel's racial segregation, ghettoisation, racial depopulation and dispossession in Palestine (Baroud, 2013, 5; BDS Movement, 2022a). However, the BDS Movement also draws upon Indigenous materials of Palestinian resistance to colonial occupation, specifically practices of de-linking from the settler colonial capitalist system through autonomous community power-building and popular struggle (Desai, 2021, 58; Qumsiyeh, 2011, 1).

The formation of the BDS Movement signalled a renewed call for international solidarity action with Palestine, providing the theoretical and strategic tools with which activist groups and communities around the world can engage in concrete solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. This has been carried out through the BDS Movement's emphasis on recovering the local as the site from which to contest Israeli apartheid and settler colonialism. This is advanced through a strategy of materially de-linking from the flows of complicity which companies, states and institutions maintain with Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid, situated in place-based activism to enforce boycotts, divestments, and the creation of "Apartheid Free Zones" (BDS Movement 2022b). As Linda Tabar notes:

> By building alliances with trade unions, student movements, people of conscience and grassroots organisations throughout the world, BDS is re-rooting transnational solidarity in local political spaces and sites of struggles through which it is mobilising countervailing people's power across borders to advance the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle (2017, 429).

By situating concrete solidarity within activists' and communities' own sites of struggle, the BDS Movement has operated to re-territorialise solidarity activism with Palestine through a decolonial framework, drawing together transnational solidarity action and connecting it to the global flow of imperial and colonial relationships across geographies of racial capitalism (Desai and Tabar, 2016, vii-ix; Salaita, 2016, 63-70). This provides a framework for a geo-political situatedness in which decolonial scholar-advocates can collaborate in generating a decolonial praxis in Britain, both inside and outside of the university. A contemporary example of how this is being developed in a creative and radical way in Britain is the praxis of Palestine Action.

In the summer of 2020, building upon previous BDS activist organisations such as the Boycott Israel Network and a number of BDS orientated direct actions in Britain and Northern Ireland, Palestine Action was formed to build a sustained direct-action movement against Israel's arms trade in Britain. Drawing from the strategic framework of the BDS Movement, Palestine Action is committed to ending Britain's century-long complicity with the colonisation of Palestine and Israel's apartheid regime (Palestine Action, 2020). Palestine Action is a network of

activists and organisers from across Britain that coalesces with the broader Palestine Solidarity Movement including groups such as Manchester Palestine Action, local Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) groups as well as a number of local-led grassroots organisations supporting Palestine Action's campaign against Elbit Systems sites. The network prioritises directly enforcing the BDS call through sustained civil disobedience and direct action, targeting the military and technological supply chains between Britain and Palestine which reproduce Israel's settler colonial military occupation, and the global relations of colonial and imperial violence reproduced by these exchanges such as policing, the arms trade and border imperialism (Palestine Action, 2021a). Although Palestine Action has targeted a number of companies over the course of its campaign, the primary object of the network's campaign has been the Israeli private arms manufacturer Elbit Systems. After purchasing Israel's largest state-run arms company Israel Military Industries in 2018, Elbit Systems has become Israel's largest arms manufacturer and has reached global prominence in both military and security markets due to its distinctive ability to market its weaponry and military technologies as "combat proven" – tested on captive Palestinians under colonial military occupation (WhoProfits, 2021). According to scholar-advocate Jeff Halper, Israel maintains a key "niche" within global arms and security markets where it offers a model of "securocratic control", modelled on its occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, which it exports to client states, private security, and arms companies around the world (2015, 44-45). Elbit Systems maintains a central role in the global proliferation of this model of colonial control through the sale of weaponry, drones, and surveillance technologies that are used globally – from the US/Mexico border wall (Parrish, 2019; Walia, 2021), to the EU's "Fortress Europe" project in the Mediterranean (Ahmed, 2020). Elbit has recently been procuring contracts with the British government and Army and has been testing its "combat proven" drones for potential use by the Police and Maritime and Coastguard Agencies for domestic policing and border militarisation (with specific focus on the targeting of migrants and refugees) (Elbit Systems, 2021; Lewis, 2020; Reagan, 2020). The company currently has eight sites across Britain, including a number of factories which build and export its combat drones and weaponry to Israel. This is, however, fewer than they recently had. Palestine Action's two-year long sustained direct-action campaign forced two of the company's sites to close, including their London Headquarters and their subsidiary factory Ferranti Technologies in Oldham (Palestine Action, 2022a; Palestine Action 2022b).

