

# ENVIRONMENTALISM OF THE OCCUPIED



*A slow violence perspective on the West Bank's deteriorating agricultural sector, and an overview of Palestinian agro-resistance in the struggle towards food sovereignty*

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Programme in Human  
Ecology

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21 May 2018  
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## Abstract

This thesis explores what it means to struggle for food sovereignty under belligerent occupation. It makes the argument that the deliberate suppression of agriculture in the West Bank (occupied Palestinian territories) and ensuing deterioration of food sovereignty can be understood as an example of “slow violence,” further entrenching the settler-colonial occupation of Palestine. The settler-colonial occupation, along with the creeping annexation of land, agro-military settlements, hydro-hegemony, and asphyxiating checkpoint regimes strip Palestinians of their traditional forms of livelihood. This is a most urgent issue, with access to agricultural land rapidly diminishing and Palestinians increasingly finding themselves as a captive market, left to rely on imported food from Israel. In this thesis, therefore, I explore how Palestinians’ agro-resistance, and struggle to achieve food sovereignty, is also perceived and operationalized as resistance to the occupation. The research was carried out using secondary sources, as well as field work in the West Bank, primarily through interviews and participant observation, and also draws on insights gained during an internship with Palestine’s largest farmer’s union; the Union of Agricultural Work Committees. It explores a range of different examples of agro-resistance in the West Bank (e.g., rooftop gardens in refugee camps, land reclamation, the revival of local seeds and community supported agriculture). The results are analyzed through a political ecology perspective, drawing on theoretical concepts, including; slow violence and food sovereignty. Extending on the concept of “environmentalism of the poor,” this thesis suggests that an “environmentalism of the occupied” can be observed in the West Bank, where environmentalism can be understood as a struggle to sustain current and future livelihoods, but *also* aimed at securing self-determination/sovereignty over land and resources. In a climate-changed future, with agriculture increasingly under threat across the globe, the strategies and especially the perseverance of Palestinians in their agro-resistance serves as an example for all of us.

*Keywords:* slow violence, food sovereignty, environmentalism of the poor, environmentalism of the occupied, resistance, occupied Palestinian territories (oPt).

## Acknowledgments

I am spectacularly thankful to *every single person* who has helped me in completing this thesis. Most of all, to the people I met in the West Bank who inspired me with their hope, courage and indefatigable determination. Any thesis would be too short to adequately express my admiration for you and the fantastic work that you do. I have never in my life met as many remarkable people in such a short time span, and only regret that the thesis is not long enough to include even more of your brilliant initiatives. Faced with more injustice than is fathomable, you are leading an environmental revolution that ought to teach and inspire all of us in the ways of resilience and resistance. Spending time with you was humbling! I am also grateful for having been accepted into the Human Ecology program, at Lund University. It has changed the way I see the world. Thank you to all students and professors, and especially to Andreas for your support in supervising this thesis. Friends, family, my love - I could not have done it without you.

## Abbreviations:

<b>BDS</b>	Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions
<b>CSA</b>	Community Supported Agriculture
<b>FSM</b>	Food Sovereignty Movement
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>JNF</b>	Jewish National Fund
<b>LVC</b>	La Vía Campesina
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OPT</b>	Occupied Palestinian Territories
<b>PA</b>	Palestinian (National) Authority
<b>PAS</b>	Palestinian Agricultural Sector
<b>PRDP</b>	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UAWC</b>	Union of Agricultural Work Committees
<b>WB</b>	West Bank

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Situating Palestine and the research topic

Words on paper cannot do justice to much of what encapsulates Palestine; the beauty of the country, the openness and the hospitality of the people. Unfortunately, words also cannot capture the full scale of the environmental injustice occurring on this small piece of land. It is, however, caught daily in the West Bank (WB), through one's senses. The smell of untreated sewage seeping down from a settlement into Palestinian fields, leaving crops inedible. The sound of water, heard streaming through pipes running across a farmer's land, but only supplying the neighboring settlement, used there for irrigation, verdant lawns and swimming pools, while the farmer has to transport his own water in with tanks. Burned olive trees and the scream of a female farmer as she despairingly relays how nearby settlers have burned down her grove. After years of waiting, they were finally bearing fruit. Many of the trees had names. They provided subsistence, and a crucial connection to a future on this land always at threat of being expropriated. In Ramallah there is a heartening mural which reads; "Their artillery can't kill our roots." This thesis hopes to explore why Palestinians find themselves a captive market to Israeli produce, and how a fledgling movement of agricultural projects is proving a potent weapon in the fight against the occupation and its overlapping systems of power and domination - what Palestinian activist, Vivien Sansour (2010), refers to as *agro-resistance*.

Paradoxically, what was once known as the Fertile Crescent is growing increasingly dependent on food imports. Before the occupation, the WB was a net exporter of agricultural products. Today, when you step into a bustling fruit and vegetable market in the WB, the vast majority of the produce comes in boxes adorned with Hebrew letters, brought in from Israel or the Israeli settlements in the WB. In 1994, the contribution of the agricultural sector made up approximately 13.3% of the WB gross domestic product (GDP), but has dropped to just 3.2% today (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 1994 and 2017). Today, the state known as Israel has expanded to control more than 93% of historic Palestine (Lloyd and Pulido, 2010) and, although slowly, continues to expand. The Oslo process institutionalized the concentration of the most valuable natural resources of the WB in Israeli-controlled areas. As you look out over the Jordan Valley, you see one mammoth farm after another, but as you get closer, it becomes evident that the vast agri-industrial farms are all operated by Israeli settlers. Once known as Palestine's breadbasket, today 94% of the Jordan Valley is under full Israeli

military and civil control (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2012). It is, arguably, a textbook moral injury for Palestinians in the WB to have to buy vegetables grown on colonized Palestinian land, using appropriated Palestinian water, with the profits going back into the illegal settlements. As described in section 5.2.1, the profits generated by the income from the agricultural settlements allow them to expand, which further accelerates the de-agriculturalization of the WB.

The struggle for food sovereignty in the WB faces a trifecta of obstacles; the belligerent occupation, the dominance of international organizations and the neoliberal turn of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which this thesis will discuss in turn. Since its inception, the Zionist project has been predicated on detaching Palestinians from their land (Pappé, 2007). As this thesis will argue, the State of Israel uses the suppression of the Palestinian agricultural sector, and the ensuing dependency on food imports, as a means of slow violence and a tool of occupation. Therefore, activists on the ground are rejecting the notion of merely obtaining food security, in favor of the counterhegemonic notion of food sovereignty, seeing it as intrinsically linked to Palestinian national sovereignty. The concept of food sovereignty is underpinned by a belief that all peoples have a right to control their own food systems, including their markets, modes of production, food cultures and natural resources. But what does it mean to struggle for food sovereignty while lacking *political* sovereignty?

Movements the world over are trying to democratize increasingly corporatized agricultural systems. Faced with an additional layer of asymmetry, the agro-resistance movement in the WB is challenging the settler-colonial Israeli food power. Determined to preserve every remaining *dunam*<sup>1</sup> of Palestinian land from confiscation by the Israeli state, they are supporting farmers in cultivating the land. Their work is underpinned by a vision to end the dependency on food aid and imported Israeli products wherever possible, and to promote indigenous Palestinian grown alternatives instead. Though it might not look that way at first glance, with their pickaxes and seed bags, these farmers and activists are, indeed, at the forefront of the battle against Israeli occupation.

I hope to contribute to the growing scholarly debate around the importance of agricultural resistance in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), such as the work of Mansour (2012), Abdelnour et al. (2012) and Zurayk and Gough (2013), which I return to throughout the thesis. While there have also been publications focused on the threat of food insecurity in the

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<sup>1</sup> One dunam equals 1000 square meters.

WB, they do not usually go on to discuss the many ways in which Palestinians are resisting and fighting back. Convinced that my research should follow the trends I observed amongst the activists on the ground in the WB; my analysis focuses on the countless ways this resistance is occurring every day.

I am motivated to contribute to this topic, as I noticed a research gap within the field of political ecology and environmentalism in the Middle East in general and the oPt in particular. Moreover, there is currently very little comparative research that is focused on common trends and strategies across occupied peoples (from Palestine to Tibet, Western Sahara, Kurdistan, etc.), concerning how they increasingly employ environmental narratives to fight for sovereignty over land and resources. This under-theorized issue is of great importance and could prove of great significance as the global scramble for resources is predicted to escalate in the coming years. It might seem frivolous - in a context of military occupation, with so much *acute* violence – to concern oneself with the slow violence of a deteriorating agricultural sector. But, as this thesis intends to argue, the creeping annexation of land, and the slow but steady gravitation towards complete dependence on Israel for food, proves a most urgent issue. The following pages represent an attempt to understand what it means to persevere and to reject consenting to one's own eradication. Drawing on fieldwork and secondary sources, it explores various examples of Palestinian agro-resistance. Some interviews took place over a desk, but perhaps the most informative ones took place bent over in a field sowing chickpeas or sampling ripe cucumbers in a rooftop garden in a refugee camp.

## 1.2 Aim and research questions

The origin and momentum of this field of scholarship come from the work of indigenous Palestinian activists and scholars; I modestly add my perspective and try to build on it, and hope to make a contribution to this emerging field of research. While drawing on a range of meta-concepts such as resistance, sovereignty, settler-colonialism and environmental injustice, I intend to add to this field of research by approaching the issues through the lens of political ecology. This thesis uses a multifaceted theoretical framework linking slow violence, environmentalism of the poor, and food theory. Drawing on existing theory, secondary sources, and my own empirical findings, it further intends to make a theoretical contribution, arguing that the growing agro-resistance movement observed in the WB can be conceptualized as “environmentalism of the occupied.”



This thesis intends to answer the following research questions:

**1) What are the main factors suppressing the Palestinian agricultural sector and how have these led to a deterioration of food sovereignty in the West Bank?**

- How can these obstacles be understood as a case of slow violence?

**2) How is the Palestinian struggle to regain control over natural resources and achieve food sovereignty perceived and operationalized as resistance to the occupation?**

- Extending on Martínez-Alier's (2003) concept of "environmentalism of the poor," how can "environmentalism of the occupied" in the WB be understood, not only as a struggle for sustaining current and future livelihoods but *also* aimed at securing self-determination/sovereignty over land and resources?
- What are some of the agro-resistance strategies employed?

### 1.3 The political ecology of occupation

"The Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides a textbook case of a political ecology of war" (*Nature is a Battlefield*, Keucheyan 2017, 127)

This section describes the key tenets of political ecology, and why I argue that it is an illuminating lens through which to view the highly political environment of the WB. Within the last decade, there has been a growing interest in how environment and conflict intersect, and the field of political ecology is especially apt in addressing my research topic. The critical research field of political ecology is not comprised of one single body of theory; rather it is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary analytical approach underpinned by common principles (Robbins 2012, 9). Robbins (2012, 5) describes how the tree of political ecology "spouted from the intellectual seeds" of critical development research, peasant studies, environmental history, cultural ecology and postcolonial theory.

A key factor of the political ecology approach focuses on identifying ecological systems as *power-laden*, challenging apolitical and decontextualized explanations (Walker, 2005). Gradually (from local to regional and global), it takes into consideration the broad web of dynamic human-environmental linkages and their interconnections (Hempel in Robbins 2012, 15). This is in line with my thesis' discussion of the asymmetry of power, and of how

different bodies/entities (including the occupier, the international community, and the PA) leaves the WB a highly politicized environment. One might even argue that there is no *apolitical* ecology left in the WB. It is also important to highlight that the majority of new and critical ideas of political ecology are not produced in universities, but rather through the vigorous work of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activist groups on the ground (Robbins 2012, 21). In that sense, the WB is arguably full of political ecologists, and it is their work that inspires me. Of particular interest to this thesis is the subfield of liberation ecology (Peet and Watts, 2004), which focuses on the “potential liberatory or emancipatory” opportunities of environmental activism. It describes how activists “see the possibilities for broadening environmental issues into a movement for livelihood entitlements, and social justice” (ibid., 38), and in the case of the WB, one might add, for national liberation.

## 1.4 Disposition

In answering my research question, the thesis follows this structure: **Chapter 2** offers a brief introduction to the underlying contextual issues of the colonial matrix of control, de-development, and the settler-colonial present. It also provides a short summary of the economic aspects of the Oslo Accords and the First Intifada. **Chapter 3** introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis, namely slow violence, environmentalism of the poor and food sovereignty, and **Chapter 4** elaborates on the methodology used in this thesis. An assessment of the factors suppressing the Palestinian agricultural sector (PAS) is presented in **Chapter 5**. Followed by an analysis of how these factors can be understood as an example of slow violence in **Chapter 6**. **Chapter 6** goes on to answer the second research question, discussing how the Palestinian resistance and struggle towards food sovereignty can be interpreted as “environmentalism of the occupied.” Finally, **Chapter 7** connects the two research questions and discusses the implications of the findings.

## 2. CONTEXT

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2017 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the oPt, and many of the young people I met in the WB are now the third generation to grow up under occupation. The United Nations (UN) voted in 1947 to partition the contested piece of land into two separate states. A war followed in 1948 - known in Israel as “the war of independence” and amongst Palestinians as the *Nakba*, al-Nakba in Arabic, meaning the catastrophe and referring to the exodus of some 700.000 – 900.000 Palestinians as a result of the war (Abu-Lughod in BADIL 2013, 10). Palestinians, from more than 500 villages, were left as refugees – a status that the surviving refugees and subsequently their descendants, hold to this day. For this reason, and because a range of expulsion methods remain prevalent today, in Palestine the *Nakba* is often referred to as a *still ongoing process* (see, e.g., Pappé 2007, 245). While the field of ‘Palestine Studies’ is dauntingly broad, this chapter introduces what I consider the most crucial of underpinning concepts to contextualize my area of research, namely; the notions of the *colonial matrix of control* (Halper, 2000), *de-development* (Roy, 1987) and the *settler-colonial present* (Wolfe, 2006 and Gregory, 2004). Lastly, it provides a brief overview of the Oslo Accords and the First Intifada.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1 The colonial matrix of control and de-development

Israeli peace activist Jeff Halper (2000) refers to Israel’s oppression of the WB as representing a *colonial matrix of control*. It is “an interlocking series of mechanisms,” Halper points out, “that allow Israel to control every aspect of Palestinian life in the Occupied Territories.” The matrix is composed of a triple-layered system of control mechanisms. Firstly, the overt forcible measures (including direct military action, imprisonment, torture, and curfews). Next is the more subtle control, derived from the Israeli policy of creating and changing the “facts on the ground,” that is the physical realization of the imaginative geography of the Israeli state. These include land expropriation, the construction of Israeli settlements in

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<sup>2</sup> The occupation of Palestine is wrought with Orwellian misnomers and discursive violence, and I need to briefly intersect a cautionary note on the terminology of this thesis. I use the term ‘occupied Palestinian territories’ (oPt) in accordance with the accepted nomenclature employed by the UN. The Geneva Convention, Art. 49 (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949) irrefutably states that an occupying power shall not “transfer parts of its own population into the territories it occupies”, but for brevity I refer to *illegal* Israeli settlements, simply as “settlements.” Similarly, I refer to what the International Court of Justice (2004) has declared an *illegally constructed wall* as simply “the wall”.

the WB, as well as the Byzantine network of highways and bypass roads connecting these settlements to Israel.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, and perhaps most subtle of all, is the bureaucratic/legal layer of control, through which Kafkaesque permit processes, color-coded license plates, and Israeli issued ID-cards, narrowly restrict where one is to lead one's life. All are, Halper contends, tools used to suffocate Palestinians through restrictions (ibid.). This thesis argues that the three layers of the colonial matrix of control are influential in suffocating the PAS as well.

While initially coined by Roy (1987) about the conditions in Gaza, the notion of *de-development* has, since the 1990s, been widely applied in the WB as well. Roy argues that the Israeli occupation does not merely cause delay or underdevelopment of the economy. In fact, the “economic and, by extension, societal potential is not only distorted but denied” through “the deliberate, systematic and progressive dismemberment of an indigenous economy by a dominant one” (Roy 2007, 33). Reports from international agencies substantiate Roy's argument that the occupation is “depriving or ridding the economy of its capacity and potential” (Roy 1995, 128). (See, e.g., United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2017<sup>4</sup> and the World Bank, 2013<sup>5</sup>). As Sayigh (in Haddad 2016, 49) argues, it is not so much the “invisible hand” of market forces, but rather “the visible hand of the occupying power” which has “twisted, distorted and stunted” the Palestinian economy since the onset of the occupation. This thesis finds that today, more than 30 years after its origin, Roy's observation is still very pertinent, especially with regards to the systemic de-development of the WB's agricultural sector.

Looking towards the foreseeable future, there are three worrying trends worth highlighting about the topic at hand. Firstly, the Palestinian population is expected to double by

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<sup>3</sup> See also research concerning the “infrastructural violence” of the occupation (Salamanca, 2014); focused on the detrimental impact of e.g. the wall, military outposts, Israelis-only bypass roads, checkpoints, settlements and other large-scale infrastructure or Hanafi (2013), for research, on what he terms the “spaciocide” of the WB.

<sup>4</sup> The report strongly condemns the Israeli occupation, resulting in “five decades of de-development, suppressed human potential and denial of the right to development” (UNCTAD, 2017). It raises concerns about the continuous decline in GDP growth over the past two decades, as well as the appropriation of Palestinian natural resources and institutionalization of economic dependence on Israel.

<sup>5</sup> The World Bank report (2013), using a *conservative* counterfactual scenario assuming no physical, legal or regulatory constraints in just Area C (see Section 2.2) concludes that potential agricultural activities alone could add USD 704m to the Palestinian economy each year. However, see Meari (2017) for hard-hitting criticism of the World Bank's assumption that the sea minerals, quarrying and agricultural produce could be exported, equivalently, under the PA's control, with foreign markets in mind. Depoliticizing the occupational regime, the World Bank report envisions enhanced cooperation with Israeli security forces and presents the agro-military settlements as “an ideal economic model to be imitated by Palestinians” (ibid.). There is no mention by the World Bank of how such an export-strategy could decrease Palestinian dependence on Israeli imports, let alone lead to an end to the occupation.

2050 to a total of 9.5 million (UNFPA, 2016), which, unless current trends reverse, is expected to lead to even greater dependence on food imports. Secondly, in the era of Trump, an emboldened Israeli right-wing government has escalated its settlement expansion, expanding existing settlements during 2017, with twice as many additional settlement units built than the year before (OHCHR, 2018), as well as construction of the first *new* settlement in the WB since the Oslo Accords in 1993 (Kershner, 2017).<sup>6</sup> Lastly, there have been no negotiations between Israel and Palestine since 2014.

## 2.2 The settler-colonial present and its logic of elimination



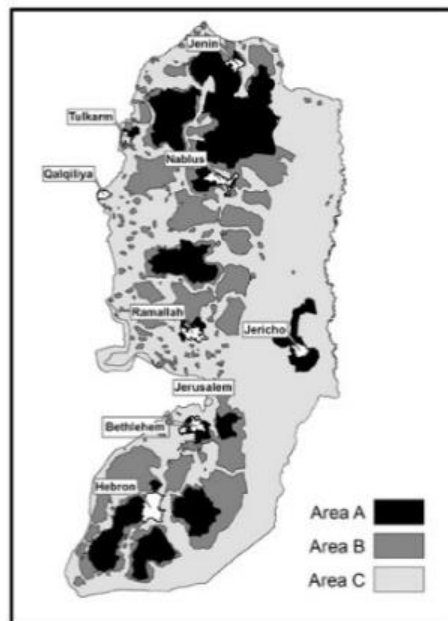
Map 1) The gradual shrinking of Palestine (Source: Sharif 2017, 17).

