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Land struggle and Palestinian farmers' livelihoods in the West Bank: between de-agrarianization and anti-colonial resistance

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between rural livelihood transformations and the land struggle in the West Bank between 1979 and the Oslo Accords. During this period, the Israeli adoption of the state land doctrine opened a new terrain of struggle, prompting specific responses among Palestinian rural communities. Bringing Agrarian Political Economy and Agrarian System Analysis in dialogue with Settler Colonial and Indigenous Studies, and relying on an extensive fieldwork, it analyses drivers and outcomes of de-agrarianization and semi-proletarianization in the villages of Al-Walaja and Wadi Fukin, showing how wage work in Israel contributed to uproot Palestinians from their land.

KEYWORDS

De-agrarianization; semi-proletarianization; livelihoods; land dispossession; Israel/Palestine

Introduction

Wadi Fukin and Al-Walaja are two villages located in the rural highlands of the West Bank, south of Jerusalem. Following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, they were transformed into border villages and most of their inhabitants displaced to refugee camps. When part of them returned to the West Bank side of their villages in the 1960s (Al-Walaja) and in the 1970s (Wadi Fukin), the villages' territories had been reduced to about one third of the pre-1948 areas. After Israel occupied the remaining villages' areas, as the rest of the West Bank, in 1967, de-agrarianization became an increasingly widespread phenomena in the region.

This article investigates the relationship between the economic transformation of farmers' livelihoods and land use, and the political struggle for land control in the West Bank between 1979 and the Oslo Accords (1993–1995). During this period, the Israeli state adopted specific land and economic measures that opened a new terrain of struggle, prompting specific responses among the Palestinian population, especially rural communities.

Bringing Agrarian Political Economy in dialogue with Settler Colonial Studies and Indigenous Studies, it analyses the terrain of land struggle as an arena, in which various social actors use different means – including property law, violence and power relationships – to advance claims over the land. Relying on a combined framework, it analyses how agricultural production and reproduction, labor processes and farmers'

livelihoods at the household and village levels changed in relation to the struggle for land. It contributes, in this way, to explain how the struggle for land shapes the opening or foreclosing of livelihood opportunities at the micro level, and vice versa, an approach that is adopted in very few studies (Borras 2009).

The paper begins with a literature review about de-agrarianization and land dispossession, and then presents our research methodology. The following sections offer an overview of livelihoods in Wadi Fukin and in Al-Walaja in the 1970s, the terrain of land struggle in the West Bank from 1979 to the mid-1990s, and then the transformation of farmers' livelihoods and land use during this time. Results are finally discussed.

De-agrarianization and terrain of land struggle

De-agrarianization and land dispossession

Since the 1980s, de-agrarianization has been observed as an increasingly widespread and advanced phenomenon in the Global South, with rural households making use of their (often meagre) resources to build an increasingly diversified range of livelihood activities (Ellis 2000; Scoones 2015). De-agrarianization may be defined as a process by which the share of agriculture in rural households' labor and income decreases, while the share of non-farming activities increases (Bryceson 1996). This reorganization of rural livelihoods has been the subject of considerable academic debate, especially in the field of agrarian political economy. Within this literature, scholars have largely analysed how past and contemporary processes of capitalist accumulation have driven agrarian transformations that, affecting dynamics of agricultural production and reproduction, property, and power within agrarian formations, have produced variegated processes of rural livelihood diversification (Fairbairn et al. 2014; Bernstein 2010).

Approaching the subject from an economic standpoint, albeit with a substantive and non-neo-classical perspective, many studies have focused on the determinants, patterns, and effects of livelihood diversification for rural households. Analysing the push or pull factors, they have highlighted two opposite forms of diversification. The first one is 'distress diversification' that is a coping strategy adopted to struggle against poverty by engaging in very low-return activities, whether through self-employment or low paid and temporary wage labor. The second one is 'positive diversification' that involves a strategic decision by some household members to specialize in more lucrative non-farm activities. The latter generally require various forms of capital, including professional skills (Ellis 2000; Losch, Freguin-Gresh, and White 2012). Beyond this debate, several studies have evidenced the relationship between socioeconomic groups and various types of diversification (Gautam and Andersen 2016; Martin and Lorenzen 2016). As for the short-term effects of diversification, many studies have focused on household incomes, assets and welfare or wealth status, on farm output, food security and consumption, and on the distribution of incomes among households, with mixed results according to the contexts analysed (Alobo Loison 2015).