In challenging material links of colonial violence – from Elbit's offices and factories in Britain to Israel's settler colonial occupation in Palestine – Palestine Action draws upon a repertoire of strategies for targeting the company's operations. Each action is coordinated and planned to produce the most sustained disruption to Israel's arms regime as possible, working to "disrupt,

destroy or dismantle" Elbit's operations across the country (Palestine Action, nd). Tactics include using graffiti and red paint to target Elbit's sites, and occupying factories via lock-ons[4] and roof-top occupations, where activists chant, let off flares, and display banners in opposition to Elbit's operations (See Figures 1 and 2 below).[5] Occupations often involve various forms of property damage on-site, such as smashing security cameras, windows, and air conditioning to prevent the production of weaponry and specialist military technology for as long as possible after the activists' removal (and often arrest).

Factories are often shut for days, if not weeks on end afterwards, directly preventing the manufacture, sale, and exporting of Elbit's weaponry for use against Palestinians, refugees and other oppressed people throughout the world. In drawing upon the local complicity of these global militarist and colonial relationships of violence, an activist in a Palestine Action promotional video details our proximity to this violence and our ability to challenge it: "I can act to stop these weapons being manufactured, it's within my power and I will do that" (@Pal_Action, 2022). Palestine Action situates its solidaristic praxis within the historical arc of Britain's complicity in the colonisation of Palestine since the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which committed the British government to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Understanding the colonisation of Palestine as a historical structure (Khalidi, 2020; Wolfe, 2016), which Britain maintains through its continuing diplomatic, economic and military support for Israel, Palestine Action state:

> The UK has been complicit in the colonisation of Palestine for over 100 years. Now, they host Israel's largest arms company, building weapons which are "battle-tested" on Palestinians. (@Pal_Action, 2021).

Palestine Action draws upon the geo-political and historical complicities with the settler colonisation of Palestine in order to both legitimate its campaign, as well as to gather support from individuals willing to engage in direct action against Elbit's operations throughout the country.

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[4] Lock-ons are a tactic used to prevent the immediate removal of protestors and prolong any action or disruption taking place. This is often through the use of a portable arm-tube attaching activists to one another, or the gates and doors of the sites targeted to block access to buildings.
[5] Both direct action photos were taken by photographers on site documenting the actions, which were then posted on Palestine Action's social media platforms.

Figure 1: Palestine Action activists occupying the roof of Elbit Systems subsidiary Factory, UAV Engines in Shenstone, letting off a red flare, waving a Palestine flag, and having unfurled a Palestine Action banner which is hanging from the building. Part of the building has had red paint thrown at it to symbolise the blood of those who are attacked with Israel's military drones, which UAV Engines supplies components for.

Activists have engaged in a number of such actions across the country over the past two years, from Elbit's drone assembling and weapons factories in Oldham, Staffordshire, Sandwich and Leicester, to its Head Offices in Bristol and London. Actions have, on a number of occasions, occurred simultaneously to similar protests and have garnered support from other activists, organisers and members of the local communities on the ground. Palestine Action's campaign has helped to put pressure on Elbit's factories – both through directly shutting them down and damaging their property, and through working with local campaign groups to raise awareness of Elbit's operations in local areas. Through this dual strategy, in January 2022, Palestine Action was able to force the closure of one of Elbit's subsidiary sites, Ferranti Technologies in Oldham (Hever, 2022; Palestine Action, 2022). In doing so, Palestine Action has created potential new pathways in which to advance the Palestinian BDS call into these sites' local communities, through the use of direct action in exposing the transnational links between urban England and global regimes of violence reproduced through Israel and Britain's arms trade.