In the WB, not only is there a colonial past, but also a colonial *present* (Gregory, 2004). Initially, post-1948 Palestine was explained using colonialism as an analytical paradigm, however as Farsakh (2008) notes, “colonialism has been challenged for its inability to account for the peculiarity of the Zionist project, which did not seek economic exploitation per se.” Settler-colonial studies have since been suggested as the better paradigm, with its founding assertion that “settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event” (Wolfe, 2006). As illustrated in Map 1, Wolfe (ibid.) further cautions that settler-colonialism “progressively eats into Indigenous territory,” and inevitably involves a “logic of elimination,” and at times even “genocidal logics” (ibid.). The expansion of settler-colonial agriculture is “geared to vouchsafing its own reproduction,” generating and regenerating profits in a

<sup>6</sup> See also Cook (2018) for more on the alarming 2016 retroactive legalization of WB settlements and the growing acknowledgment that Israel is in fact “preparing the ground to annex the occupied Palestinian territories.”

continuous cycle, rendering the indigenous population increasingly dependent on the settler-colonial economy as they lose access to their own resources (ibid.). Veracini (2013) describes how settler-colonial goes beyond merely wanting to “control the ‘natives’ from a metropolitan center” (as, for instance, British rule in India), but in fact hopes to “erase indigenous peoples in order to replace them with another socio-political body” (as, for instance, in the United States and Australia). Lastly, of particular interest to this thesis is Tuck and Yang’s (2012) admonition that settler-colonial “insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain,” which is especially evident in terms of the de-development of the PAS.

### 2.3 The myth of the peace process



Map 2) Map depicting the three administrative zones implemented during the Oslo Accords.

(Source: Peace Now, 2015)

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into detail on the full history of the occupation and the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords. Instead, this section will briefly outline the primary outcomes of the negotiations in relation to the topic at hand. Namely, the division of the WB into three distinct administrative divisions, the ensuing deterioration of the “facts on the ground” and the disillusionment that followed. The Oslo Accords were intended to *temporarily* divide the WB into three administrative zones, called Areas A, B, and C (illustrated in Map 2). Area A, 18% of the WB, is comprised of the main towns and is under so-called “full”

Palestinian civil and security control. Whereas in Area B, approx. 22% of the WB, the PA controls civilian services but has joint security control with the Israeli military. Finally, Area C, covering 60% of the territory, is under full Israeli control (OCHA, 2017a).<sup>7</sup> This division was supposed to be an interim arrangement until full Palestinian governance over the entire WB was achieved by 1999. 25 years on, the WB remains a territorial archipelago subdivided into 166 separate units that have no territorial contiguity.

There is also a widespread criticism amongst Palestinians and an increasing number of international observers that the Israeli state employs the peace process as a smokescreen, all the while altering the facts on the ground (see, e.g., Mansour, 2011). For instance, despite agreeing to halt settlement expansions during the Oslo Accords, today there are 270.000 *more settlers* than when the Oslo Accords were signed (with a total of 588.000 settlers as of 2016) (B'Tselem, 2018). In “The Oslo Illusion” Hanieh (2013a) warns that often the “stated goals of Oslo” are confused with its real aims, i.e., serving “as a fig leaf” for Israel “to consolidate and deepen its control over Palestinian life.” Thrall (2017, 133) adds that among those active in the resistance movement in the oPt, there is a one-word answer when asked why there has not been wider support for a civil disobedience campaign in the last decades: “Oslo.” As detailed in the next section, the economic aspects of Oslo institutionalized the WB as a captive market and “immunized Israel against the forms of protest to which it had previously been vulnerable” (Thrall 2017, 143).

## 2.4 Critique of the Paris Protocol, and ensuing economic dependence on Israel in the post-Oslo years

One feature of the Oslo Accords proved especially detrimental to the Palestinian agricultural sector - namely the Protocol of Economic Relations (known as the Paris Protocol), signed in 1994. This section will outline how, what again was meant to be an *interim* (five years) protocol is still wreaking havoc 24 years later. While intended to create a customs union with equal market benefits between the two countries, Israel has been widely criticized for not showing good faith in the implementation and enforcement of the Paris Protocol (Taghdisi-Rad, 2010). This has resulted in what Le More (2008, 53) has referred to as one-sided economic integration which, while giving the impression of an equitable relationship between partners,

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<sup>7</sup> The conditions in Area C are especially deplorable for the diminishing number of Palestinians living there. According to the World Bank (2013), less than 1% of Area C is designated by the Israeli authorities for Palestinian use, the remaining 68% is reserved for Israeli settlements, approx. 22% for closed military zones and 9% for nature reserves.

masks the exploitative relationship between the two (Kuttab et al., 2017). With regards to exports, the Paris Protocol states that Palestine has the right to export agricultural products to external markets barring restrictions (Paris Protocol, 1994). In reality, however, all exports are handled through Israeli sea and air ports, or border crossings entirely controlled by Israel. The processes of transferring all goods from Palestinian to Israeli trucks, extensive checking, and much higher transaction costs mean that Palestinian imports and exports can, as a result, cost twice as much as those of Israeli imports and exports, and increase the average waiting time by up to four times (Beltrán and Kallis, 2018).<sup>8</sup> These structural obstacles have left Palestinians heavily reliant on Israeli imports.<sup>9</sup>

The main consequences of asymmetric economic relations include Israel's ability to protect its own farmers from competition from Palestinian products through export restrictions (Haj Khalil, 2009; Taghdisi-Rad, 2011). The WB is unable to stop the free flow of Israeli goods into Palestinian markets. This is how the WB has come to be described as a *captive market* with sub-standard Israeli products sold at below-cost prices (see Section 5.2.1). At the onset of the Oslo Accords, the WB was – with much fanfare – declared “open for business” (Friedman, 2009). Since then, it has been increasingly obvious that “the myth of the Palestinian economy” is just that (Arafah, 2017). In summary, it appears that the anticipated economic peace that the Oslo Accords was expected to bring about with its “peace dividend” has yet to arrive in the WB.

## 2.5 The legacy of the First Intifada

In order to contextualize the present-day agro-resistance, I want to also briefly present an overview of the First Intifada (henceforth: the Intifada). While Palestine has a long and impressive history of popular struggles and resistance, this period of intensified resistance, lasting from 1987-91, is of particular interest as it gave rise to many characteristics relevant to those engaged in agro-resistance today, including resistance as an everyday praxis, and linking

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<sup>8</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis, but see Palestinian Ministry of Economy and the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem, 2011 (in Beltrán and Kallis, 2018) for concrete examples of how these delays in inspection procedures – are especially detrimental with regards to fresh produce. There are also speculations that clearing procedures are implemented particularly “harshly when it suits the needs of Israeli markets or to punish farmers at times of heightened political tension” (Palestinian Farming and Civil Society Organizations, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> After the US, the oPt constitutes the second largest market for Israeli exports (which presumably disincentivizes them to change their policies), approximately 70% of Palestinian imports are from Israel – although “cheaper and more competitive sources for Palestinian imports are available worldwide” (UNCTAD, 2017).



economic resistance with political aspirations. *Intifada* in Arabic translates as shaking off, and that is precisely what the Intifada intended to do; shake off the ties to the occupier. This included strategies of non-cooperation such as the withdrawal from the Israeli labor market, boycotting Israeli products, general strikes, and a refusal to pay taxes to the Israeli authorities (Lim 2012, 219). Framed around a narrative of “constructive resistance,” the participants were determined to provide Palestinians with services, which Israel failed to deliver adequately, if at all, including healthcare, education, agricultural support, and cultural enterprises. The intifada rested on an extensive range of committees and networks, including student associations, women’s societies, trade unions, social and cultural associations and, especially, neighborhood committees, which allowed for a broad sector of society to become involved (Darweish and Rigby 2015, 57).

King (2007, 229-231) describes how one of the most influential groupings among the popular committees focused on an agricultural response to the occupation. Initiatives included popular interventions that helped farmers reclaim land by cultivating it (Dana, 2014). More than 500.000 fruit trees alone were planted during the first two years of the Intifada (King 2007, 230). Of particular relevance to the topic of Palestinian food sovereignty is the encouragement during the Intifada for people to establish so-called “Victory Gardens.” In response to the Israeli crackdown on the Intifada (including village-wide sieges and curfews), as well as an overall strategy to overcome economic hardship by reviving household economies, Victory Gardens were crucial in strengthening the *sumud*<sup>10</sup> of the people. Established through grassroots volunteer efforts, the garden projects were not-for-profit and focused on achieving full or partial self-sufficiency and ensuring economic survival (Abu Sa’Da and Tartir, 2014; Dana, 2014).<sup>11</sup>

The Intifada employed a dual strategy of resistance: both *delinking* from the Israeli state through, e.g., boycotts and strikes, while simultaneously creating “a progressive alternative to the colonial order” through an anti-colonial emancipatory vision of fostering wider Palestinian productive capacity and self-sufficiency (Tabar, 2013). Understanding the legacy of the Intifada, provides insight into the roots and pervasiveness of Israel’s employment of food power in the WB, as well as Israel’s perseverance in terms of preventing self-sufficiency

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<sup>10</sup> A multidimensional word that defies translation into English, but denotes unyielding defiance and a sense of steadfastness and rootedness.

<sup>11</sup> The horizontal organizational strategy was important because it had no clear leaders, and therefore was difficult to control, let alone stop. Nonetheless, before long, the army began their arrests, and many were arrested for the “crime” of teaching back-yard gardening skills or distributing seeds (Qumsiyeh 2011, 142-149; Kaufman-Lacusta 2010, 43-44).

in the WB (see also Shomali and Cowan, 2014). Many activists lament that the kind of solidarity and liberatory consciousness present during the Intifada has died out, further institutionalized by the territorial fragmentation of the Oslo Accords and NGO'ization of civil society (Shehadeh 2015, 50; Tabar, 2013).

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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This thesis builds on theoretical concepts related to the field of political ecology. The following section will introduce the three carrying concepts applied in the thesis: (1) slow violence, (2) environmentalism of the poor, and (3) food sovereignty. Due to space constraints, I have chosen to focus on the *main characteristics* of the respective theories and why I find them especially relevant in relation to the thesis topic.

#### 3.1 Slow violence: rethinking how violence is defined

Violence is typically perceived “as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space” (Nixon 2011a, 2). Slow violence, according to Nixon, refers to violence happening in a different manner, often hidden from sight, dispersed across time and space, but with disastrous aggregate results. The ignoring or marginalization of such slow-motion catastrophes leads Nixon to call for a “widening of what constitutes violence” (2011a, 10). Nixon’s (2011a) conceptualization of slow violence rethinks and expands how violence is defined. Building on previous exposés of cumulative and attritional environmental hazards (e.g., Carson’s 1962 *Silent Spring* with its focus on “death by indirection”), Nixon draws attention to the delayed and often hidden “violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space” (ibid., 2). Especially consequential are also the representational issues that slow violence poses. Its relative invisibility and delayed effects make it very hard for the stories of slow violence to get told. This, Nixon laments, is “a particularly pressing question for our age, as the news cycle spins ever faster, as the media venerates spectacle, and as public policy is increasingly shaped around what are perceived as immediate needs” (Nixon, 2011b). Nixon adds, that it is in particular with regard to climate change and war’s toxic aftermaths that “the staggered and staggeringly discounted casualties” are representationally neglected (Nixon, 2011a, 2).

### 3.2 Environmentalism of the poor

Martínez-Alier (2004) coined the concept of “environmentalism of the poor,” in part describing the environmental interlinkages of social justice struggles, which might not at first appear environmental. Initially they perhaps appear as traditional land conflicts, but they also have an ecological aspect (ibid.). “Environmentalism of the poor” is increasingly gaining attention as a third current of environmentalism, in addition to what is described as the first (the “cult of wilderness”) and second currents (the so-called “gospel of eco-efficiency”). This third current is also often referred to as “popular environmentalism,” “the environmental justice movement” or “livelihood/liberation ecology.” It is also described as a rejection of the post-materialist interpretation of environmentalism, which posits that industrialized, Western nations are more prone to be concerned about environmental protection (see Inglehart, 1981). Environmental concern thus becomes a luxury, which poor people – preoccupied with fulfilling basic needs cannot concern themselves with. “Environmentalism of the poor” describes how, while there is sometimes also a sacred reverence for nature, for many joining in this struggle, the environment is not a luxury, but a prerequisite for their livelihood and survival, and it is this material underpinning that motivates its followers. The thesis of “environmentalism of the poor” does *not* argue that poor people automatically adopt environmentalist views. However, based on extensive research studying a myriad of resource extraction and waste disposal conflicts in history and today, Martínez-Alier shows that “the poor are often on the side of the preservation of nature against business firms and the state” (Martínez-Alier et al. 2017, 323). This is so because such behavior “is consistent with their interests and with their values,” and poorer people will act to protect the natural resource base on which their lives and futures depend. While the term does pose some risk of essentializing, it is important to note that it is not strictly geographically determined.<sup>12</sup>

Conflicts also arise as the resource frontier continues to expand along with the globalizing scale of the present-day capitalist world economy. This growth in social metabolism, Martínez-Alier contends, “means we are seeing more instances of resource extraction conflicts in poor or indigenous communities brought into the front line of contests about the values of environmental resources and services” (Martínez-Alier, 2007). There is a

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<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Dauvergne’s (2016) description of how “environmentalism of the rich” (i.e., efforts to save the environment that concentrate on the potential for growth and consumption) can be found among elites in *both* the global North and South. Just as, for instance, the water protectors at Standing Rock Sioux (USA) fall within the “environmentalism of the poor” spectrum.

collision between valuation languages, which is why states or companies often fail in attempts to pay-off and stop communities that are engaged in “environmentalism of the poor”-related activities. For many such communities, it is a matter of having access to a sustained livelihood, as well as territorial rights, underpinned by a notion that “the fights for human rights and environment are inseparable” (Martínez-Alier et al. 2017, 323). This third current has also helped to shift the reputation of environmentalism in the global South. Nixon (2011a, 4) describes how environmental discourses had hitherto been “regarded with skepticism as neocolonial Western impositions inimical to the resource priorities of the poor in the global South” (e.g., conservation or antihuman environmentalism imposed by Western nations or NGOs). “Environmentalism of the poor” in a sense *takes back* the notion of protecting the environment and gives credence to environmental justice narratives. In the analysis, I address how this is very relevant in relation to the WB.

Often “environmentalism of the poor” also encompasses cases of environmental racism, i.e., exposure to “pollution or resource extraction injustices on grounds of membership of particular ethnic groups, social class or caste” (Martínez-Alier et al., 2016). An inventory of the online “Environmental Justice Organizations, Liabilities and Trade” (EJOLT) atlas of environmental conflicts shows that in many countries, “indigenous populations are involved in ecological distribution conflicts much more than one would expect by their share of population in the country as a whole” (ibid.). The repertoire of strategies includes everything from advocacy through dialogue and education programs, to more direct confrontations with local and/or international adversaries. “Environmentalism of the poor” fights its battles in courtrooms, at demonstrations, by blocking sites of extraction, in boycotts, strikes, refusing compensation, and so forth (see, e.g., EJOLT Atlas, 2018 for more).

While this thesis extends on Martínez-Alier’s “environmentalism of the poor” to describe the agro-resistance movement in the WB as environmentalism of the occupied, I also want to briefly mention work done in a similar vein by Scott (1985). In *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott describes forms of resistance within peasant communities. Scott intends to break with media and earlier literature portraying peasants as passive victims without agency. As a reaction to affronts to their moral economy, peasants employ “everyday forms of resistance,” which, although such subversive tactics are often too subtle to make headlines, are, in fact, useful in reaching (modest) concrete goals (see also Scott, 1989).

### 3.3 Food theory

To contextualize the situation in the oPt, it is necessary to address the broader global food crisis briefly. “The annual massacre of tens of millions of men, women and children by hunger,” argues Zeigler, the first UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, “constitutes the scandal of our times” (in Mann 2014, x). In a world where – presently – global agriculture production is sufficient to feed more than double the world’s population, “every child who dies from hunger is murdered,” he poignantly adds (ibid.). Many scholars within the field, however, underscore that the food system is in fact not broken, it is working precisely as a capitalist food system is *intended* to work (Holt-Giménez 2017, 57; Bello, 2009; Patel and McMichael, 2009). The systemic crisis of the current food system is following patterns rooted in colonialism and exacerbated through the globalized accumulation mechanisms of the neoliberal free-market paradigm (Trauger, 2014).

Focusing on the oPt, and the wider Levant, it is relevant to pose the following question: how did a region known as the ‘cradle of agriculture,’ become so dependent on food imports? Both the Arab Spring rallying cries of “bread, freedom and social justice” and the role droughts and ensuing food insecurity played in catalyzing the Syrian civil war have brought this issue to the fore. Swain and Jägerskog (2016, 52) also describe how the food price hikes of 2007-2008, have led to a renewed interest in food sovereignty and greater national production (for a more detailed elaboration of the decreasing food security in the Levant see, e.g., Kamrava et al., 2012, and Zurayk’s, 2012a, examination of how Middle Eastern indigenous agricultural practices are rapidly deteriorating).

#### *3.3.1 Food security and its limitations:*

Food sovereignty, as a concept, arose out of a rejection of the growing prominence of food security within academic and political spheres. Adopted initially at the 1996 World Food Summit, the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Rome Declaration on World Food Security, defines food security as existing “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996). In the immediate aftermath, civil society organizations raised critique that such a technocratic understanding “connotes simply adequacy of supplies and nutritional content, with the food itself produced and delivered under any conditions, including far-off, chemical-intensive industrial agriculture” (Edelman et

al., 2014). Patel (2009) makes an especially stinging critique of food security's avoidance of addressing issues of power and control of production, as he warns that "it is entirely possible for people to be food secure in prison or under a dictatorship." Since the 1996 definition of food security, a wide range of state and intrastate policies have been framed around the principle of food security. Free trade is, thus, understood as the main tool for achieving food security (Zuryak and Gough 2013, 8). Despite criticism, the neoliberal conceptualization of food security (which claims that a corporate agro-exporting model in a globalized world) is perfectly suitable to ensure that food is available for everyone is still the most dominant (Kuttab et al., 2017), and has been used to legitimize the present-day managerial "solutions," rather than addressing the root cause of global food insecurity.

McMichael describes how peasants today increasingly self-identify as "canaries in the mine" (McMichael, 2008), seeing their condition as an indicator of the social injustice and environmental havoc brought about by the "toxic combination" of "industrial agriculture, and its enabling policies of neo-liberalism" (ibid.). Consequently, there is a growing trend of agrarian resistance (McMichael, 2008), and peasants, who had been pushed out of farming, mobilizing to reclaim their fields (Clayes, 2013). The food sovereignty movement (FSM) has, since the mid-1990s, been employing, what Benford and Snow (2000) refer to as counter-framing. Specifically, challenging the dominant food security frame, and instead replacing it with one of food sovereignty (Rosset 2006, 34).

### *3.3.2 The shift to food sovereignty*

The concept of food sovereignty got its breakthrough in 1996 due to the work of international peasant organization La Vía Campesina (LVC).<sup>13</sup> This happened as a reaction to the disillusionment that followed the adoption of the concept of "food security," and a wider rejection of the neoliberal agribusiness development model and the aftermath of the Green Revolution (Edelman et al., 2014). In contrast to the FAO definition, food sovereignty is a bottom-up, grassroots concept. It has evolved a lot in the past two decades, and as such, there is no single agreed upon definition. However, LVC's inaugural "Food Sovereignty: A Future

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<sup>13</sup> La Vía Campesina (The Peasant Way) is a network of over 160 rural peoples' organizations situated in approximately 80 countries in the Global North and South and claims to be the world's largest social movement (LVC, 2018). Prior to the establishment of LVC, McMichael (2009) describes how the subaltern perspective of small-scale farmers – particularly from the global south – was largely silenced. Furthermore, there were limited possibilities for farmers' organizations across the globe to form alliances and share strategies of resistance.

without Hunger” (1996) declaration states that: “Food sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security” (LVC, 1996). One of the key tenets of food sovereignty is its focus on addressing the roots - not the symptoms - of food insecurity. In that sense it politicizes the current food crises, rejecting the notion that the widespread hunger and deteriorating environmental state of the world is an unintended consequence of an otherwise well-functioning food system.

In 2007 the first International Food Sovereignty Forum brought together over 500 delegates in the Malian village of Nyéléni, and the resultant “Nyéléni Declaration” was instrumental in formulating an agenda of resistance for the FSM (Edelman et al., 2014). Building on the foundational work of LVC, the declaration also emphasized issues of specific relevance to this thesis. The declaration, for instance, states that local producers, not other authorities or corporations, have a right to control their land, water, seeds and local markets. Furthermore, food sovereignty must also apply to those who are “under occupation, in conflict zones and marginalized” and seeks to re-empower farming communities, and rejects food dumping and inappropriate food aid, which are prone to creating dependency (Nyéléni Declaration, 2007). While there are many commendable aspects of food sovereignty, the rest of this section will focus on its most crucial features in relation to the thesis topic.

#### *Choice and control:*

The FSM provides a powerful framework to shift the orientation of the global food system from its focus on commodification, and rethinks it in terms of self-determination, social justice, public health, cultural appropriateness and sustainability (Nyéléni Declaration, 2007). Food sovereignty is less about a right to food per se, but instead emphasizes the rights of a community to make its own decisions regarding production and consumption activities (Trauger, 2014). It focuses especially on how food security should *never have to be at the benevolence* of an outside controlling entity - be it humanitarian food aid or an occupying power: then it is not true food security. The people - not corporations, foreign NGOs or international financial institutions, and certainly not occupying powers - should be in control and able to make choices regarding their food. Gross and Feldman (2015) describe how, in the case of Gaza, the FSM’s emphasis on “the right to produce their own food in their own territory” is insufficient if it does not also “stress the right to exercise sovereignty regarding the importing

of food alongside the growing of food.” Walking around any WB market, it is awfully evident that it is also the case there. Even if, hypothetically, WB farmers could freely grow their own food on their own territory, it would still be an unjust and untenable situation, far from true food sovereignty as long as dumped products from Israel and the settlements flood the markets.

*Reframes the debate around peasants and intersectionality:*

Edelman et al. (2014) describe how the FSM challenges the corporate market colonization and aspires to return the land to its social function “as the producer of food and sustainer of life, that puts local production of food at the center.” Furthermore, the movement actively counters the narrative of the modernist development model, which either marginalizes farmers or frames the farmer as “a (romantic) thing of the past” destined to be replaced by large commercialized farms in order to feed the world (Desmarais in Kuttab et al., 2017). Through advocating for repeasantization, the FSM reclaims “the term peasant as a proud self-description” (ibid.). Finally, it is also worth emphasizing that the FSM is not a single-issue movement. It is also not exclusively a peasant movement. From its outset, it has intentionally set out to build strategic links with movements representing those living in urban areas, experiencing land grab, fighting for women’s rights, and so forth.

Another effort to challenge industrial-scale agriculture is “civic agriculture” (focused on agriculture’s potential for strengthening social communities through local/place-based food systems, see Lyson, 2004, for an elaboration). I concur, however, with Trauger’s (2015) argument that there is a significant risk for its focus on the *individual* purchasing decision, to overshadow or become unreflective in regards to challenging the wider corporate food regime. Taking a more political stance, Wittman’s (2009) conceptualization of “agrarian citizenship,” describes how emerging movements of agrarian resistance, are underpinned by a desire to “rework the metabolic rift between society and nature.” While both of these frameworks present interesting tendencies, I still find food sovereignty the most relevant for this thesis addressing the agro-resistance movement in the WB.

In addressing the limitations of food sovereignty, both Zuryak and Gough (2013, 14) and Edelman et al. (2014) describe, how despite the initial expectations, food sovereignty has yet to enjoy the same legitimacy as - let alone replace - the conventional definition of food security. In its effort to revalorize “life on the land” and the strategic value of peasants,



Bernstein (2014) has also raised concerns that it might be romanticizing peasant life. Furthermore, some NGOs (and intrastate organizations) are skeptical about the realism of the FSM's ability to actually feed the world and argue that the promotion of food sovereignty leave the millions of farmers that depend on an income from producing commodities for export in a lurch (ibid. and Burnett and Murphy, 2014). LVC, however, asserts that "food sovereignty does not negate trade," rather it focuses on "the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production" (LVC, 2001). While I agree with the argument that food sovereignty is indeed so over-defined, it becomes nebulous, and there is presently no shared political programme underpinning it (Grey and Patel, 2015), I do believe it has great value, nonetheless, for its connective efforts and as a breeding ground for future development (primarily on the ground among the FSM activists, but also within academia).

### *3.3.3 Issues of territory and state sovereignty within food sovereignty*

Food sovereignty has given rise to extensive literature. For the purpose of this thesis, regarding how food sovereignty is applied in the WB - where the notion of a sovereign state is, to put it mildly, tentative, I will briefly outline some of the primary considerations regarding the issue of sovereignty and the role of the state. Unfortunately, as Patel and Grey (2014) lament, the question of "sovereignty" in "food sovereignty" is largely under-theorized. The one area where the intricacies of sovereignty have been explored involves the relationship between food sovereignty and indigenous movements, especially within North America. The literature most directly relevant from the perspective of food sovereignty has pointed to the overlap between movements engaged in food sovereignty and the advancement of indigenous rights in Canada (Desmarais and Wittman, 2014; Grey and Patel, 2015; Trauger 2017, 85 et seq.). Determining "who is the sovereign in food sovereignty?" (Edelman et al., 2014), and specifically what the role of the state entails, is perhaps one of the most contentious issues in the scholarly debate over food sovereignty. Views range from the state as crucial to achieving food sovereignty (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005, 15-17), to the conceptualization of "multiple sovereignties" (Patel, 2009) and the insignificance of the state (Bernstein, 2014).

In comparison to its initial conceptualization, the role of the sovereign has evolved a lot over time. Agarwal (2014) describes how the language of food sovereignty – both in declarations and among activists - has shifted from an initial focus on national self-sufficiency to a more localized understanding today, i.e., from "the right of the nation" to "the right of the

peoples.” The Nyéléni declaration further emphasizes how food sovereignty’s “episteme of territory and power departs from the geographical imaginary of the nation-state” (Trauger, 2014).

Grey and Patel (2015) argue convincingly that food sovereignty is “a continuation of anti-colonial struggles,” rather than separate from them. As I will describe in Chapter 6, the fact that food sovereignty is not seen as a single-issue struggle – but rather as Grey and Patel (ibid.) argue, recognized for its “radical potential (...) as a decolonizing activity” – is highly relevant in the oPt, and allows for broader alliances to form. This, Claeys (quoted in Edelman et al., 2014) argues, should also be seen in light of food sovereignty’s politicization of the collective rights *already* acknowledged by the UN; rights such as the “right to self-determination, the right to development and the right to permanent sovereignty over natural resources.” Fitzherbert and Morris (2017, 15), however, raise concerns about how struggles for food sovereignty in indigenous communities often encounter problems in terms of invoking an “idealized indigenous imaginary.”<sup>14</sup> As Grey and Patel (2015) also reflect, concerning how food sovereignty is increasingly taking prominence in indigenous and anti-colonial agendas, “a ‘right to define agricultural policy’ is indistinguishable from a right to be Indigenous, in any substantive sense of the term.” In the analysis, I describe how a Palestinian *fellaheen* (farmer) imaginary is increasingly invoked amongst agro-activists in the struggle for food sovereignty.

In summary, believing that these theories provide the best explanatory benefits, this thesis uses food sovereignty to – partly – describe the aspirations of the agro-resistance movement in the WB, and Nixon’s understanding of slow violence to explain the deterioration of the PAS. Drawing on Koh’s (2012) ‘theory-to-research-to-theory strategy,’ I adapt Martínez-Alier’s concept of environmentalism of the poor to the occupied context of the WB. Based on my empirical findings I propose that the agro-resistance in the WB can be understood as “environmentalism of the occupied.”

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<sup>14</sup> Fitzherbert and Morris (2017, 15), go on to argue (based on research among the Māori in New Zealand) that this, importantly, primarily occurs when outsiders (e.g., foreign NGOs) become involved. Edelman et al. (2014), building on Spivak’s original understanding of the term, counter that “strategic essentialism” is increasingly employed to revalorize indigenous stewardship of the land, and indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination and food sovereignty.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

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The research methodology for this thesis takes a qualitative approach; the first research question has been answered primarily through desk-based research using secondary sources, whereas the second relies on additional semi-structured interviews and participant observation. During a six month stay in the WB (from October 2016 to March 2017), I collected data through an internship with the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) and by conducting informal interviews with various organizations, farmers and activists. Additionally, I had countless informal conversations with friends, co-workers and with strangers across the WB about the research topic. Although not all these interactions have made it formally into this thesis, every conversation helped shape my understanding of this issue – for which I am grateful. Below I outline the primary considerations with regards to the method, as well as my research approach.

### 4.1 Methods and sampling approach

For this research, I wanted to draw on the experiences of a wide sample. Therefore, I consulted both long-established organizations and newer initiatives. To gain as much nuance as possible, I interviewed everyone from chair-people and communication officers to activists and farmers participating in the various projects. As I wanted to learn about the Palestinian perspective, I deliberately avoided interviewing individuals representing the many larger international NGOs, some of which also implement environmental projects.<sup>15</sup> Instead, I have chosen to focus exclusively on Palestinian-led initiatives. I employed purposive opportunity sampling (Bryman 2012, 418, see also Cohen and Arieli, 2011, for the advantage of this approach in conflict environments with regards to establishing trust). In addition to being Palestinian-led, the “criteria” was that the initiatives interviewed were somehow involved with issues related to food sovereignty (inter alia: land rights/reclamation, decreasing dependence on Israeli inputs, indigenous seed, etc.).

In retrospect, however, this turned out to be a much wider-ranging topic than expected. Each new person introduced a new perspective with original considerations and nuances, and I found that either the topic should have been narrower, or the sample larger, for

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<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Sharp (2011) and Spivak (1988) for more on critical epistemology and privileging the narrative of those best suited to explain the challenges faced (e.g., by farmers), rather than having an international NGO speak on their behalf.

me to reach a knowledge saturation point. With regards to the generalizability of the study, it is also important to emphasize that the research focuses on a subset of people involved in issues of environmentalism and food sovereignty and is not necessarily representative of the wider WB population. Finally, while I was able to get in contact with the Arab Youth Climate Movement's chapter in the Gaza Strip, and hear about their inspiring work despite immense challenges (see Arab Youth Climate Movement, 2017), unfortunately, it proved impossible to visit Gaza. Thus, while the situation is arguably even more dire there,<sup>16</sup> this thesis only concerns itself with the West Bank (also excluding Palestinians living in annexed East Jerusalem and the rest of historic Palestine).

Using semi-structured/conversational interviews allowed for open-ended questions, with possibilities for follow-up questions, often in a conversational manner (Bryman 2012, 440). I prepared interview guides beforehand based on what I was especially curious to learn, but would let the interviewees introduce topics of their interest as well, only redirecting the conversation when it strayed too far from the original topic. As the research progressed, the interviews, in a sense, built on one another, and the new knowledge provided insight into the "discursive terrain" (Edley 2001, 199), which in turn shaped the next interview. While of course more challenging to analyze, I judged that this approach was the most appropriate, especially with regards to the exploratory stance of the research, as it allowed for the interviews to center around similar themes, while still allowing the specificities of each project to come to light. I judged that formal, structured interviews or questionnaires would not have offered the same nuances (see also Zureik, 2004, for the reluctance towards questionnaires in the oPt).

Inspired by the same deliberations underpinning the "walking interview" methodology (see, e.g., Clark and Emmel, 2010; Evans and Jones, 2010), I employed what might be called a "farming interview," by which I mean talking with people, while engaged in the farming task that the interview was about. I found that physically being in the spatial context of what we were talking about, i.e. "showing rather than telling" - able to point out nearby settlements, types of seeds, alternatives employed when met with obstacles, etc. - was conducive in contextualizing the conversation. Overall, this approach significantly enhanced my understanding of the issue in comparison with conducting interviews across a desk. While in no way comparable to what I gained from the experience, contributing to the task at hand

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<sup>16</sup> In 2012, the UN raised concern with a report declaring that the strip would be "unlivable" by 2020 (UN, 2012). In its most recent comprehensive report on Gaza, it is announced that "sadly, as we check-in on those same trends again in this 2017 report, the deterioration has accelerated" (UN, 2017), leaving a very disheartening outlook for the future. Today, more than 80 percent of Gaza's population is dependent on food aid (UNRWA, 2018).

was also a small way to give something back to the people kind enough to contribute to my research project.

The empirical body of this thesis also draws on experiences gained during my internship with UAWC, as well as field notes from a range of participant observations. These include everything from demonstrations, the national Land Day events, olive tree planting, conferences and so forth. My presence was in a role of both active participation and observation collecting field notes. Chapter 5 of the thesis, however, relies primarily on secondary sources.

Palestinian Birzeit University's useful *Guide to Applied Field Research in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* warns non-local researchers not to "depend only on stereotypical ideas and Orientalist references" to try and understand the situation in the oPt (Majeed and Sakka 2014, 96). Therefore, as much as possible, I attempt to rely on local sources (Palestinian or Israeli), rather than Western interpretations. With regards to very recent events, I have also referred to so-called grey literature (e.g., news articles). Triangulation, Bryman (2012, 392) contends, increases the credibility and analytical comprehensiveness of non-positivist and non-traditional methods such as the ones used in this study. This is especially relevant seeing as the field of research is prone to controversy and bias, and I have, to the best of my ability, corroborated data received through interviews with additional sources (e.g., UN reports, maps, laws, etc.).

## 4.2 Research approach and justification of doing fieldwork - despite reservation

Palestine is often referred to as one of the most researched places on earth (e.g., Collins 2012, *ix*, see also Sukarieh and Tannock, 2012, for a critique of what they refer to as *over-researched* Palestinian communities). This has understandably led to a certain amount of research fatigue in the WB. Palestinians have taken time to answer questions, again and again, allowing Western researchers to compile reports and write articles, that have yet to improve their situation significantly, or as one Palestinian farmer in Salfit explained: produced "reports that no one ever reads" (farmer, Salfit, interview). I therefore intended for the research design and its methodologies to be inspired by both activist and decolonizing approaches.

"The word itself, 'research,' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary," contends Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 1), suggesting decolonizing

methodologies as a way to change this.<sup>17</sup> Decolonizing methodologies actively questions and work against colonialist and Orientalist perspectives, while cognizant of the politics of knowledge production, especially of the role of the researcher in relation to the researched (ibid.). Abdul Majeed and Sakka (2014), in their guide to research in Palestine, specifically warn against the “blind importation” of preconceived assumptions and destructive essentialist dichotomies, describing how the oPt has been especially prone to epistemological imperialism. They go on to explain the negative consequences of methodologies and ideologies that ignore the occupied/colonized context – in a place where nothing is removed from politics. (See, for instance, the critique below of studies focused of food insecurity in the WB as solely a *financial* issue among households, without taking the colonized context into account.)

While I arrived in the WB with the intention of studying activism related explicitly to climate change issues, it became clear upon arrival that (while interconnected) issues of food sovereignty are at the fore of the agro-resistance movement. I, therefore, adapted my research upon having engaged with activists on the ground. The project also intentionally took on some aspects of activist research, e.g., investigating not just the symptoms, but challenging the root causes of the problem (see Hale, 2001). However, due to time, resource, and availability constraints, I regrettably found it beyond the scope of this project to make it a thoroughly activist and collaborative research process.

One justification for carrying out fieldwork in the WB, despite my reservations, was for the data to be empirically-grounded and embedded in localized knowledge. I am especially inspired by Yara Sharif’s fieldwork in the oPt and her notion of “embodied objectivity”, arguing that such narratives’ “objective strength lies in the fact that they offer the partial, situated perspectives of Palestinians and it is exactly because of their specificity, their subjective positioning, that these stories give us crucial information about experiencing daily life under conflict” (2017, 9). This is a view akin to Haraway’s (1988) notion of “situated truth,” or wider “standpoint etymology,” founded on the belief that marginalized groups are uniquely situated to question issues of unequal power relations.

Arguably, parts of this research could have been conducted from afar (through Skype, e-mail, etc.), but as I will argue below, based on my ontological and epistemological convictions, the added value of being immersed in the socio-political context and culture, and

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<sup>17</sup> Tuhiwai Smith (1999) draws from her own experiences of research among the Maori in New Zealand – and inspiration from writers such as hooks and Said – to argue that Western research has exploited and misrepresented indigenous communities, and in fact been a cog in the wheel of their historical and continued colonization.

to be able to establish trust and conduct interviews in a setting comfortable for the activists themselves, called for traveling to the WB to conduct the fieldwork.

Said (in Collins, 2010) drew attention to “the transformation that often occurs when activists cross the geographic threshold and find themselves *on the ground* in Palestine.” It is one thing to *read* about settlement expansions, but statistics become tangible in a completely different way when during the short time I was there I could see the landscape change and the settlements close to where I lived expand. Especially because I did not have any farming experience to speak of beforehand, I think it is also only from having spent time literally ‘in the (olive, chickpeas, etc.) field’ with Palestinian farmers, that the significance Palestinian farmers attribute to serving their land became clear to me, a significance lost in written reports, articles, etc. While extremely aware of my privileged position of being able to leave at any time (see more on positionality below), spending an extended period of time in the WB still provided an insight into the obstacles facing Palestinians.

#### 4.3 Ethical issues: reflexivity, positionality, and privilege

This section describes some of the ethical dilemmas and challenges I encountered during the research. There were a range of practical obstacles such as unexpected checkpoints, roadblocks and permit issues causing delays, as well as visa complications for getting into the country.<sup>18</sup> Due to the risks involved, I do not mention the names of those I interview, but only their occupation and/or organizations that they represent. I found not speaking Arabic nor Hebrew to be a disadvantage, especially as my research topic is one that directs itself inwards (amongst Palestinians), rather than outwards (towards an international community). Furthermore, seeing as the interviews were conducted in English, i.e., neither my own nor the interviewees’ first language, this might also have affected the interpretation of the questions and responses from both sides. But it should be mentioned that Palestinians – including farmers – are comparatively, indeed remarkably, fluent in English.

Inspired by feminist insights on positionality and reflexivity (e.g., Harding, 1987), throughout my research I reflect on how everything I experienced was influenced by (and influenced in turn) me being: female, Caucasian, Danish, but also involved with Palestinian solidarity work, and additionally, my role as a student researcher. There is nothing neutral about

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<sup>18</sup> The challenges of doing research in the WB, of course, pale in comparison to living there. For more on difficulties experienced when in the WB for research purposes see e.g., Holgersen, 2015; Zureik, 2004; Amour, 2012.

the fact that I was able to travel to and research environmental injustice in the WB, but could just as easily leave again and return to a part of the world which is partly responsible for upholding the occupation. My position as an outsider was inevitably a limitation to my work. A Palestinian or someone who had been engaged with the FSM in the WB for an extended period of time would have been able to interpret the context in a different, and in all likelihood more profound, way. This is not to say that there are not benefits to approaching a situation/movement from the outside and from a different perspective (see, e.g., Lazar 2005, 6 et seq.). Fortunately, it does not have to be either/or, as there has been a surge of emancipatory knowledge-production from Palestinians living inside the oPt, as well as in the diaspora, what Smith (1999, 8) has referred to as “researching back.”

#### *4.3.1 Mobilizing privilege and critical solidarity*

While I wish it were something I had deliberated more carefully before leaving for Palestine, I do find many entries in my research diary<sup>19</sup> reflecting on the appropriateness of doing research in the oPt and a sense of research aporia: How will any of the people I am engaging with benefit from this research? I wondered whether it would have been more appropriate to have researched Denmark, focused explicitly on the role of the Danish state or NGOs in sustaining current power imbalances in the oPt and how to change that, for example. In the WB I met young Palestinians who expressed their (legitimate) frustrations, with the ceaseless influx of researchers (and the lack of change), and others urging me to “please, tell the world about this!” Although still precarious and subject to roadblocks, my passport, and to some extent my class and ethnicity, granted me a range of movement within the WB, perversely denied to the vast majority of Palestinians. I tried to mobilize this privilege to bear witness and gather on-the-ground insight across the WB which could be shared outside Palestine. Nonetheless, while attempting to minimize it, I still felt like I have ended up taking part in academic neocolonialism, unable to give something concrete back to those who participated in the research, and regret this.