For 18 months, the Oldham factory site was frequently targeted by Palestine Action activists, from rooftop occupations and lock-on blockades, to covering the building in red paint and damaging its infrastructure, alongside a sustained community campaign including vigils, protests and rallies outside the factory supported by local groups such as Oldham Peace and Justice and Manchester PSC (Palestine Solidarity Campaign) and Manchester Palestine Action. This dual strategy of direct action coupled with a local community campaign was most clearly expressed during a rally outside the factory where Palestine solidarity

artist Lowkey performed to a crowd of protesters as activists scaled the roof (@Pal_Action, 2021b).

Figure 2: Palestine Action activists occupy the front of Elbit's former subsidiary Ferranti Technologies in Oldham, Manchester, dismantling the porch and covering the doors and windows in their signature red paint.

By drawing upon the framework of a re-territorialised decolonial solidarity provided by the Palestinian BDS Movement, Palestine Action enables individuals, groups and communities to engage in place-based activism which directly confronts the coloniality of Israel's arms trade in Britain. As a Palestine Action activist details in a pre-action interview:[6]

> I'm back again because the occupation is still ongoing, the drones are still being produced in factories like the one in Leicester on British soil. And because I recognise that solidarity is rooted in concrete action and the best thing we can do for Palestine is taking direct action (@Pal_Action, 2021c).

By directly targeting the military and technological supply chains which perpetuate settler colonialism in Palestine and the global proliferations of weaponry, drone, and border technologies exported by Elbit Systems, Palestine Action works to disrupt the material relationships of coloniality and thus offers a model of a geo-politically attentive decolonial praxis in Britain. While decolonial scholars and advocates can work to push for BDS on campuses to make their universities "Apartheid Free Zones", the BDS Movement and Palestine Action provide a model example which can be drawn upon in generating a decolonial praxis outside the space of the university, where all decolonial advocacy must

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[6] Individuals are encouraged to take part in pre-action interviews before taking part in direct action with Palestine Action. The purpose of the interviews is to provide space for activists to explain the reasons why they have decided to take direct action, as well as to express that it is possible for anyone to take action in solidarity with the Palestinian cause in Britain.

ultimately direct its work. By embodying a struggle-as-method praxis alongside activist organising with networks and social movements such as Palestine Action, the dialectic between decolonial theory and decolonial advocacy through place-based struggle in an imperial site such as Britain, can be engaged through the praxis of guerrilla activist research.

As opposed to the practice of decolonising as academic moves-to-innocence by stripping decolonial theory from its context in the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle, Palestine Action has reconfigured the theory and strategy of the BDS movement in the network's own place-based context within Britain through its direct action campaign. In engaging with Palestine Action through guerrilla activist research, I have attempted to demonstrate how decolonial scholar-advocacy can operate to generate praxis-based knowledge which can inform British based solidarities with the Palestinian struggle for material decolonization. Specifically, Palestine Action's dual strategy has not only targeted weapons factories to prevent the manufacture of weapons which are used on Palestinians and other oppressed groups, but this praxis has also cultivated local communities of solidarity resisting weapons manufacturing and supporting Palestine in the long-term. These strategies for decolonization from our local geo-political locations, in part developed dialogically through a collaborative process of interviews-as-groundings with myself and fellow activists, as well as through the direct-actions, were thus generative sites for my development of the guerrilla activist research model. As Edward Said observed, "The point of theory therefore is to travel, always to move beyond its confinements, to emigrate, to remain in a sense in exile" (2000). If decolonial theory is to both acknowledge its roots in grassroots struggle and travel beyond the confines of its theoretical production to distant and uneven geographies of struggle and solidarity, it must be explicated and be made concrete through engagement with the contemporary forms and practices of those struggles. Only in this way can the double move of decolonial de-linking take place, one that challenges decolonising in the abstract towards building global relationships for decolonizing the CMP.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued for the need to recover a material decolonial praxis grounded in social struggle, expressed as a material force which generates radical theory, through guerrilla activist research, by directly confronting and disrupting the colonial matrix of power. I have critiqued the dilution of 'decolonising' and the restriction of decolonial thought and praxis within the walls of academic institutions. At best, there is an absence of decoloniality as a tool for exposing and challenging material connections between British universities and Israeli settler colonisation. At worst, 'decolonising' is used as an active tool for covering

up and mystifying these complicities through academic 'moves-to-innocence' by 'decolonising' in the abstract.