Muddying the moral waters further is the highly contentious issue of neutrality when writing about the occupation in Palestine. Some will argue that academics must remain neutral (even in contexts of oppression) for their findings to be deemed acceptable by the

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<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Punch (2012) for her contribution to the methodological debate on the use of field diaries, making a very compelling case on how field notes and journals could be more overtly included in the research process and outcome. Their potential to illuminate otherwise hidden struggles of fieldwork, including “practical difficulties, emotional and intellectual concerns, and feelings of cultural and academic guilt” (ibid.).



mainstream discourses/structures of power. My counter-argument is that I cannot grasp how one would disentangle themselves from politics and remain “neutral” in a context of severe injustice.<sup>20</sup> I specifically chose to study in the field of human ecology because I am committed to addressing power inequalities. Therefore, it seems natural to me that this thesis does not try to uphold a façade of normalcy or neutrality concerning the occupation of the WB.

As Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish cautions, there can be “no spectators at chasm’s door,” adding that “no one is neutral here” (quoted in Ehrenreich 2016, 2). However, I do believe there is a way not to be neutral, *but still be critical*. This includes being frank about disclosing any personal and political biases, e.g., my sympathy towards both the movement for a free Palestine and the broader FSM, and continuously reflecting on how they might influence my interpretations. Validation is arguably especially crucial in research influenced by a sense of solidarity, and in addition to the corroboration of data gathered in interviews (with secondary-sources), a peer review has also been helpful in identifying potential bias.

## 5. OBSTACLES FACING FARMERS IN THE WEST BANK

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Palestinian food insecurity in the WB is on average 19% and up to 79% for the registered refugees living in Area C (World Food Program, 2015). As a consequence of the factors discussed in the coming sections, the agricultural sector has seen a steady decline in relation to the WB’s GDP, from 53% of the GDP prior to the 1967 occupation of the WB (Dana, 2014) to a historic low of just 3.2% in 2016 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017).<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the percentage of Palestinian labor force working in the agricultural sector decreased from more than 32% in 1967, to less than 10% in 2015 (Awwad, 2016). According to UNCTAD (2015), “the Palestinian agricultural sector has been the sector most affected by occupation” due to the confiscation of Palestinian land and natural resources and Israel’s restrictions on the movement of labor and goods.

It is concerning to note that the WB is one of the most import-dependent places in the world, with locally produced food amounting to only 4% of WB consumption, while imports account for 96% (ARIJ and The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, 2015). In the WB,

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<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, even if I had believed it to be a virtue, I would argue that it is *near-impossible* to remain neutral in an environment as charged as this. Even the statement “I am doing research in the West Bank” can be perceived as non-neutral by most Israelis, who refer to the WB as “Judea and Samaria.”

<sup>21</sup> According to UNCTAD (2015) Palestinian agricultural lands have shrunk from 2.4 million dunams in 1980 to just 1.03 million dunams in 2010.

the average household already spends 49% of their income on food (FAO, 2009), leaving Palestinians especially vulnerable to price fluctuations on the international market, and to Israeli food power as described below.

The following section provides an overview of the difficulties farmers in the WB experience, including the institutional weakness of the PA and the impact of the wider neoliberal turn in the WB in the post-Oslo years. Next, it addresses how there is more to the WB's environment than meets the eye, and how issues of environmental injustice rooted at the beginning of the occupation still impact farmers today. Specifically, it addresses the impact of agro-military settlements and how farms struggle daily against a broken supply chain that restricts access to agricultural equipment, technology, and water. It briefly discusses the increasing impact of climate change in the WB, and how it disproportionately affects Palestinian farmers, before elaborating on the effect so-called "aid" has in de-developing the PAS.

## 5.1 The role of the Palestinian Authority

During the time I spent in the WB there were clear signs that many Palestinians, despite the occupation, by no means exempted their own government from responsibility for their problems. Recurring demonstrations at the main square in Ramallah would call out the economic vassalage to Israel. When I first arrived I was surprised at how Palestinians would laugh when I ask why the PA does not do "x, y, z" to try and end the occupation. Most would go on to describe in harsh terms what they think of the PA. Israel, Haddad (2016, 97) argues, has, under the purview of the international community, successfully outsourced a significant portion of its responsibilities to the PA, which renders the PA as a proxy-occupation in the opinion of many Palestinians (see also Gordon 2008, 169 et seq.).

### *The impact of wider neoliberal turn in the WB in post-Oslo years*

Another point to be made on how the PA, despite its regulatory limitations, hinders the development of the agricultural sector and consequently diminishes food sovereignty in the WB, concerns its *neoliberal turn*. Tabar and Salamanca (2015, 23) argue that the PA has "emerged as a neoliberal laboratory designed from scratch by the policies and prescriptions of globalizing institutions under a refashioning settler colonial project."

Furthermore, Khalidi and Samour (2011) make a powerful argument that the PA has accepted a neoliberal economy under colonialism, and the outcome is that free trade is equated “with freedom, house ownership with state building, and an independent central bank with political independence.” While acknowledging that this economic model is of course not “exclusive or particular to the case of Palestine” (Tartir, 2015), many take special issue with *the stage at which* it has been introduced – namely, *prior* to the end of the occupation. As Haddad (2016, 51) adds with criticism, in the still occupied settler-colonial context of Palestine, conventional neoliberal theories such as open markets and export-led growth are adopted *without* any control of borders.<sup>22</sup>

In sum, the Oslo Accords and ensuing rapacious neoliberal policies have resulted in a notion of “false decolonization” (Tabar and Salamanca 2015, 11). Tabar and Salamanca (ibid., 20 et seq.) go on to describe how this strategy “has persistently silenced and neglected the political realities on the ground” and substituted resistance with complacency and pacification. Tartir (2017) and Farsakh (2016) describe how it has also had political implications in terms of silencing opposition to this approach, and crucially, depoliticizing and fracturing the Palestinian struggle.

#### *The PA’s Palestinian Reform and Development Plan and neglect of agriculture*

While the PA repeatedly refers to the agricultural sector as the backbone of Palestinian development and urges settlement workers to “return to the land” (Ismail Da’iq, 2010; Awwad, 2010), this section argues that this rhetoric rings hollow upon inspection of its policies. This is asserted, even taking into account that the PA does not have the full institutional or regulatory authority to institute such policies (Taghdisi-Rad, 2014). According to Taghdisi-Rad (2010, 190) however, the economic frameworks adopted since the Oslo Accords reflect the PA’s view of “the Palestinian agriculture sector as a lost cause” with limited “long-term growth potential,” and resulting prioritization of other sectors instead of agriculture. All economic frameworks adopted since the Oslo Accords, particularly the 2007 Palestinian Reform and Development Program (PRDP), have been reflective of neoliberal and classical structural adjustment policies. The stated goal of the PRDP is to create a “diversified and thriving free

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<sup>22</sup> As described in Tartir et al. (2012) and Khalidi and Samour (2011) this is largely intended to be realized by the PA through enclave-style industrial parks near the Israeli “border” (e.g., in the seam zone of the wall), thereby circumventing the Israeli closure, but simultaneously left entirely dependent on cooperation with Israel. Oftentimes industrial parks are built on perfectly arable land, which leaves Palestinian policy network Al-Shabaka to decry the PA’s “official declarations about empowering the people in their land when the land is neither preserved nor used for Palestinian interests” (Tartir et al., 2012, see also Sansour and Tartir, 2014; Sharif, 2017).

market economy led by a pioneering private sector” (PRDP in Hanieh 2013b, 115). Underpinned by free-market ideology and fiscal austerity, the PA’s strategy is based on tax-free industrial zones and private-sector projects, all dependent on intensified security cooperation with Israel (Samara, 2000; Hanieh, 2016). With development seen through “the prism of liberalized market standards,” Razek-Faoder and Dajani (2013) make the argument that the PA understands food security “as the ability of individuals and households to purchase food on the market rather than the ability to access resources of production.” The PRDP, Hrimat et al. (2011, 454), also note, has a focus on economic growth and agribusinesses and “only minimally mentions food security issues and subsistence agriculture.”

Specifically, this neglect of the agricultural sector is observed in the substantial underfunding of the Ministry of Agriculture. In 2012, for instance, it received just 1% of the total PA budget, and of this, 85% was spent on salaries (Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction in Tartir et al., 2012). Section 5.4 of this thesis goes into further detail on how this rural and agricultural neglect is exacerbated by the fact that, currently, less than 1% of the total international aid received by the WB is allocated to its agricultural sector. Farmers lament that there are no mechanisms in place to ensure a fair price for their products, no market protection from Israeli dumping, no subsidies (for instance for the initial costs/inputs of cultivating currently empty land for crop production) and very insufficient insurance schemes (field visits with UAWC, see also El-Zein, 2017; Mansour, 2012; Kuttat et al., 2017). UNCTAD (2015) also describes how there needs to be a concerted effort to improve agricultural infrastructure (which could decrease transportation costs, improve packing facilities, etc.). Furthermore, UNCTAD calls for the establishment of a “not-for-profit public agricultural development bank” that would be able to share the risks intrinsic to the sector, by providing credit and insurance to farmers, support post-harvest services and fund investment into agricultural and water-related infrastructure (ibid.). Many farmers expressed frustration that while loans for consumer spending are readily available, “there is no way for me to get a loan for agricultural projects” (farmer, Southern Hebron, interview).

## 5.2 Environmental Nakba & the impact of settler-colonialism

In trying to understand the origins of settler-colonialism and the wider Zionist project, I examined an old copy of *A New Way of Life* (Bentwich, 1949). It is a book inviting Jews from around the world to join the Zionist settlement efforts. “Eretz Israel” is described as a bare country with “parched soil in need of another wave of pioneers to stimulate and revive

it” (ibid., 33). The foundational Zionist narrative of Palestine as a “land without a people” waiting for pioneers to settle and make “the desert bloom” is very much reinforced throughout the book (see Pappé 2007 for more on the Zionist foundation in historic Palestine). In a pattern similar to other settler-colonial invasions, historic Palestine was largely described as *terra nullius*, for the new state of Israel to flourish through a “collective re-imagining...of a landscape that had potential for ‘modernization’” (Gasteyer et al., 2012). A more apt description, however, might be one more akin to the beginning of a process of accumulation by dispossession, wherein the settlement of Palestine led to the simultaneous large-scale dispossession and depeasantization of the indigenous population (see Araghi 2009, 124 et seq.; Harvey, 2003). Intensive modern settler cultivation was thus framed as a contrast to the backward system of the indigenous population and made way for the expansion of greater agricultural development and accumulation through a process of “enlightened colonialism” (Gorney 2017, 327; Keucheyan 2017, 39)

In the wake of the Nakba, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) planted forests to cover up the traces of Palestinian villages demolished in 1948.<sup>23</sup> “Covering ethnic cleansing with pine trees is probably the most cynical method employed” Pappé and Jaber (2014) argue, “by Israel in its quest to take over as much of Palestine as possible with as few Palestinians in it as possible.” Simultaneously, according to the UN, in the WB “more than 2.5 million productive trees (including 800,000 olive trees) have been uprooted since 1967” (UNCTAD, 2016), and there has been a rise in settler violence and uprooting of trees during the last two years (OCHA, 2017b)

Next, I wish to briefly outline the trajectory of the settler-colonial occupation’s effect in terms of land confiscations, and ensuing consequences on the PAS and food sovereignty in the WB. As mentioned in the introduction, historic Palestine was known as part of the Fertile Crescent and among the first places wheat was cultivated, and the WB has gone from being an exporter of food to being highly dependent on imports (Dagher, 2015; Butterfield

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<sup>23</sup> According to the JNF’s own description they have been greening the desert by planting more than 250 million trees since their inception (JNF, 2018). Fast growing non-native pines planted in the wake of the Nakba would serve an array of functions, e.g., Europeanizing the land creating a familiar “natural” environment for the mostly European Jewish settlers. And as the highly acidic pine needles would fall to the ground, they would make the soil unfertile for agriculture (UAWC, AC, interview). Another function, however, was to erase the history of the Palestinian existence. As studying a map of the positions of JNF forests makes evident, the pine forests have been planted “to seize and divide Palestinian territory within east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank” (Lorber, 2012, see also JNF n.d. for map). Abunimah (2014, 159-160) details how the dense planting of highly flammable pine trees in the arid Mediterranean climate – only predicted to get hotter with climate change – has led to an increase in wildfires.

et al. 2000, 2). Interestingly, there is a dramatic difference between the occupation in the first decades, as Weizman (2007, 119-120) describes, compared to today. In the first decade of occupation, Israel implemented a range of programs to distribute improved seeds, vaccination programs for livestock, access to agricultural machinery, etc. Gordon (2008, 64-68) details how this policy aimed at “pacifying the territories”, meant that “the degree of resistance to Israel’s occupation was relatively low” in the initial decade of occupation. However, what received much less attention was that Israel deliberately began controlling which kinds of produce could be planted, and especially which could not, as well as preventing exports from the WB (Samara, 2000). It was an apparent strategy intended to “create dependency, to undermine development and competition and to facilitate the confiscation of land” (Gordon 2008, 72).

Israel meticulously protected its markets, all the while increasingly dumping its own excess products onto the captive Palestinian market (Haddad 2016, 51). During this initial stage of the occupation, Israel also intensified its “pulling strategy,” i.e., offering jobs both in Israel and the settlements earning higher wages than what they earned through farming (although the wages were far lower than those of Jewish workers performing equivalent tasks), which also contributed to the neglect of their own lands (Sa’Da and Tartir, 2014). In 1970, 34.2% of Palestinians in the WB worked in agriculture, compared to only 13.8% by 1987 (Gordon 2008, 113). Finally, in 1979, perhaps one of the harshest blows came, when Israel re-introduced the Ottoman Land Code. According to Ottoman law, predating Israel’s statehood, land out of use for seven years or more belonged to the state. Israel, however, shortened the period to just three years (Gordon 2008, 129), and simultaneously, water quotas for Palestinian farmers were reduced, making it more challenging to farm the land (Weizman 2007, 120)

In a report following a field visit to the WB, international environmental organization Friends of the Earth described how, with its water injustice, toxic waste-dumping, destruction of Palestinian farmland, etc., there could be no clearer example of environmental injustice than that occurring in the WB (Friends of the Earth, 2013). They referred to the situation on the ground as an ‘environmental *Nakba*’ (ibid.), recognizing that not only were these actions environmental crimes, but also “part and parcel of systematic colonization and ethnic cleansing in the occupied territories.” This also correlates with how, as mentioned above, the Nakba is referred to not only as an event but as an *ongoing* process reasserted each day of occupation as the reach of the settler-colonial erasure continues to expand. The proliferation of ecological degradation occurs on different topographical latitudes (air, ground, subterranean level) (Weizman 2007, 12). Wells and wastewater treatments are destroyed, stone quarried,

trees uprooted, pollution emitted, - sometimes in the ubiquitous name of security - sometimes, it can often seem; “just because.”

### 5.2.1 The vicious circle of agro-military settlements

“Is it possible today to concede control of the hill aquifer, which supplies a third of our water? ... you know, it’s not by accident that the settlements are located where they are ...” (former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, 2001, quoted in Hirschberg 2001)

“Make sure you write that I don’t hate them [neighboring settlers] because they are Jewish – but because they are violent...” (farmer, Jenin, interview)

In explaining the detrimental effect of the agro-military settlements on the PAS, it is essential to understand how they are constructed with what Weizman (2007, 8) describes as “the aim of creating an ‘irresolvable geography.’” Settlements are not small outposts, but often large gated, and guarded, communities with Israelis-only access roads, some with large associated industrial quarters, universities or vast agro-industrial complexes. As acknowledged, even by the Israeli state (see above), there is nothing coincidental about the location of settlements (near the WB’s most valuable natural resources, including; the fertile Jordan Valley, quarries, Dead Sea minerals and strategic water resources) (see also Rieken, 2014).

Agro-military settlements combine “the goal of expropriating Palestinian farmland with that of intensifying military domination, drastically restricting Palestinian access to land and food in the process” (Zurayk and Gough 2013, 21). As described by, Palestinian human rights organization, Al-Haq (2016), this exacerbates the occupation in two crucial and interconnected ways: Israel’s exploitation of resources generates income that sustains the settlements, and this allows them to expand further “exploiting yet more resources as they grow.” This expansion obstructs the Palestinian access to land further, thereby hampering their livelihood and the national aspirations. In summary, “by restricting Palestinians’ access to their own natural resources, Israel is denying them vital economic opportunities, whilst profiting from its own illegal exploitation of them” (ibid.). It is critical to emphasize that, despite the subsidies from the Israeli state, the agro-military settlements are dependent on external markets

for export, and in fact, an increasing proportion of total Israeli agricultural income derives from settlement exports (ibid.).<sup>24</sup>

The main obstacle facing the marketing of Palestinian small-scale farmers' products is the severe competition from dumped subsidized Israeli and settlement products. These are predominantly products with a quality below export standards, which are then redirected into the WB market at meager prices, often below-production cost, leaving Palestinian farmers unable to compete, especially taking into account the additional production costs borne by Palestinian farmers due to the occupation (UNCTAD, 2015). As a farmer explains: "sometimes it is not even worth picking our grapes, so they rot in the fields. Everywhere, [at the markets], there are Israeli grapes instead" (farmer, Southern Hebron, interview). The Israeli products also commonly enter the market earlier than the Palestinian alternative (due to their access to, e.g., irrigation, greenhouses, GMO-seeds and chemically intensive production methods). Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I also want to draw attention to how the deterioration of the PAS and ever-expanding settlements leave many Palestinians compelled to take up work in the very same Israeli settlements that expropriated them from their own land.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the vicious circle described above by Al-Haq, it is also crucial to consider the wider environmental impact of the settlements. From their panoptical positioning on hilltops, the settlements, with calculation, and impunity, allow their sewage and wastewater to flow into neighboring Palestinian areas, causing the contamination of the underground water, health impacts and crop damage (Ramahi, 2012; Zio, 2013). More than 1/3 of the settlements are not connected to any water treatment facilities (ibid.). Indeed, as Abunimah (2014, 154) describes, for Palestinians; "the sewage flow into their communities is an additional weapon in the hands of the settlers."

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<sup>24</sup> Today Israeli agricultural settlements in the WB are overall large-scale, chemically intensive, high technology monocrop agribusinesses. Increasingly centered towards the global market due to growing demand in the global fresh fruit and vegetable industry. More than 50% of the dates and 40% of the herbs exported from "Israel" are grown in the settlements (Who Profits, 2014). The European Union, for instance, imports *15 times more* agricultural products from the settlements, compared to imports from Palestinian (Aprdev et al., 2012). Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this thesis to elaborate on, but see e.g. Corporate Watch (2016) for details on extensive misleading labeling of settlement products as "Product of Israel."

<sup>25</sup> Here Palestinians, including children as young as 13, work at far below the Israeli minimum wage, with no benefits, banned from unionizing, and often under working conditions deemed illegal in Israel (e.g., in chemical and pesticide factories) (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2015). Furthermore, with more than 25% of total wages in the WB stemming from work in the settlements or Israel, this "forced dependence on employment" in the settlement leave Palestinians all the more vulnerable to political shocks – as the Israeli authorities, without warning, can revoke their permits (UNCTAD, 2016).



The following section will detail how the WB is increasingly being used as a sacrifice zone by both settlers *and* Israelis inside Israel. Intimately tied to imperialism, sacrifice zones, according to Klein (2015, 169), are “places that, to their extractors, somehow don’t count and therefore can be poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed, for the supposed greater good of economic progress.” Israel has been displacing its environmental consequences; in addition to the agricultural settlements, there are also more than twenty Israeli-run industrial zones in the oPt. Some have been relocated from Israel to the WB, while others have been intentionally constructed there because the majority of Israeli Environmental Law either does not apply or is not enforced in the WB. According to Bromberg, executive director of ‘EcoPeace Middle East,’ this has made the WB “a paradise for environmental crime that affects life on both sides of the Green Line” (quoted in Rinat, 2014).

Pesticides banned by both Israel and Palestine are continuously used without repercussions in agricultural settlements (Watts et al., 2017).<sup>26</sup> Geshuri Industries, which we will encounter again later in this thesis to see the effects on its neighboring Palestinian farm, moved its factory from Israel to the WB. The pesticide, insecticide and fertilizer factory, was declared illegal inside Israel due to the health hazard. Today the factory has stop-work orders the one month a year where the wind blows its pollution towards Israel (Abunimah 2014, 158). Similarly, when the environmental risk of stone dust constrained the quarrying industry inside Israel, Weizman (2007, 33) notes, “the stone quarries mushroomed in the WB.”<sup>27</sup> This placing of hazardous and polluting industries right next to Palestinian farms can be considered an additional strategy to force Palestinians off the land.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The conditions are so deplorable that Israel’s own state comptroller in 2012 reprimanded the government that the “continued failure for years to provide substantial supervision and enforcement in the field of safety and hygiene in the Israeli factories in [Judea and Samaria], which has to point to ongoing disregard for human life” (as quoted in Abunimah 2014, 158).

<sup>27</sup> See Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din’s (2017) report “The Great Drain” on how the escalation of Israeli quarrying in the WB constitutes a “brutal economic exploitation of occupied territory for the State of Israel’s exclusive economic interests – in blatant violation of international law.” It is crucial to note that planning documents obtained from the Israeli state indicate that the authorities plan on relying on the mining potential in the WB for at least the next 30 years, thereby preventing Palestinians themselves from utilizing these natural resources, and eventually leaving them depleted (ibid.). It is in stark contravention to the rule of usufruct, for Israel, as an occupying power, to use the WB’s natural resources for its own economic benefit. Today just 10 of the Bethlehem area’s 150 Palestinian stonecutting factories is operating at full capacity, due to the Israeli refusal to issue permits for Palestinian-run quarries (Clarno 2017, 103).

<sup>28</sup> For elaborations on the illegal expropriation of minerals from the Dead Sea, with the (significant) profits returning to the settler-economy, in clear contradiction to the rule of usufruct, see Al-Haq (2012), Ma’an (2011) and Power and Koek (2014).

Therefore, when Israel seeks, and receives praise, for its eco-pioneering green agriculture and industrial practices (e.g., Siegel, 2015), it should be kept in mind that they have outsourced their most polluting industries to the WB. A final example of “environmental load displacement” (Hornborg, 2008) is detailed in the 2017 report by Israeli human rights organization B’tselem: “Made in Israel: Exploiting Palestinian Land for Treatment of Israeli Waste.” Here it describes how hazardous waste produced inside Israel, such as infectious medical waste, batteries and electronic industry by-products, is systemically and illegally transported *from* Israel to the WB for disposal. Finally, it is disconcerting to note this – almost schizophrenic - contrast between how the WB is often described by Israeli settlers, and their government, as the promised land and spiritual home of Judaism, justifying the violence inflicted by the settlements erected there, and how the WB is, in fact, treated as a sacrifice zone.

### *Colonialism disguised as environmentalism?*

Above I described how the State of Israel has used an environmental mirage to erase the traces of past Palestinian history, but also to curtail it in the present. All the while portraying these initiatives as part of a progressive environmental agenda. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into further detail, but see, e.g., Gorney (2017, 327) on how environmental policies “have been co-opted and used by the State of Israel to further marginalize the Palestinians and take over lands, in what can be termed nationalistic/ethnic environmentalism or Green nationalism.” Especially the efforts of the JNF has come under the accusation of greenwashing (see, e.g., Benjamin et al., 2011; Collins 2011, 122; Klein, 2016), but with regards to the WB, one evident example also includes the State of Israel’s practice of declaring large areas of the WB closed “nature reserves.”<sup>29</sup> Finally, Who Profits (2018) recently provided an interesting discussion of how Israel uses commercial solar fields to greenwash the occupation. In contravention with international humanitarian law, Israel has confiscated land to install four large solar farms (with plans of expansion). These are especially exploitative because both the energy and profits generated from the solar fields go directly to the settlements,

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<sup>29</sup> Israel has designated 48 nature reserves in the WB that have a total area of 330.700 dunum or 5.68% of the WB (Isaac and Ghanyem, 2003). This appears to follow a distinct settler-colonial pattern, see e.g. Klein (2016) on the designating of ancestral Native American land as conservation parks, or Yeh (2005) on the Chinese state’s present-day strategy of declaring vast pieces of land as conservation zones, forcing Tibetan nomads away, and shortly after allowing mining operations in the same area. Both in line with Robbins’s (2012, 180) “Conservation and Control thesis” describing how the declaration of natural reserves has been used as an excuse to force indigenous communities off their land. See also Sfard (2018) for an assessment of how land designated as nature reserves in the WB, controversially, after a short period are allowed to be used for settlement expansions, as Abunimah (2014, 155) states “this is not mere greenwashing, it is green ethnic cleansing.”

bypassing the nearby Palestinian communities, some of which are prevented from connecting to any electricity grids at all.

### 5.2.2 Israeli hydro-hegemony

“Perhaps if we don’t give them enough water they won’t have a choice, because the orchards will yellow and wither.” (Levi Eshkol, then Israel’s prime minister, in a discussion following the 1967 war on how to expel the remaining Palestinians from the WB. Quoted in Abunimah, 2017)

Farmers in the WB are also severely curtailed by what is often referred to as Israel’s “hydro-hegemony,” i.e., when a state exploits its position as, e.g., an occupying power in order to control and dominate water resources in violation of international law (Zeitoun and Warner, 2006). German hydrologist, Clemens Messerschmid, argues that the situation of induced scarcity in the WB is more akin to “hydro-apartheid” (2014). Messerschmid also adds that calling the current situation in the WB a “water crisis” is a misnomer; “A crisis is a sudden change ... The undersupply of Palestinians is desired, planned and carefully executed” (Messerschmid in Silver, 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a *minimum* of 100 liters per day per person, but on average Palestinians in the WB only have access to 73 liters (parts of Area C, where water must be brought in by tankers, survive on just 20 liters a day) (Amnesty International, 2009). Settlements consume, per capita, 18 times more water than the Palestinians (ibid.).

Residents in the WB has also seen what was once a locally-managed community resource, commodified (by their occupier, no less). Most Palestinians in the WB purchase their water from Mekorot, the Israeli national water company, spending an average of 1/3 of their income on water, compared to just 0.9% for settlers and 3% on average in Europe.<sup>30</sup> In their report, Amnesty International (2009) found in no unclear terms that the destruction of water infrastructure, including agricultural water facilities, and overall depriving of water to Palestinians is used “as a means of expulsion.” The lack of sufficient water was brought up by literally every farmer I interviewed, and many lamented having to resort to rain-fed crops, rather than much more profitable ones such as citrus, and fruits and vegetables in general. As of 2015,

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<sup>30</sup> That is; Mekorot operates some 42 wells in the WB, supplying water to Israeli settlements (including agricultural settlement), and selling some of the water *back to Palestinians* in amounts determined by the Israeli authorities (Amnesty International, 2009).

only 2.3% of Palestinian fields were irrigated but contribute to 47.4% of total production, in stark contrast to the area farmed by settlers, where 70% of fields are irrigated (UNCTAD, 2015). In Section 5.3, I discuss how this dependence on rainwater increases WB farmers' vulnerability to climate change.

### 5.2.3 Wall and checkpoint issues

The State of Israel began constructing the wall in 2002, and it has had severe adverse effects on the WB farmers ever since, especially those farmers whose land is now on the Israeli side of the wall.<sup>31</sup> The Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ, 2015) describes the negative feedback loop that the construction of the wall has set in motion: as farmers are unable to access and tend to their land regularly,<sup>32</sup> and oftentimes prevented from bringing with them the required inputs (tools, tractors, fertilizers, etc.)<sup>33</sup> and with virtually non-existent irrigation, farmers have either resorted to replacing their grain or vegetable crops with olives (as these require fewer inputs, but also generate less income/nutrients), or they have “been compelled to leave their lands barren.”<sup>34</sup> This sets in motion an additional negative cycle, of losing a source of income/livelihood, as well as exposing their land to appropriation due to the Ottoman Land Code.

During my time in the WB, I spent a day together with the Israeli organization Matchom Watch (Checkpoint Watch), which observes and tries to prevent violations at the various checkpoints and agricultural gates (see also Hatuka, 2012, for more on Israeli solidarity

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<sup>31</sup> Upon completion the wall is estimated to deprive WB residents of 9.5% of the WB, separating farmers from some of their most fertile land, predicted to result in a 28% reduction of agricultural production (See Gordon 2008, 216; ARIJ, 2015; Zoi, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Accessing farmland in the seam zone and in much of Area C requires permits, which are always temporary and must be renewed. Some farmers only have permits to access their land for a few days a year during the olive harvest and complained that as farm work is, of course, structured by seasons (which climate change is making increasingly erratic/unpredictable), the Israeli Defense Forces' rigid allocation of permits is very damaging to the workings of the farmers.

<sup>33</sup> There are hurdles, for WB farmers, both to importing these inputs and to bringing them onto their fields. Every farmer I met through UAWC had experienced either confiscation of machinery or problems in terms of importing required fertilizers. In 2015, UNCTAD found that the 2008 restrictions on the importation of fertilizers have decreased the agricultural output in the WB by 20-33% (UNCTAD, 2015). According to a farmer in Salfit fertilizers are restricted because they can also be used to make bombs, adding despairingly, “I don't want to bomb anything, I just want to farm” (farmer, Salfit, interview).

<sup>34</sup> Crops such as wheat, fruit trees, and vegetables are increasingly replaced with olive trees as these require less maintenance (but also generate less income and do not improve food security). Wheat production, for instance, has dropped drastically in the last decade, and domestic production now cover just 10% of the WB market needs (ARIJ, 2015). The import-dependency on such a staple crop has severe consequences in terms of vulnerability (ibid.).

organizations working in the WB). At various stops along the wall, we compare how Israeli trucks unhindered bring produce in cooling trucks into the WB, while WB farmers and their produce, on the other hand, must pass one obstacle after another. One of them is waiting to pass through the agricultural gates in the wall. Of the 81 agricultural gates, 63 of them are only open for a brief period each year during olive harvesting season. As a farmer, waiting in his truck for the gate to open, tells us: “My grapes become raisins before they make it through all the gates and checkpoints.” Which would be funnier if it was not also true. Most gates are open just 30 minutes two times a day, and as the same farmer grudgingly tells us; “they open 10, 15 minutes late, but they always, *always* close on time.”

Finally, it is also important to note that everything from a house and a school, to solar panels, animal pens, water cisterns, irrigation structures, and so forth, can be demolished without warning if the Israeli army deems that the owners do not have the required permit.<sup>35</sup> It is not uncommon for drones to regularly fly over some of the most sought-after Palestinian land in Area C. The drones are controlled by neighboring settlers, who then inform the Israeli authorities if they observe any “illegal” construction activity.

### 5.3 The impact of climate change, and its effect on food sovereignty in the West Bank

Already the driest place on earth, by 2100, temperature increases are expected to make living in large parts of the Middle East “intolerable to humans” (Pal and Eltahir, 2016). The increases in droughts and agricultural pests (attributed in part to rising temperatures) have *already* contributed to detrimental fluctuations in ripening patterns and the abandonment of agricultural land (Canaan, employee, interview). As a date farmer explained “before, when there were changes one year, we knew things would go back to normal the year after. Now there is no longer any normal” (farmer, Jordan Valley, interview).

Mason et al. (2010) note that, although they share the same agroecological zone, the PAS is predicted to be substantially more vulnerable to the impact of climate change in comparison to the Israeli agricultural sector, “due to the greater reliance on rain-fed agriculture.” Climate change is expected to have dire impacts on the water sector, and the

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<sup>35</sup> Among the more Orwellian things, I saw during field visits in Area C was a Bedouin school that had been demolished simply because it lacked the required permit. In what Makdisi (2008) refers to as “occupation by bureaucracy,” it is important to note that, just 1.5% of these (expensive) Palestinian permit applications are approved (OCHA, 2015), and are often conditional on allowing usage to nearby Israeli settlements as well (e.g., wastewater plants, disposal sites). In 2016, more Palestinian structures were demolished in the WB than in any other year (OCHA, 2017a), causing great fear and uncertainty among the farmers I met.

agricultural sector in particular (Mimi and Abu Jamous, 2010), but the implications of climate change on the livelihoods of Palestinians, should not be addressed in isolation from the *existing* political and environmental impacts of the Israeli occupation. Many of the common adaptation strategies are rendered impossible by the occupation.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this thesis, but in recent years, there has also been a surge in scholarship predicting that in conflict areas climate change will increasingly act as a threat multiplier.<sup>37</sup>

## 5.4 The golden handcuffs of the “aid” industry

This section will address how both farmers and activists argue that the aid industry is, in fact, causing more harm than good. Especially since the Oslo Accords, the oPt has become one of the most aid-dependent places in the world, with international aid increasing by 17 times between 1993 and 2009 (Tartir 2015, 483). The NGO-isation of the WB civil society rapidly escalated post-Oslo, and from 2000-2007 the number of active NGOs in the WB rose by 61.5% (Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute in Hanieh, 2016). Nonetheless, as Tartir (2017) succinctly sums up the result of decades of aid, “it has failed to reverse the cycles of de-development, it has entrenched the status of a captive Palestinian economy that is unproductive and aid reliant, it has created structural deficiencies in the governance realm, and it has sustained and subsidized the Israeli military occupation.”

### *Suppresses anti-colonial resistance:*

Many scholars have accused international aid of specifically and intentionally de-linking Palestinian NGOs from the national anti-colonial struggle and undermining nationalist notions of self-reliance (Hanafi and Tabar, 2005; Nagarajan, 2015; Khalidi and Samour, 2011). There is an overall critique that, due to the absence of effective accountability mechanisms, donors in the oPt are not committed to the generally accepted principles of “Do No Harm” and

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<sup>36</sup> Adaptation by migration, for instance, is virtually impossible due to the restrictions on movement (Humble, 2018; State of Palestine, 2016). Due to the permit regime, many other adaptation strategies are also limited, leaving the donor community focused on practical “adaptation strategies” under the status quo instead (Jarrar, 2015). Furthermore, in 2018, it was revealed that since 2016 Palestine’s applications for funding to the Global Environmental Facility have been snubbed, due to the US’ threat to withdraw funds from any bodies that recognize Palestine (see Mathiesen, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Feitelson et al., 2012, and for studies specifically focused on the oPt, e.g., Mason 2013. Other studies, relevant to the situation in the WB, indicate that communities that are already in a marginalized socio-political situation, are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, see, e.g., Blaikie et al., 2014.

aid effectiveness (Knudsen and Tartir, 2017). Despite the fact that the aid organizations are – of course – not elected by the Palestinian people and cannot be disposed of, “the political objectives of western donors” have nonetheless “taken precedence over the developmental needs of Palestinians” (Turner 2014, 40 see also Haddad 2016, 279). The aid industry has also been widely critiqued (Tartir et al., 2012) for perpetuating its own existence in Palestine, rather than working towards ending the occupation.

*Rewards local NGOs ability to work within the donor system, rather than challenging it:*

The ballooned number of NGOs has also resulted in severe competition for funding, which has resulted in a tendency towards compliance with the donor agenda, rather than Palestinian priorities (Taghdisi-Rad in Paragi, 2017). Studies show that international donors notoriously ignore trade unions, popular committees, etc., and “prefer to work with NGOs trained in writing applications, managing large grants and setting up glittery websites” (Merz, 2012). While it is, of course, a critique of aid more broadly that it requires local NGOs to adapt to the language (both literally and figuratively) and reporting requirements of the donors, such conditionalities take on an added political dimension in the oPt. UAWC, along with many other NGOs, adheres to the call from Palestinian civil society for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) (see below). Many Western governments do not provide aid to NGOs adhering to the BDS pledge, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), further, requires recipients to sign an “anti-terrorism clause” in order to obtain funds. This clause has been subject to extensive critique in the oPt (Lazarus and Gawerc, 2015). Finally, Sabawi (in Shahin and Azar, 2011) adds that the highly inflated salaries of foreign-funded NGOs have diluted the spirit of volunteerism and grassroots organizing, as well as undermined the WB private sector.

*Assumes part of the cost of the occupation:*

Critics of the aid industry have argued it provides an artificial notion of sustainability and “keeps the Palestinian population from plunging into a humanitarian catastrophe” (Hever, 2015). While it had been long criticized that aid had “footed the bill” of the occupation, it still sent shockwaves through the community when Israeli economist, Shir Hever (2015), showed that 78% of aid intended for the oPt ends up back in Israeli

coffers.<sup>38</sup> Hever's (2015) findings also underpin why some, including Hanieh (2013b, 110), argue that "aid" in the context of the WB is a misnomer, as it has been "as much aid to Israel as it was to Palestinians." Hever (2015) adds that while donors are not themselves occupying the Palestinians "decades of acquiescing to Israeli demands and conditions on the disbursement of aid have turned them into accomplices to Israel's crimes" and calls for donors to use the leverage they have to pressure Israel. Le More (2008) presents a particularly scathing criticism of the unaccountability of international actors (e.g., the EU) with regards to not seeking compensation for aid projects destroyed by Israel.<sup>39</sup>

#### 5.4.1 Aid and the de-development of the Palestinian agricultural sector

The following section will argue that the PAS is the sector which has suffered the most from the effects of the aid industry. Based on three key arguments; its neglect of Area C (due to its politically sensitive nature) and its propensity towards band-aid initiatives or export-oriented projects. With rural communities in Area C *especially* prone to feel the effects of settlement expansion, demolitions, settler violence, permit and movement restrictions, denied access to natural resources and the effects from the construction of the wall, one would think that most aid would be directed their way. However, both international and PA assistance programs are instead centered in Area A. The neglect of Area C and the agricultural sector in general, Le More (2008, 118) describes, is due in part to the higher risks (e.g., of long delays/rejections of permits, demolitions, etc.), but also due to the politically sensitive nature of the agricultural sector (see also Awwad, 2016). The higher vulnerability of Area C, O'Callaghan et al. (2009) assert, means that the neglect of its inhabitants and the "reluctance to challenge Israeli restrictions on working there is contrary to the principle of impartiality," and the authors go on to call for active involvement in securing rights, rather than acquiescence.

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<sup>38</sup> Aid to the oPt is, in fact, an important export sector for the Israeli economy, providing a source of foreign currency through inflated prices, tolls and fees. Israeli companies also supply goods (mostly food) to the international aid agencies to be provided to the Palestinians. Due to the Paris Protocol, importing cheaper food from nearby countries could be even more expensive, because then the agencies would have to pay steep customs (Hever 2010, 40).

<sup>39</sup> According to Al-Haq (2018) the demolition of donor-funded humanitarian projects is increasing. In 2016 the Israeli authorities seized or demolished more than 292 donor-funded structures, representing a 165% increase from 2015. According to UNCTAD (2017), "the increasing belligerence of occupation presents a two-fold challenge, because it denies the Palestinian people access to their natural and economic resources and at the same time discourages donor support by minimizing development gains." See also Casalin (2015) and Le More (2008) for criticism of the international donor community's complicity, by not seeking compensation or in other ways holding the Israeli authorities accountable for this destruction.



Despite its importance for the sustainability of a future Palestinian state, and its current deteriorating condition, Abdelnour et al. (2012), show funds directed to the agricultural sector accounted for just 0.74% of total foreign aid in 2006. Similarly, Mansour (2012) argues that it is indicative of skewed priorities when in 2011, USD 125 million was funded by the donor community within the food security cluster, while the agriculture cluster received just USD 13 million.