This article explored a number of decolonial and Black radical theorists and their conceptual frameworks for understanding the material reproduction of the CMP through the colonial world-system of racial capitalism. Then, these approaches were synthesised through my engagement with Palestine Action, forming a role of what I term the guerrilla activist researcher, which I suggest as a possible space for decolonial scholar-advocates based in Global Northern sites such as Britain to situate themselves geo-politically within. This encourages and embodies a double move of de-linking, both epistemologically and materially, from the relations of the coloniality of power through collaboration in concrete social struggles.

What the model of guerrilla activist research provides is not so much an applicable methodology, but rather an opening up of the possibilities that are produced through the dialogical relationship between intellectual research and the generative space of social movements in concrete action. In attempting to bridge the gap between decolonial theorising and decolonial advocacy with a constant movement of theory, reflection, and action, guerrilla activist research provides one pathway for radical scholars to tie in their academic practice into those spaces that are producing both knowledge and praxis against those systems that their respective disciplines attempt to describe and analyse, such as sociology, international relations, or politics, while also reaching beyond such disciplinary divisions. After all, knowledge produced in practice is unbounded by the epistemological and conceptual boundaries in which academic research is usually confined. Guerrilla activist research is not a disposing of alternative forms of activist-research. Rather, it is a methodology which builds upon them in such a way as to assert both the primacy of praxis and material social struggle within our research, as well as the importance of generating knowledge with activists that raises a committed decolonial consciousness that situates ourselves, our communities and our struggles within our global colonial conditions.

At its methodological and epistemological basis, what the model of guerrilla activist research as decolonial praxis calls us to demand is that decolonial theory, or 'decolonising', should no longer be asserted without concrete engagement in social struggle, that is, as an ongoing form of decolonial praxis. As Mignolo and Walsh articulate, drawing on Enrique Dussel, praxis makes the path (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, 19). It is within the continuous flow and movement of action and reflection, of theory and praxis, "wherein decoloniality is both enacted and rendered possible", cracks are made in racial capitalism and its colonial orders, and where the seeds of a decolonial future are planted (Ibid, 7-10). If decoloniality involves thinking, being, and doing otherwise, then we must be attentive not only to our various positionalities with relations of exploitation and oppression, but also to where we are situated geo-politically within the coloniality of power. This

way, we can develop a decolonial praxis that can disrupt it coloniality at both the local and global levels (Fúnez-Flores, 2022, 16). The framework provided by the BDS Movement, and the radical praxis of Palestine Action provide one strategic model in how this can be enacted, through the re-territorialisation of concrete international solidarity with the anti-colonial Palestinian struggle here in Britain. The direct-action campaign against Elbit Systems exists as one generative site of resistance in the struggle for the decolonization of Palestine and therefore, decolonization as a global project. It is within the movement of these radical solidarities, rooted in a strategy which blurs the local and the global, where a decolonial praxis can be forged (Desai, 2021, 62; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, 138).

As I have argued in this article, the task of decolonial praxis cannot be achieved through theory or within the academic or educational spheres alone. Theory and praxis must come together to be expressed as a material force in the movements which directly seek to know the world through changing it. In this way, we can strive towards

> Global cognitive justice, which is the objective of the epistemologies of the South, is a credible aspiration — an aspiration worth fighting for — only if it guides the practice here and now, inside the social struggles, in the relations within and among social groups fighting against domination. The lived experience of the ends for which one struggles must start in the means one uses to achieve them (Santos, 2018, 78-79).

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