*Band-aid solutions and acquiescence to the occupation:*

Within both the UN and the wider aid community there is a tendency to see the deterioration of the PAS and ensuing food insecurity as an issue of lacking “economic access to food” (see, e.g., FAO, 2003). This decontextualization and depoliticization of the problem masks the reality of the violence of settler-colonial occupation and naturally affects how these same organizations try to solve the problem. As a result, aid programs are focused more on band-aid type of assistance in the form of cash assistance and food aid, as well as developing industrialized agribusinesses in the WB, rather than “tackling the root cause of the problem,” i.e., ending the occupation and investing “in the indigenous agriculture industry of Palestine” (Mansour, 2012). Often local agricultural organizations in Area C suggest plans for sustainable projects that address issues of rights, and instead, they are fobbed off with a temporary coping mechanism and the justification that “they [foreign donor] have to remain neutral” (UAWC, advocacy coordinator (AC), interview). When water infrastructure is destroyed and permits to repair it are denied, farmers receive support to bring in water tanks (that will have to be continually refilled). If a farmer’s land is confiscated or water infrastructure destroyed, and a family’s livelihood is gone, one member of the family might be offered a temporary job (ibid.). As Mansour (2013) sums up the situation; “projects that are meant to support the Palestinian farmers work *around and within* the Israeli Occupation,” thereby, in fact, normalizes it through its acquiescence to the status quo. Food aid, almost exclusively imported via Israel, is especially criticized in the WB, “You can’t imagine how it hurts,” a farmer in Jenin tells me, the indignation clear in his voice, “to see imported grains brought in, truck after truck [by the UN], when we could have grown it here in Palestine” (farmer, Jenin, interview).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See also the FAO’s recommendation that food aid should never be supplied without a clear exit strategy to avoid dependence (FAO, 2004). It should be provided only in cases of emergency, and always directed at cultivating the capabilities to satisfy long-term needs (ibid.). In fact, Ophir in Gross and Feldman (2015) explain, food aid in Gaza, and the wider oPt, has *for decades* served as a buffer between a humanitarian catastrophe; thereby “sustain(ing), rather than transform(ing), the situation.”

### *Export-oriented agricultural “aid projects”:*

Aid projects have also incrementally deteriorated small-scale Palestinian farming by promoting and funding export-oriented agribusinesses. This makes a small elite of Palestinian agribusiness owners rich (as beneficiaries are required to be large-scale landowners) transforming their farms into agribusinesses, while small-scale farmers have become laborers instead (Mansour, 2012; Awwad, 2016). Mansour (2012) describes how aid-projects’ focus on monocropped luxury products destined for export has further diminished food availability on the local market and left the majority of the population reliant on low quality imported food. Even products that could have been sold on the local market are exported to increase profits. In a context of poor food security; Kurzom (2001) contends “agricultural export should be our last priority, not as it is today, the top priority.”

Moreover, the export of products entrenches the normalization of the occupation and dependence on Israel, seeing as it is essentially impossible to export Palestinian products without contracting with an Israeli transporter and intermediary – who is in a position to set the terms (Mansour, 2012).<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, industrialized agriculture requires expensive inputs (e.g., fertilizer, modified seeds, chemical pesticides), which engenders a captive market in the WB for the Israeli biotech and agrichemical market, and make it difficult for the farmers to make ends meet (Mansour in Gray, 2017). In addition to not addressing the issue of rights, agricultural organizations also critique the fact that the meager funds directed towards agriculture go towards agribusinesses aimed at export, rather than promoting training, and research into strengthening *baladi* (Arabic for local or grown in the home country) crops which would provide a long-term sustainable solution. During a field visit with UAWC, a farmer in the Jordan Valley lamented how farmers in his entire village now focus on cash crops for export and critique the short-sightedness of this strategy. Worried about the developments, and what would happen if agricultural imports were suddenly restricted, he asked “who can live off a diet of just dates and herbs?”, calling for diversification of crops, especially strategic ones such as wheat. Further critiquing that it is easier for Palestinians to attend training in writing grant proposals than training focused on soil preservation, indigenous farming techniques, etc., and lamenting that youth, today, would rather work for the NGOs, “but, how can there suddenly be

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<sup>41</sup> Mansour (2012) uses the Khazairan Herbal Agribusiness Company (KHAC) as an emblematic example. Established with the help of donor support, the agribusiness produces on average 200 tons of herbs *exclusively* for the foreign market. Initially, “100% of the produce was exported through Israeli companies”, and even though today some is exported through Jordan, it still has to go through Israeli customs. Before the establishment of KHAC, the land was used by small-scale land-owners to produce seasonal vegetables intended for the local market.

more [prestige] in working for an international NGO, with an international boss, than working the Palestinian land?” (farmer, Jordan Valley, interview).

Fortunately, there is a strong countermovement growing in Palestine, rejecting to accept by benevolence what should be available by right. The community organization, Dalia, for instance, is vehemently opposed to what they refer to as a dehumanizing and wasteful aid system (Dalia, n.d). Explaining that Palestinians in the WB are already under one occupation, and refuse to succumb to another one in the form of the aid industry (ibid.). When traveling throughout the WB, you constantly see big boards or plaques announcing that projects were built with funds from one country or another. Dalia instead advocates for the “made with no aid” emblem and a radical democratization of the aid industry.

## 5.5 Conclusion

“Control food and you control the people” (H. Kissinger quoted in Zurayk, 2012)

In sum, the previous sections have described the main constraints suppressing the PAS, which has further contributed to a deterioration of food sovereignty in the WB. It is, however, crucial to distinguish between primary versus secondary causes of this corrosion of the PAS. The aid industry, the institutional weakness of the PA and even climate change are contributing factors – *yes*. However, the main obstacle and the *root cause* of the deterioration is the confiscation of natural resources (including land and water), the economic power asymmetries and overall colonial matrix of control.

### Primary causes:

- The skewed economic policies, that allows for Israel to dump products on a captive WB market, and disrupts the WB chain of supply for agricultural inputs
- The expropriation of natural resources (Israeli hydro-hegemony, land grabbing, etc.) and ensuing de-peasantization, and loss of agricultural knowledge in the WB
- The colonial matrix of control (checkpoints, permit regime, etc.)

### Contributing factors:

- The PA and the aid-industry’s lacking prioritization of the agricultural sector
- Climatic changes

Differentiating between the root causes and its corollaries helps move the discussion along beyond a technocratic/apolitical understanding of the deteriorating PAS and instead addresses the underlying asymmetries of power and colonial dominance. Such an

analysis also leads to a rejection of the prevalent de-politicized explanations of food insecurity in the WB, such as Cavatorta and Waples (2014). While the authors do mention the “restrictions” on mobility and market access they do not find that to be the *dominant* cause of food insecurity in the WB, rather, they argue, “the predominant cause of food insecurity is lack of economic access to food (ibid.). Thus, food insecurity is strictly linked to “lack of purchasing power and, ultimately, poverty.”

Coined in 1976 by Wallensteen, food power describe situations in which one state seeks to achieve a political or military advantage over a target country by, e.g., manipulating its own food exports, “with the aim of punishing the target country or forcing it to change its policy” (Gross and Feldman, 2015). This chapter has described how the determinants for food sovereignty in the WB have been systematically weakened, and has served as a strategic tool in sustaining, or arguably, even exacerbating the occupation. In this sense Israel can be described as exercising its food power, by keeping the WB as a captive market for dumped Israeli products, this has severely de-developed the PAS and shattered food sovereignty in the WB, and further served Israeli political, economic and territorial objectives. Leaving the WB in a vulnerable position of forced dependency on Israel for perhaps its most basic need; food. As described above, the aid industry presently presents a smokescreen to the ongoing deterioration of the PAS. However, food sovereignty advocates in Palestine reject the notion that true food security, let alone sovereignty, can be dependent on the benevolence of aid. By addressing the fact that there is a root cause to the deterioration of the PAS, this also crackles the depoliticized frame presented by the aid community; that “Palestinian food insecurity is an unfortunate *by-product* of the conflict” (Zurayk and Gough 2013, 47, *emphasis added*).

## 6. ANALYSIS

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### 6.1 Slow violence in the West Bank

The following section describes how the erudition of the PAS can be understood as a case of slow violence. I make this argument based on three key ideas: Firstly, the representational bias against slow violence in academia and media. Secondly, how this causes slow violence to become normalized. And finally, how the PAS is a silent victim of insidious slow violence due to its attritional and cumulative consequences.

One of the key reasons the destruction of the PAS is invisibilized is what Nixon (2011a, 3) describes as the “representational bias against slow violence.” Arguably, this is all the more true in a context with ample cases of more “abrupt violence” having what Nixon refers to as “instant sensational visibility” (e.g., air strikes, house demolitions, etc.) (ibid., 2). It might be argued that such images saturate the news stream emerging from the oPt. While there are brilliant exceptions (see, e.g., O’Malley, 2015; Shehadeh, 2007), overall, I would argue that there is both a media and scholarly marginalization of the issue at hand. Barber et al. (2016) are critical of how the oPt is often flooded with journalists during “the raw tragedy of war when violence peaks,” but that media is quick to pack up and leave again when the violence ebbs. Given that dumped vegetables or Kafkaesque permit regimes do not leave any telltale bloody trails, TV cameras are not there to cover every farmer who has no other option than leaving her land because she cannot make ends meet, and journalists do not stand at the ready to document every farmer who has his greenhouse or irrigation system demolished because it lacked the correct permit. The destruction of the PAS and the resultant persistent vulnerability does not fall within the traditionally accepted conceptual categories of violence. This is especially true, because, by ensuring that the oPt stays *just* on the “right” side of a humanitarian catastrophe, Palestinians do not “look the part” of malnourished people (Gross and Feldman, 2015; Azoulay 2003, 155).

In the oPt, an artificial distinction is often drawn between violent and calm times. But as Collins (2012, 12) describes, “even in a period where no Palestinians are being killed, the situation is hardly calm” taking into account the omnipresent “colonization, economic exploitation, ecological destruction, [and] the gradual militarization of everyday life.” Furthermore, Palestine, it has been proposed, suffers from media and compassion fatigue, sometimes referred to as “Palestine fatigue”; i.e., the longevity and protracted nature of the occupation suggest its ultimate insolvability and so causes apathy within the international community (see Morris, 2015). It has also been noted that the attention paid to Daesh in the Middle East has ominous implications for the sidelining of attention to the situation in the oPt (ibid.). This allows the accelerating settlement encroachment, as well as the systematic erosion and destruction of the WB’s productive base (through the confiscation of natural resources) to go on almost unnoticed. As described above, many of these processes exacerbate each other and contribute to a negative feedback loop, illustrating the compounding effects of slow violence.

Nixon calls for widening conventional assumptions about violence “as a highly visible act that is newsworthy because it is even focused, time-bound, and body bound” (Nixon,

2011a, 3). Correspondingly, I believe, it can be argued that had the erudition of the PAS happened all at once, rather than in slow motion, it would have garnered greater attention and outrage. Instead, this type of settler-colonial slow violence has become so normalized it is rendered invisible. Chomsky (2016, 137) argues that the *scale* of the Israeli authorities' violations is intentional and "each action is limited in scope so as not to arouse too much international attention, but they have a cumulative effect and intent that are quite clear."

This thesis argues that the environmental degradation and erudition of food sovereignty functions as a (slow) weapon of war, which should also be seen in the context of the wider war of attrition waged against Palestinians in the WB, i.e., Israel's military strategy of achieving its goals "by wearing down the enemy to the point of collapse through continuous losses in personnel and material" (Small 2013, 90). And as Nixon (2011a, 3) warns, "slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential" in that it functions as a "major threat multiplier" by "proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions to sustain life becomes increasingly but gradually degraded." As illustrated above this is particularly relevant in the WB, where slow violence, as I described it here, deepens the colonial structures and progressively degrades Palestinians' ability to sustain themselves.

Nixon, moreover, provides an apt and powerful proposal for "a more radical notion of displacement", which rather than "referring solely to the movement of people from their places of belonging" refers instead; "to the loss of the land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable" (2011a, 19). Several times in the WB, I heard descriptions akin to this sentiment of displacement without moving; of "the loss of the land and resources beneath our feet." I think an emblematic example of slow violence, is a farmer who while perhaps still nominally owns land, is barred through a permit regime from entering it, and the wider settler-colonial matrix of control from getting access to water, and other inputs in order to farm it, let alone market her produce. All the while, knowing that any land left fallow too long will be at risk of expropriation.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Extending the analysis, it could also be argued that the peace negotiations in and of themselves are essentially a type of slow violence. Many Palestinians will refer to a version of the analogy of Israel gobbling up the proverbial pie, i.e., if the negotiations were over a pie, instead of a territory, and as the two sides negotiate, one side is scrumptiously eating away of this non-renewable resource, thereby making itself much stronger. This renders the question: what, in the end, will be left to negotiate over? As Al-Haq (2016) dishearteningly sums up the prospects of such a hollow victory; under Israel's occupation, the Dead Sea has diminished, settlements have over-exploited the arable land, quarries have depleted the underground resources, and the water aquifers have dried up; so "what will be left when the occupation ends?"

While it would require more research on the subject, I think there is also an argument to be made that it is not only amongst external observers (media, aid-organizations, wider global community) that the deterioration of the PAS is marginalized due to its slow violence characteristic. But perhaps also among Palestinians. Within a socio-political context where there are ceaseless pressing issues in the short/immediate term, the more long-term effects of slow violence are overshadowed. Nixon calls for eco-literature to help bring to the fore the lived experience of slow violence (2011b). I can think of no better candidate on such a narrative, than Palestinian writer and lawyer, Raja Shehadeh's, 2007, book *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a vanishing landscape*. In it, readers join Shehadeh on six narrated walks throughout the WB, across more than two decades. The book brilliantly, but also tragically, describes the insidious manifestation of settler-colonialism. And the excruciating slow-motion loss of one's home country. As Shehadeh (ibid., xvii) explains; it feels like his country has "contracted a terminal disease (...). As our Palestinian world shrinks, that of the Israelis expand, with more settlements being built, destroying forever the *wadis* and cliffs, flattening hills and transforming the precious land which many Palestinians will never know."

Will it have an impact if more attention is paid to slow violence in the oPt, specifically on the deteriorating PAS, the ever-greater dependency of food imports from Israel and ensuing loss of food sovereignty? Arguably, its urgency becomes clearer once the *longue durée* of slow violence in de-developing the PAS and the implications regarding the loss of food sovereignty, and wider vulnerability (not to mention prospects for achieving statehood) are taken into account. Recognizing this urgency also encourages focusing our attention on types of Palestinian resistance different from the ones commonly portrayed in the media (in reaction to spectacular forms of violence, at demonstrations, etc.). I will do this in the chapter below. Certainly, a counter-argument is that when even the overtly violent, and blatant, crimes against Palestinians and international humanitarian law are increasingly marginalized by the international community, where does this leave the prospect of slow violence receiving more attention?

## 6.2 Environmentalism of the occupied

The rest of this thesis will focus on the many ways Palestinians in the WB are fighting to regain control of their natural resources and achieve food sovereignty. I suggest that this agro-resistance can be described as "environmentalism of the occupied." This concept builds on "environmentalism of the poor," but argues that Palestinians in the WB struggle to

maintain, and regain, control of their natural resources not “merely” in order to sustain their livelihoods, but as part of an agenda for national liberation and freedom as well. This is exemplified, in the following pages, through agro-resistance’s multipronged strategy of resistance focus on promoting dignity through self-reliance, of linking as many livelihoods as possible to land, yet not being driven primarily by financial gains, but rather an aspiration of maintaining and, ideally, regaining sovereignty over natural resources. As described in the methodology section, the data offered a much broader pool of findings than can be presented and discussed here, but below I have chosen examples I find representative of environmentalism of the occupied.

### 6.2.1 A resistance economy centered around the agricultural sector

The resistance economy that is currently being revitalized in the WB, as part of the agro-resistance movement, is centered around many of the same principles as during the First Intifada; i.e. linking economic activity to political vision (Arafeh, 2017), and calls for an emancipatory economic countermovement, which supports the Palestinian national liberation process (Dana, 2014).<sup>43</sup> Acknowledging the ineffectiveness of macro-actors, a resistance economy focuses on the role individuals can play in undermining Zionist capital, as well as “[reinforcing] self-sustainability and socioeconomic (as well as cultural) resistance over and above artificial economic growth” (Tartir et al., 2012). The strategy entails both the promotion of *baladi* food and the boycott of Israeli products. According to its proponents, a resistance economy centered around the PAS would simultaneously strengthen the *sumud* of the farmers and cultivate local livelihoods, strengthen and expand local markets, reduce aid dependency, and regain “some measure of control over the Palestinian economy” (Abdelnour et al., 2012). Ultimately, in the long run, the aim is to ensure food independence from Israel and create sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

#### 1) The promotion of *baladi* food

While there has recently been a global surge in movements calling for a re-localization of food and farming systems, the following section illustrates how the movement in the WB is political in a way it might not be in other contexts. UAWC has a “*Bas Baladi*”

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<sup>43</sup> The concept “resistance economy” was introduced in Iran in 2010 to describe the economic strategies developed in the context of the US-imposed sanctions against Iran, but is also inspired by India’s successful *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) resistance economy, implemented as a defense during British colonial rule, which culminated in India’s independence (Piran and Dorche, 2016).



(Arabic for “only local”) farmers shop in Ramallah, exclusively selling Palestinian grown products. Similarly, once a week, in Ramallah and Bethlehem the Fair Trade organization Adel arranges an outdoor market which also only sells Palestinian products. These markets were established with the intention of making supporting Palestinian products more accessible, and thereby strengthens the struggling agricultural sector (Adel, employee, interview). As Adel explain in an interview; “we hope to broaden the issue of boycott and connect it to food sovereignty,” adding that they are always met with requests for *baladi* versions of something which, unfortunately, does not presently exist – and hope “one day there will be a competitive Palestinian version of everything” (ibid.).

Sharaka (Arabic for partnership), is one of several volunteer-run “Community Supported Agriculture” (CSA) projects in the WB. Through its efforts at local farms, it set out to improve the local food chain, connecting its members to locally grown produce directly from farmers, and have proudly been able to run its CSA project under the “made with no aid” slogan. It was established around 2009, in part, in reaction to the inadequacy of agricultural donor-projects and is adamant in emphasizing that it is *not* an NGO, but a group of concerned Palestinians (Sharaka, organizer, interview). Once at a farm near Ramallah, one of the Sharaka organizers tells me, as we are planting almond trees, that I shouldn’t be fooled to think that we are just out here farming. No – he says – “this is our resistance!” Sharaka frames its efforts very much as part of the struggle to achieve food sovereignty and preserve agricultural heritage. The participants of the group eagerly explain the significance of the different varieties of *baladi* seeds as we sow them. Their main vision: is “a food sovereign Palestine where Palestinians produce sufficient food supply by means of traditional, seasonal, and environmentally sound farming techniques.”

One Saturday while working together at the farm, a Sharaka member shares a cake, proudly declaring that, despite challenges in obtaining them, it only consists of *baladi* ingredients. “They do not get to occupy our stomachs,” someone adds with a chuckle. Recently in Palestine, there has been a movement to “decolonize the plate”; i.e., a renaissance of cooking Palestinian dishes made exclusively of Palestinian ingredients. Countering the way that imported Israeli products and food aid, have over the years increasingly come to define what is on the plate in the WB. This also challenges the corporal aspect of having to put food

embodying the occupation into one's mouth.<sup>44</sup> But as mentioned, securing Palestinian-grown ingredients in the WB is no easy task. And what do you do when Palestinian ingredients for a traditional Palestinian dish cannot be procured, and the only alternative is to use the imported ingredients from Israel? With delight, news is shared when Sharaka members meet of how they have at last been able to secure a Palestinian-grown version of something, and plans are hatched on how to try and create a growing demand (Sharaka, organizer, interview). Other initiatives like a traditional culinary school in the town of Nablus, and restaurants across the WB revitalizing traditional Palestinian dishes, become important tools in the preservation of Palestinian culture. This movement is also part of a growing counterculture, across the Middle East, alleging that Israel is appropriating Arab/Palestinian dishes.<sup>45</sup> As El-Haddad, co-author of a Palestinian cookbook stresses, when "so little remains in a physical and geographic sense, things like food become one of the only means of locating one's self and one's identity" (quoted in Mohammad, 2013).

Finally, I want to underscore that none of the Palestinians I met, who promoted supporting *baladi* produce heralded a 100% Palestinian diet per se. What they *do* want is choice, rejecting the notion that a fruit and vegetable market bustling with products actually represents a choice, if the vast majority are dumped Israeli products. This is very much in line with the overall call by the broader FSM for choice and control (see section 3.3.2).

The preservation and revival of *baladi* seeds:

At UAWC, there is no doubt that the struggle for food sovereignty is part and parcel of the struggle against the occupation (UAWC, campaign coordinator (CC), interview). "Food security is not enough," a UAWC campaign coordinator explains, "we need food sovereignty" (ibid.). At the UAWC headquarters in Ramallah, their "2014 Food Sovereignty Prize" (awarded to them from the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance) is proudly displayed. To foster broader alliances, UAWC is also a member of LVC and is currently the only Arab

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<sup>44</sup> I argue that the occupation is embodied in the produce from the settlements, based on Hornborg's (2011, 18) understanding of embodied land "as the consumption of resources requiring land surfaces in excess of what is nationally available."

<sup>45</sup> Many Middle Eastern countries consider it culinary imperialism and historical distortion, as well as a violation of culinary copyright, when Israel markets dishes (e.g., hummus, tabbouleh, falafel, etc.) as traditionally Israeli (Lichfield, 2010; Nir and Groszlik, 2013). It is interesting to note that across occupied regions there appears to be a growing movement of "counter-cuisine," i.e., modes of culinary defiance and a way of reasserting existence, in line with Scott's (1989) model of "everyday resistance" (see Section 3.2). See examples from Western Sahara (Gluck, 2015; Kahn, 2010), Tibet (McConnell, 2014) and Kurdistan (Sinjari, 2016). Furthermore, presently, in Greenland there is also a strong movement for de-colonizing the foodscape which has traditionally been dominated by Danish influences (Ringgard, 2016).

member organization. Established in 2003, UAWC's seed bank was one of the first seed banks in the Middle East (UAWC, seed bank coordinator, interview). It is the largest in Palestine and has supported more than 2000 farmers. As a testament to its success, impressively, so far, all farmers have brought seeds back to the bank. It stores more than 270 samples and is especially focused on seeds that are rainfed and drought resistant because this "makes the farmers less dependent and improves their steadfastness" (ibid.). The seed bank is also an act of defiance against the erasure of Palestinian agricultural heritage. While the financial/monetary banks in the WB all store *Israeli* Shekels, the UAWC seed bank coordinator wittily explain, "in a lot of ways [through its storage of *Palestinian* seeds] this bank is much more valuable."

While the new Palestine Heirloom Seed Library (PHSL) is perhaps smaller, it more than makes up for it through its enthusiasm. Its founder, Vivien Sansour's joy for seeds is omnipresent and contagious. While Sansour acknowledges that in the context of occupation, the dumping of food might not at first seem like a priority, she makes a strong case for why revitalizing the PAS must be a key concern for the resistance (PHSL, founder, interview). She considers the farmers who defy all the obstacles in their way and hold on to their land as crucial to Palestinian resistance against the occupation, adding that "the seed is one of the strongest weapons against the occupation." The library has a clear functional purpose, but also a deep socio-cultural importance in terms of preserving history; the library, for instance, has been able to secure seeds for species which had been considered lost. Vivien's concern for seed sovereignty expands far beyond Palestine, taking a global outlook on the deterioration of food and seed sovereignty and explaining that "this is much larger than a nationalistic approach," adding that in fact "all nationalism should be violently criticized." While Sansour emphasizes that the root problem to the deterioration of food sovereignty in the WB is the occupation, she is also highly critical of the cash crop agribusiness promoted by the aid industry, as these have "led to a drastic reduction in terms of diversity" and replaced local seeds with imported, patented GMO seeds – that do not reproduce. Which means that rather than aiding the farmers, they have deepened their dependency. The PA, similarly, in their advocacy of agribusiness promotes "chemicals that literally kill the soil we say we are fighting for" (ibid).

## 2) The boycott of Israeli products

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address the growing global BDS movement (see, e.g., Barghouti, 2011, for more on the BDS campaign's aim of making the cost of the occupation so great as to be unsustainable). I will instead briefly address the boycott efforts inside the WB and how it is connected to the "environmentalism of the occupied." Activists

focus on de-normalizing the purchase and reliance on Israeli produce – calling especially for the boycott of *sensitive and strategic* Israeli products “through the prohibition of their marketing in Palestinian areas and the substitution of these products with alternatives from local or international producers” (as described by Khalidi, 2016). During the 2014-assault on Gaza, a store owner on Irsal street in Ramallah explains; activists stuck stickers on all Israeli products warning that “16% of this product's price goes to the Israeli army,” (in reference to the 16% value added tax which is paid to Israel on all imported goods – and directly or indirectly finances the Israeli military). According to Lyse-Thompson (2015), sales of Israeli products fell by 50% during the boycott.

One of the main issues of contention is whether the WB resistance economy can ever be more than a symbolic act without the support from the PA, e.g., in the form of preventing Israeli dumping and radically increasing support to the PAS, etc. All PA attempts so far to encourage Palestinians not to buy settlement products, have been short-lived (Rigby and Darweish 2015, 84, see also Sansour and Tartir, 2014). Dana (2014) argues that for it to succeed, a resistance economy campaign must be “sustainable and institutionalized,” supported by organizations, committees, and political parties, not just ad hoc events or reactions to intensified Israeli suppression. El-Zein (2017) critiques the elision in resistance economy literature of the institutional weakness of the PA, in part due to the “neoliberal context of the post-Oslo straitjacket” and in part due to a lack of will. Based on fieldwork concerning the difficulties faced by the WB’s first mushroom farm, El-Zein makes a particularly harsh critique of the vision of the resistance economy, calling it “disconnected from the reality.”<sup>46</sup> Once the initial enthusiasm and promise of success fades; what El-Zein describes, as small-scale niche ventures, do little to address the deeper issues of food sovereignty (ibid.). El-Zein suggests that an agriculturally-based resistance economy should rather focus on “strategic staples such as wheat,” and also calls into question the depoliticizing romanticism, prevalent in much resistance economy literature, regarding the role of agriculture and the farmer as the bearer of the nationalist banner.

Not everyone, however, sees the (at present) mostly symbolic nature of the resistance economy as an impediment. UAWC describes how the fact that the boycott does not,

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<sup>46</sup> See El-Zein (2017) for more on how the farm struggled both due to Israeli violations in terms of preventing imports required to run the farm, as well as a lack of support from the PA. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this thesis, but El-Zein also goes into a compelling argument of how a successful resistance economy must be coupled with the withdrawal of Palestinian labor from the Israeli market. The mushroom farm specifically hired female workers who had previously worked in the settlements.

presently, pose an economic threat to the occupation, does not take away from the fact “that it is important, and sends a strong signal that at least we don’t want to *support* it with our money” (UAWC, AC, interview). As Abunimah (2014, 123) also emphasizes, economic resistance *alone* is not likely to liberate the oPt, but breaking “the neoliberal ideological shackles” and the limitations to self-sufficiency imposed by the occupation is an important step along the way (ibid.).

At its present stage, however, the resistance economy campaign in the WB is accused by some of addressing itself mostly to middle-class consumers (see, e.g., El-Zein, 2017). When I ask a vendor at the market in Ramallah who is yelling out “*Baladi, baaaaaladi*” as he tries to attract customers to his stand of Palestinian grown grapes; he acknowledges that it is not easy. Sometimes *baladi* products are double or even more the price of the Israeli alternative. I interpret what he explains as if there is a clash between the ideals of the campaign and the local economic reality; i.e., that many families do not have the economy to choose. Furthermore, members of Sharaka lament that it is often difficult to distinguish between the origins of produce, thus undermining the boycott effort. Adding that, it is their impression that many Palestinians might not be aware just how much of their agricultural purchases comes from Israel and the settlements, and that campaigns raising awareness about this would be useful.

### 6.3.2 Sustainability by necessity and forced self-reliance

Agro-resistance initiatives in the WB often find ways to make do with very sparse both financial and physical resources. It is often due to a sheer lack of access, or an aspiration not to have to rely on Israel for anything. As mentioned above (Section 2.3), in accordance with the “interim” Oslo Accords, Israel is, in fact, responsible for providing civil services, water, and other infrastructure in Area C, and successfully manages to do so for the Israelis living in the neighboring settlements. However, many farmers in Area C find themselves both prevented from accessing the *existing* (water/electricity) infrastructure *and* from constructing their own (Al-Haq, 2018). Effectively rendering such farmers ‘off the grid.’ The following section, provides an outline of some of the endlessly innovative solutions agro-resistance initiatives in Area C employ in their refusal to be coerced into leaving their land.

At Marda Permaculture Farm, the founders subscribe to a notion of “radical self-reliance.” The farm was re-established in 2006, following its destruction by the Israeli army a few years earlier. The owner explains that while permaculture might still be a relatively foreign

concept in the WB, its underlying principles are certainly not.<sup>47</sup> In essence, the Marda farm centers its activities around sustainability, social and environmental justice and living self-sufficiently, removing as many layers of dependency as possible. And as the owner explains; he can't think of anywhere that the principles of permaculture are more urgently needed than in the WB. The farm lacks sufficient access to electricity, water, access roads, and imported fertilizers. Furthermore, the settlement of Ariel (population: 20.000) looms on a hilltop right above the Marda farm, and periodically lets raw sewage stream down onto Marda's land. During my visit there, I get the opportunity to help the owner install a hydroponics system, which has since been crucial in improving water-conservation at the farm. The farm serves as a demonstration site, for water-management, recycling and energy conservation techniques and as a place to exchange ideas and strategies on how to farm with locally-appropriate resources, and as few outside inputs as possible. The owner explains that the work done at the farm can hopefully "help inspire and empower other Palestinians, to help us become independent from the Israeli market," overall, he adds "it is about not giving in to the pressure from Israel to leave our farms."

Near Tulkarem, Hakoritna Farm has been met with countless obstacles since they started the farm in the 80's. Particularly, between 2002-2007, during the construction of the wall which now towers right next to the farm, when the army sabotaged the farm repeatedly, eventually declaring it a military zone. The farm lost 19 of its 32 dunams to the wall. In addition to the wall, Hakoritna has what they describe as "probably the worst neighbors in the world," namely Geshuri and Sons Industries, a large Israeli factory complex, which manufactures fertilizers and agrochemicals. As described above (Section 5.2.1), such factories moved to the settlements once they became illegal inside Israel. In the face of all this pollution and toxicity, the farm took the ultimate retaliation and made their farm organic, which makes the fact that it remains doused in industrial fumes and dust, and for the industrial runoff from the settlement seeping into the field, the ultimate insult. Faced with all the different aspects that are out of his control, the owner of Hakorinita Farm explains "I can at least 100% control what I put into my mouth", emphasizing that even if changing the factories is out of their control they cannot force them to leave. All Palestinians are hungry, the owner of Hakoritna adds, not for Israeli or imported food, but for food sovereignty, pronouncing that "until we can have true sovereignty, we should at least be able to have food sovereignty."

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<sup>47</sup> See e.g., Mollison, 1988, for more on the philosophy behind permaculture principles.

Hakoritna has thought self-reliance into everything they do. Because, as they explain, they “refuse to give legitimacy to this oppressive system by engaging with it.” With barely concealed pride the owner enthusiastically demonstrates the biogas system running on compost (which means that the farm can reduce its reliance on Israeli-controlled resources such as fertilizers) and the water catchment systems (which partially irrigate the farm). As well as the solar driers, explaining how knowledge on food-preservation (in general, but also, e.g., in the face of a future siege) can help support Palestinian resilience and food sovereignty. While Hakoritna’s self-sufficiency is a mix between choice and necessity, there is no doubt that the owners frame their farming, and staying on the land, despite all the obstacles, as resistance.

Finally, I also want to briefly mention the recently opened Palestine Museum of Natural History (PMNH), near Bethlehem. It is a museum, but by visiting and engaging with its founders, you quickly sense that it self-identifies as an environmental justice organization, with a founding philosophy of fostering “the next chapter of Palestine’s history - rooted in empowerment, freedom, and sustainability.” (PMNH, director, interview). While the museum engages in a broad range of activities, I want to highlight its large demonstrations site, used to develop and test ideas adapted to the (physical and political) environment of the WB. This site is used to develop ideas, on how to farm with limited resources and without dependence on Israeli inputs, which are now being transferred to farmers and other parts of the community. Their research into aquaponics, for instance, has been crucial in introducing the technique to farmers in Gaza and Area C suffering from a severe lack of both land and water. Despite such ingenuity, there are, of course, limits to what farmers can adapt to, as both the farmers at Marda and Harkonita explain; they have ideas for solutions, but in most parts of Area C, you need a permit merely to harvest the rainwater falling from the sky in a cistern or install a solar panel.<sup>48</sup>

*Dignity through self-reliance:*

At both Marda and Harkonita, their resistance to being forced into dependency on their occupier is a way of restoring dignity. But it also almost appears as a type of self-defense, a preparation in case the Israeli authorities ever put their farm, community or the entire WB under siege. At Marda, the owner also explained how farming is more dignified than having to

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<sup>48</sup> Presently the WB is almost entirely energy-dependent on Israel. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper, but see Jebiril and Khatib (2018), and Al-Haq (2018) for interesting elaborations on the obstacles facing the WB’s shift to renewable energy. Despite having an ideal climate for solar energy, both private businesses and aid organizations are reluctant to invest in solar energy projects due to the inability to obtain permits, and high risks of demolitions without them (see Section 5.2.3). The PA, of course, do not have the required control of any land (except for the WB cities in Area A).

rely on aid, and that expanding the PAS could be a remedy for the widespread un(der)employment in the WB as well. Adding that it would increase the sumud of the WB if as many people as possible have their livelihoods connected to the land – rather than to aid, and their dignity if they were able to eat Palestinian food - rather than imported Israeli products. It can also be described as an act of resistance against normalization of occupational structures, as the owner at Harkonita put it; “we refuse to accept the wall, the settlements and our erasure as a fact of life.” Which, as I interpret it, means that for these farmers capitulating to being dependent on Israel for inputs would be the same as accepting the unjust power-structures prescribed by the occupation.

### 6.3.3 Land reclamation and land rehabilitation

Another strategy that falls within agro-resistance is land reclamation and rehabilitation. Once a piece of land is lost to a settlement, it is very challenging to get back, so the objective of this strategy is to prevent the Ottoman Land Code from being enacted (see 5.2). During a UAWC field visit, to one of the farmers that have participated in UAWC’s ongoing Land Reclamation Project, I meet a farmer whose land had been at risk of being expropriated by a nearby expanding settlement. He scrolls through his phone to show photos of how the land used to look before UAWC was able to support the farmer in replanting a large area with crops and thereby prevent the impending expropriation. “Some nights I would sleep out here because I was so worried,” the farmer recounts, “but for now I don’t have to worry anymore” (farmer, Southern Hebron, interview). Impressively, UAWC has managed to reclaim and protect more than 100.000 dunams of threatened farmland. In addition, the project provides a source of income for tens of thousands of Palestinian small-scale farmers, and specifically serves the purpose of “linking livelihoods back to the land, not creating additional layers of dependency” (UAWC, AC, interview).

At UAWC, through my internship in Ramallah and everyone I engaged with at their regional offices, I am repeatedly struck by how the work they do has a range of concrete – material – goals in terms of securing land rights and livelihoods, etc., but is just as much about something less tangible; restoring self-respect. In contrast to the accusation leveled against international NGOs, at UAWC the “the best scenario is one where we are no longer needed.” (UAWC, AC, interview). UAWC’s activities are always underpinned by a vision of the future where the occupation is lifted, and WB farmers are self-reliant and able to farm their land



sustainably, without any additional assistance. This is exemplified in how participants in UAWC programs (approximately 30.000 a year) never receive support in the form of alms; every participant contributes to the program themselves as well (in kind or financially). As well as UAWC's focus on securing rights and creating skillsets, through training, etc., rather than "programs that never end. Because this is not our goal" (ibid.).

In addition to the Land Reclamation Program, and the seed bank and *Bas Baladi* shop, UAWC also employs a number of other strategies in their supports for farmers and struggle towards food sovereignty. To mention but a few, UAWC constructs agricultural access roads and water infrastructure, their legal unit helps farms in cases of Israeli attacks and land right cases, and a marketing unit train farmers in how to increase awareness of their products. Every year they organize international accompaniment to join farmers during the olive harvest.<sup>49</sup>

On the last undeveloped hill in the Ramallah area, the Mashjar Juthour project is located (Arabic for "a place of trees/roots"). The arboretum and eco-park has many purposes, explains its owners, "including the preservation of our natural and national heritage," but also "defying the appropriation of our land and culture by the occupier." Mashjar Juthour is eager to teach everyone, and especially children, about the importance of protecting Palestinian natural heritage. Furthermore, the presence of the Mashjar Juthour projects prevents the land from being urbanized or converted into an industrial zone. The owners will gladly tell you about every single plant and tree growing on their land, and are keen to ensure that Palestinian food sovereignty is part and parcel to the Palestinian human rights movement (Mashjar Juthour, owners, interview). The owners also run a restaurant in Ramallah, which serves Palestinian dishes using vegetable grown at the restaurant's on-site rooftop garden.

To show the nuances of how different initiatives frame their actions as agro-resistance, I also want to include Canaan Fair Trade, a large cooperative of farmers focused on olive oil, but also supplying almonds, honey, and soap. It was set up in 2004, and is active in more than 55 villages with 1700 participating farmers. Before this Fair Trade unionization, an employee at Canaan explains, "the prices for olives were so low they did not cover production costs." (Canaan, employee, interview). Dependent on Israel for export, the Israeli buyers, would "make us compete against each other – and get all the benefit themselves." Today, by selling

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<sup>49</sup> The harvest season in 2016 proved especially challenging because the changing climate in the region meant that the olives were ready for harvest much later than what used to be usual. See also Koopman (2014) for a critical analysis of international accompaniment in zones of conflict, which while curtailing settler violence also risks reinforcing, rather than challenging, the racial privilege and systems of domination accompaniment relies on.

the oil to primarily foreign markets, Canaan can provide farmers with above-market prices for their produce, in order, “to strengthen their sumud and their livelihood” (ibid.). Today, Canaan is the largest fair-trade business in the Middle East and the world’s largest fair-trade supplier of olive oil. Through its support to farmers and its yearly distribution of more than 10.000 tree saplings, Canaan also supports farmers in being able to stay on the land through reclamation.

Visiting the large Canaan headquarters in Jenin, where the massive oil press facility is located, there is no doubt that Canaan believes that they play an important role in the resistance against the occupation and the preservation of “Palestinian culture through its rootedness in the land.” I ask the Canaan representative for a response to the critique of Canaan’s export model, (some WB food sovereignty-activists contend that the land, which is used for growing olives for export, could, and should, have been used to grow strategic staples like wheat, lentils or legumes.) Canaan replies that it is not so black or white, taking into consideration the present political conditions, and that through export they “are able to provide a much higher price for the oil, which allows the farmer to stay on his land” (ibid.). It is more likely that the land would have been lost to the occupation (than used for growing produce for domestic consumption), had it not been for Canaan’s support for the olive farmers (ibid.).

### *The primary motivation is not material gains*

It is important to note that while there might also be economic incentives, for most of the agro-resistance cases presented in this thesis this is not their *primary* motivation, some even operate at a loss. To these agro-activists, staying on their land, and producing food to sell on the Palestinian market, entails much more than a financial or material dimension. It ties into the wider national struggle to stay on the land, preventing it from falling into the hands of settlements, and also holds cultural value in preserving traditional farming methods. An emblematic example of how staying on the land is motivated by more than financial gains is the “Tent of Nations” farm, located in Area C, outside of Bethlehem. The farm is surrounded by a settlement, which continuously expands. Recently the access roads to the farm were destroyed, and the farm has also repeatedly had their crops ruined. They have been offered an open check in exchange for their land, but as the family that runs it explains, “the farm is a gift from our forefathers, and gifts should never be sold,” adding that there is no way they will ever voluntarily leave their farm (Tent of Nations, owner, interview). At the farm, they focus on “turning all of our frustrations into something positive and productive instead” (ibid.). Due to

restrictions in getting onto the electricity grid, the farm installed the WB's first ever solar panels and currently plans to build a Sustainability School for all the area's children to come and learn about the significance of farming and staying on the land.

In summary, agro-resistance cannot be described as being driven by economic calculations. Furthermore, many activists and farmers expose themselves to great personal risk by doing what they do, be it settler violence, accessing their farms "illegally" (without or outside the timeslots allocated by their permit). In the words of one farmer, caught *directly* adjacent to the wall, (despite barely making ends meet): "I wouldn't sell it for all the money in [the world]," adding that only death could ever make him leave his land (farmer, Salfit, interview).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully address, but it is also significant to discuss that while most agro-resistance examples mentioned here *are* in fact organic (e.g., for ideological reasons, or as a way to decrease dependence on imported herbicides, etc.), in contrast to agrarian social movements, especially in the West, agro-resistance in the WB is *less* about organic farming, and *more* about continuing – and ideally expanding – the presence on the land. As well as limiting the import of foreign food, which in any case, is not organic. My impression, from the farmers I met, is that if it is a question of sowing a field using non-organic methods, or not at all, the answer is clear. The farmers, it can perhaps be argued, are idealistic in their goals, but at the same time pragmatic in their means. One more dunam cultivated (organic or not), is one dunam less at risk of appropriation. And one more source of sustenance and connection to the land. This is in line with food sovereignty advocates in the global South, who have raised concerns about some Western food activists' sanctification of organic or pure food (see, e.g., Bradley and Herrera, 2016).

#### *Revitalizes the significance of the fellaheen*

Overall, the agro-resistance movement in the WB has been influential in revalorizing the role of the farmer (*fellaheen*). Classic Palestinian literature and poetry have traditionally linked the connection to the land, and especially the position of the farmer as the backbone of resistance against settler-colonialism (Yahya, 2012). Dana (2014) adds that the significance of agriculture extends far beyond it being a "strategic source of economic survival; it also symbolizes Palestinians' relationship to their land, their identity, their culture, and their history." Within the last two decades, however, laments Kurzom (2016), the esteem of the

farmer and knowledge of traditional agricultural practices have drastically eroded, especially among the WB youth. In following the tenets as described by both the FSM and environmentalism of the poor, the agro-resistance movement in the WB increasingly invokes a revitalized fellaheen imaginary. Arguably, this trend followed the commencement of the construction of the wall, which put farmers (who were destined to have their farmland confiscated to make way for the wall) at the front line of the resistance against it. Farmers and their unions found themselves at the center of the struggle, organizing the initial mobilization against the wall (UAWC, AC, interview). A review of recent literature on Palestinian agro-resistance, similarly shows a strong emphasis on the cultural and strategic significance of the farmer in the Palestinian resistance movement.<sup>50</sup>

### 6.3.5 Roof-top gardens in Aida refugee camp

In Aida refugee camp, in Bethlehem, I visit the Lajee Center's roof-top garden project. Established in 2014, the gardening project has been able to bring agriculture back into the lives of the people who live in the camp. Aid projects in the refugee camps are notorious for being short-term (band-aid) projects (Lajee Center, coordinator, interview). The Lajee gardens are different, because "we want [Palestinians] to have the control of the projects – not someone from outside," and hopefully, in the long-run, the project will help decrease aid-dependency in the camps (*ibid.*). By growing some of their own fruit and vegetables, the gardens provide a tangible addition to the food economy of the participating families. The refugee camps are one of the most food-insecure parts of the Palestinian society, and furthermore experience severe un(der)employment issues (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016). There is an unimaginable population density in the camps, and a lack of space – never mind green spaces. At Lajee, they explain how the project helps preserve agro-knowledge and ties to the land for the participating adults themselves (many of whose families lost their land during the Nakba), and an opportunity for children to reconnect with the land. At one of the rooftop gardens, a woman explains how "growing something made me feel more alive." Right now, her kids are at school, she explains, but she usually brings them with her up to the garden, and "hope that someday they will get to know what it feels like to grow vegetables again in the real

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<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Abdelnour et al.'s (2012) description of how "every farmer planting and growing on the land of Palestine is more powerful than a fighter" or Sansour and Tartir's (2014) portrayal of farmers as "freedom fighters" and "the last frontier of resistance." See El-Zein (2017) for a critical evaluation of this trend, arguing that it romanticizes Palestinian struggle and agriculture.

soil, *inshallah*.” Adding that the little garden, in the midst of a concrete jungle, helps, because “I want them to be able to imagine other lives, better lives than this.”

### *Intersectional and Palestinian-led*

Overall, the agro-resistance initiatives described in this thesis set out to confront the external sources dominating the PAS. As well as attempting to fill the gap left by PA paralysis. They are all bottom-up and Palestinian-led and represent a very different approach to both PA and donor-funded agricultural projects. Furthermore, also often focused on intersectional issues, such as the Lajee Center roof-top garden’s focus on female empowerment. While the environmentalism of the occupied observed in the WB is highly place-based, it is also in many ways transnationalised. In part due to the intersection of oppressive forces (including occupation, aid-paternalism and neoliberal influences). Through UAWC’s membership of LVC, and its many direct alliances with farmer groups in the global South who also farm under challenging conditions, they are able to exchange ideas and strategies of resistance. UAWC explains that such cooperation is often more symbiotic, than traditional donor-recipient relationships to Western NGOs (UAWC, AC, interview). Considering that they constantly face so many challenges themselves, I am repeatedly impressed by the agro-resistance movement in the WB’s insistence on taking a global perspective and its efforts to show solidarity and foster alliances across the world. From the Sharaka groups’ donation of seeds to help establish a community-farm run by refugees in Greece, to events in solidarity with the water protectors at Standing Rock (a community also facing an existential threat due to settler-colonialism).<sup>51</sup>

### *Prefigurative activities*

I find the agro-resistance movement in the WB emblematic of how grief and hope are able to coexist. Many of the activists explain some version of how doing what they do is a way to vent their frustrations. To construct something beautiful, in the midst of all the destruction. A way to *impose their own facts on the ground*. I find two aspects of how agro-resistance is enacted especially inspiring. Firstly, as Sansour (2010) describes it, agro-activists’ wish to restore “a sense of self - a self that is defiant but not defined by its oppressor,” or as

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<sup>51</sup> See Collins (2012, 121) and Pappé (2018), for more on how, while previously dominated by a pan-Arab or general so-called “Third World” solidarity, recently there has been a growing sense of Fourth World identity and pan-indigenous solidarity in the oPt underpinned by a recognition that the struggles are identical in their core. Both scholars agree that this is a beneficial trend, through it “Palestine, once again emerges as part of something much larger” (Collins 2012, 124).

Abufarha eloquently puts it; “we must not live exclusively in reaction to Israel and the occupation. We must draw on our own traditions and cultivate our own strengths” (quoted in Cook, 2016).

Secondly, it is also a method of putting into action what a future free Palestine could one day be like. Agro-resistance is often enacted along the lines of prefigurativism (i.e., the desire to embody “within the ongoing political practice of a movement [...] those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal,” see Boggs, 1977). Preparations are made for *when*, not if, settler-colonialism ends, and the wall comes down. Rather than when the time comes, having to *remain* in a position of dependency with Israel (for food, agricultural inputs, energy, etc.), agro-activists make pre-emptive efforts to ensure that the WB can stand on its own feet when the day comes. As exemplified by networks such as Sharaka, which does not wait for the day the occupation ends. They fight the existing order by creating superior social systems themselves (i.e., their model of community supported agriculture), already now, and hope that it will flourish even further once freedom is achieved.

### *Everyday acts of resistance*

Every farmer who circumvents the settler-colonial matrix of control and continues farming his land, despite the risks and obstacles encountered. Every family that foregoes something else, because they increase their weekly household budget by supporting Palestinian-grown vegetables. Every mother who does not give up on teaching her children, born and raised in a refugee camp, the significance of keeping Palestinian farming traditions alive. Every one of these acts is emblematic of something repeated across the WB (from literature to street art to queues at checkpoints) that here: “existence is resistance.” Each individual act, might perhaps at first seem too small to be significant, but collectively, and due to the way they overlap, agro-activists in the WB hope that they will have a cumulative effect. The environmental veneer of some of the agro-resistance initiatives also diverts attention away from their underpinning resistance-oriented aims. This, presumably, allows some of the projects to proceed somewhat more clandestinely, than if they had been more overtly acts of resistance against the occupation. This is exactly the advantage of the de-centralized “everyday acts of resistance” strategy that it is allowed to grow because it does not raise suspicion or appear threatening. Ideally, up until a point where it has gained so much momentum that it will be too late to stop it. It is nonetheless,

crucial to note that the State of Israel is increasingly cracking down on non-violent protests (Khalidi, 2018). In a most concerning trend, the Israeli authorities also target agro-resistance activities and wages an amplified arrest campaign against the staff of agricultural organizations. At UAWC alone, most of the senior staff has been arrested in the last few years, and many of the regional offices have been raided and had computers confiscated (UAWC, CO, interview).

### 6.3 Impediments to environmentalism of the occupied

In the following section, I will briefly elaborate on some of the obstacles facing the agro-resistance movement in the WB, including the fragmentation of the movement, an Israeli counter-movement and the tainted reputation of environmentalism in the WB. While there are positive sides to how individual farmers, consumers, volunteers or villages, etc., can take part, there is also concern that for agro-resistance to advance it must receive broader popular support from both the population and organizations for it to levy the PA to abandon its neoliberal agenda and re-prioritize the PAS. While the lack of one coherent strategy amongst the various activists and networks is advantageous in preventing a retaliation (against those that would formulate it), it is conceivably an obstacle in terms of gaining broader influence.

Many of those I interviewed called for campaigns raising awareness of the importance of supporting the PAS, and boycotting settlement products, but it appears that the impact of such a campaign is negatively impacted by the slow violence aspect, which I argued in Section 6.1 is influential in de-development of the PAS in the first place. For most, especially younger, people in the WB the PAS has been deteriorating their entire lives, and settlement products have slowly, but steadily, engulfed the WB markets, which makes it challenging to suddenly convince them that they should act with urgency to rectify this. As Mansour (2012) adds, among the broad Palestinian population, it is simply not seen as a priority, arguing that “it is essential to develop it as a critical Palestinian national agenda item where the Palestinian government advocates on behalf of its farmers and their land and resources.”

Furthermore, there is also a growing countermovement gaining momentum amongst Zionists. The Israeli organization “Women in Green,” for instance, sets out to win the “battle for every dunam of land” in the WB (Women in Green, n.d.). On their official website, they describe the waging of “an agricultural jihad, in which the Arabs, backed by almost unlimited international financing, steal state lands by cultivating them” (ibid.). Convinced that

every “tree is our literal soldier in the field, acting as a marker and stake in the earth and holding the ground for us” the Women in Green focuses on planting trees on contested land (ibid.). Other initiatives include the settlements’ invitation for international volunteers to join them during the harvest season. Organizations (often run by Evangelical Christians), arrange agricultural tourism trips, during which thousands of people travel to the settlements to assist during the harvest, especially on vineyards. In addition to supporting the settlement economy, the visitors also return having attended lectures on the religious and political justification of the settlements (Moawad, 2015, see also Handel et al., 2015, for an interesting discussion of how the burgeoning settlement wine industry serves to normalize or ‘wine-wash’ the settlement project).

Moreover, with environmentalism of the occupied encompassing many different acts of resistance, attention should be paid that it does not automatically cover everything. Alkhalili (2017), for instance, cautions against idealizing every act that seeks “to keep land in Palestinian hands” as national resistance, without taking into account ulterior motives. Another difficulty faced by the agro-resistance movement is the tainted reputation of environmentalism in the WB. In part due to what many Palestinians perceive as the Israeli authorities’ greenwashing of the occupation (see 5.2). During a visit to an Eco-Center in Auja, a coordinator explains that sometimes their environmental programs and initiatives are accused of implementing single-issue campaigns or of cooperating with Israeli groups or authorities (AUJA Eco-Center, coordinator, interview). He adds that it is an extremely difficult balance to strike, because several of their – successful – programs, e.g., ones protecting the Jordan River, would have been impossible to implement had it not been for said cooperation (ibid.). Overall, very few of the organizations I spoke to, and argue fall within environmentalism of the occupied, have any cooperation with Israeli *organizations*. Several, however, expressed that they welcome Israeli *individuals* to join them, as long as they do so wanting to work together towards an end to settler-colonialism. Finally, I briefly want to mention that environmentalism of the occupied in the WB also takes into account how they frame their activities along the nonviolence/violence spectrum, it was, for instance, interesting to learn that most prefer to frame it in terms of generating “popular resistance,” rather than nonviolent resistance.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Alazzeah (2014, 18) for an interesting argument on how a hegemonic understanding of morality, largely introduced by outsiders, led to a “rewriting of the history of Palestine thematically through a violence/non-violence binary.” See also Qumsiyeh (2011, 10-11) and Darweish and Rigby (2015, 96) for more on how the promotion of nonviolent resistance in the oPt can be controversial as it risks being presented as superior to armed resistance.



## 6.4 Conclusion

In summary, this section has illustrated some of the agro-resistance strategies observed in the WB, and argued that they can be understood as an example of environmentalism of the occupied. I make this argument building on Martínez-Alier's concept of environmentalism of the poor, claiming that in the WB the struggle to protect access to natural resources is not only motivated by a desire to sustain current and future livelihoods, but furthermore by a motivation to increase self-determination and sovereignty over these resources. Such a conceptualization underpins the argument that parts of the anti-colonial resistance in the WB is increasingly taking an environmental approach, but adding, importantly, that acts that at first *appear* environmental (such as preservation of seeds, initiatives to install solar energy or produce one's own compost, preventing Israel from overexploiting WB's natural resources, teaching roof-top gardening skills, protests against toxic fumes, etc.) takes on an additional political significance, and as such becomes a weapon in the struggle to achieve political sovereignty.

It is, in particular, the aspect (described in Section 6.3.3) of agro-resistance in the WB not being primarily motivated by a financial, or even a livelihoods, incentive that sets it apart from environmentalism of the poor. That is, in the WB the access to resources is not just a prerequisite for their livelihoods, but also additionally for the prospects of securing national sovereignty, by preventing said resources from falling into the hands of the Zionist movement, and just as importantly so that when that day comes; there will be resources left for a viable Palestinian state. Finally, as described in Section 6.3.3 the movement also broadens how resistance is framed and revalorizes the significance of the farmer, of everyone staying on their land despite the daily obstacles day face, and more broadly anyone protecting the WB's natural resources as integral to the struggle for a free Palestine.

## 7. Conclusion and looking ahead

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In summary, this thesis has tried to further the understanding of what the struggle for food sovereignty under occupation looks like. I hope it has contributed, building on secondary sources and my own empirical findings, by addressing the resistance against the occupation from an environmental and agricultural perspective. Specifically, it has answered the research questions set out in Section 1.2, by arguing that the root cause of the deteriorating agricultural sector in the WB, as well as the broader lack of food sovereignty is the settler-

colonial occupation – namely the distorted economic policies (which has rendered the WB a captive market for dumped Israeli products), the Israeli expropriation of natural resources and the overall colonial matrix of control. This thesis notes that factors, such as, severe neglect by both the PA and the international aid-community of WB's agricultural sector, as well as climate change, certainly contributes to the deterioration of the PAS, however, changes to any of these would not be enough to rectify the situation until the root cause is addressed.

In Section 6.1, the thesis argued that the factors suppressing the PAS are especially insidious due to their slow violence character, which, arguably, has allowed the deterioration to proceed for decades. Next, it argued that recognizing the *violent* aspect of this slow violence deterioration, and how it allows for the occupation and Palestinian dependency on Israel for food to cement itself, also helps recognize the agro-resistance movement that is fighting hard to resist it. In the final section of the thesis, I argued that this movement can be conceptualized as environmentalism of the occupied, in that many of the initiatives that I argue fall within this concept frame their resistance against the appropriation of natural resources as being motivated not merely by environmental concerns or a way to sustain their livelihoods, but also as a way to resist the occupation.

It is not my impression from the interviews I conducted, and I have therefore not intended to argue that agro-resistance or the struggle towards food sovereignty, *in and of itself*, is likely to end the occupation of the WB. I have, however, intended to argue that with the rapidly deteriorating PAS and the extremely vulnerable position this places the WB in, in terms of food dependency (particularly as climate change continues to escalate), the urgency of this issue cannot be underestimated. Certainly, the love the agro-activist have for their land, their *balad*, is powerful, but the question remains if it is enough to help put right everything that occupation is tearing apart.

Section 6.1 described in detail the implications of recognizing and paying greater attention to the slow violence aspects of the deteriorating PAS. Here I wish to briefly argue that, while this study is geographically specific to the WB, based on a preliminary assessment I believe that environmentalism of the occupied could extend beyond the WB to other peoples under occupation. Occupied regions across the world, to mention just two examples; Tibet (in relation to China's desire for its hydro- and mineral resources) and Western Sahara (in relation to Morocco's expropriation of everything from land for solar farms, to mineral extraction and overexploitation of the Western Saharan coasts for fishing), show that environmental injustices and the colonial expropriation of natural resources often intersect. Unfortunately, it falls beyond the scope of this thesis, but it would also be interesting to look closer at what appears to be an

occupational resource curse, i.e., many of today's remaining belligerent occupations (as in Western Sahara, Tibet and, as this thesis has argued, the oPt) appears to be sustained, *at least in some part*, due to a desire to control the natural resources found there. Further elaboration on environmentalism of the occupied, could by comparing occupied areas; assess common factors, strategies of resistance, intersections with the respective struggles for independence, etc., which might benefit local activists, the diasporas and the broader international solidarity communities.

Furthermore, as resource frontiers expand, it is becoming increasingly clear that environmental injustices of a similar nature to those experienced in the WB (albeit, primarily, without the added layer of colonial oppression) are faced by communities throughout the world, who resist everything from land grabs to toxic imperialism, and can also draw on some of the similar strategies employed in the WB. See also Klein (2016) for a recent, tremendously interesting, analysis of how – in an increasingly climate changed future – we can learn from the sumud demonstrated by Palestinians, through what Klein refers to as “climate sumud.”

Finally, while I recognize that this thesis in a sense has spanned very broadly, and would have benefited from focusing specifically on a more narrow aspect of environmentalism of the occupied, I also want to emphasize that the initiatives I have described are but a very partial representation of the full spectrum of agro-resistance in the WB. This thesis owes everything to those I met, on the ground, in the WB, and I would like for a particularly inspiring farmer outside of Hebron to have the last word; in his reminder that “maybe it does not look that way now, but everywhere there are cracks in the occupation. And every action [of resistance] we take makes that crack deeper” (farmer, Southern Hebron, interview).

May the cracks soon be deep enough for the occupation to crumble.

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## 9. Appendix 1: List of interviews

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Organization	Role
UAWC	Advocacy Coordinator (AC)
UAWC	Campaign Coordinator (CC)
UAWC	Seed Bank Coordinator
Canaan Fair Trade8	Employee
Adel Fair Trade	Employee
Marda Permaculture Farm	Owner
Sharaka	Organizer
Palestine Heirloom Seed Library	Founder
AUJA Eco-Center	Coordinator
Mashjar Juthour	Owners
Tent of Nations	Coordinator
Lajee Center	Coordinator
Hakoritna Farm	Owner
Palestine Museum of Natural History	Founder

Occupation	Location
Farmer	Jenin
Farmer	Salfit
Farmer	Southern Hebron
Farmer	Jordan Valley