Regarding the more long-term consequences of de-agrarianization for rural households, two contrasting perspectives have emerged. Certain authors argue that these processes ultimately lead to the disappearing of farming as a livelihood source (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010; Bryceson 1996). Other authors have observed that farming remains an

important activity for smallholders, especially for food self-provisioning (Fairbairn et al. 2014). This observation is confirmed by Losch, Freguin-Gresh, and White (2012) who carried out an extensive survey on the activities and incomes of 8000 rural households spread across 7 countries and 26 rural regions. Martin and Lorenzen (2016) insist that even better-off households actively pursue agriculture as an integral part of their portfolios of activities. Considering ecological and economic conditions of farming activities in various sub-Saharan African rural regions, Davis, Di Giuseppe, and Zezza (2017) conclude that agriculture remains the occupation of choice for most households when these conditions are favorable. These analyses echo the concept of ‘hybrid peasantries’ that Peemans developed by studying the dynamics of livelihood diversification among farming families’ in Southeast Asia throughout the 1990s: he observed that their livelihoods are voluntarily dual, combining – instead of choosing between – migration for wage work and agriculture in the village (Peemans 2018).

After the 2007–2008 crisis, the intensification of processes of land commodification, privatization and dispossession on a global scale has spurred renewed scholarly debates on the drivers and consequences of de-agrarianization (Hebinck 2018; Li 2011). Several authors have explored how extractive mining in Africa not only led to losses of farmland – in certain cases followed by relocation or generally poor monetary compensations – but also contributed to food insecurity, decreasing incomes in most contexts where alternative work opportunities are very few, and land conflicts in the areas where many people are desperate to access subsistence means (Andrews 2018; Mtero 2017; Schueler, Kuemmerle, and Schröder 2011). Gironde and Senties Portilla (2015) analyse the medium-term consequences on rural livelihoods of large-scale land acquisitions for rubber plantations in two regions of Cambodia (Ratanakiri) and Laos (Champasak), five to seven years after they occurred. They distinguish two levels of dispossession: first, partial, whereby families remain in a position to meet their basic needs from farming; second, severe, whereby they are no longer able to do so. And they elaborate a typology of livelihoods transformations, showing their diversity albeit in a context where most farming families undergo de-agrarianization along with insufficient opportunities to engage in activities other than farming, which leads to livelihoods degradation. This echoes Li’s (2011) insistence on the importance of analysing the availability of job opportunities in situations of land dispossession.

The literature in Agrarian Political Economy has done a lot to illuminate land dispossession as a means of capital accumulation, either primitive when embedded in a phase of capitalism emergence, or on-going when considered to be necessary to the expansion and perpetuation of capitalism (Harvey 2009). However, in recent years, some indigenous scholars have sought to explore how Marx’s and Harvey’s theories could be applied ‘not only to economic capitalistic accumulation but also to settler colonial contexts’, emphasizing the centrality of land (Sabbagh-Khoury 2022, 17). In this regard, Coulthard (2014) calls for shifting the analytical focus from the capital relation to the colonial relation. Such a shift allows to grasp how processes of land dispossession-cum-de-agrarianization unfold in contexts marked by settler colonialism where determinants, patterns, and outcomes of livelihood transformations are largely shaped by the on-going struggle for land control.

In the next section, we will provide an overview of the literature on livelihoods and land struggle in the Israeli/Palestinian context, and more specifically in the West Bank.

Analyses of rural livelihoods transformations in the West Bank

The question of how Palestinian rural communities have made a living under conditions of on-going occupation, dispossession and displacement has been a largely debated one, especially since 1967. Most of the studies have adopted a macro-level, political-economic perspective to shed light on the role that Israeli land and water dispossession policies have played in shaping Palestinian de-agrarianization, a process that has not been accompanied by the development of industry and services sectors (Sayigh 1986; Farsakh 2005).

Since the late 1960s, some Palestinian scholars have used the settler colonial paradigm as an explanatory framework for the systemic dispossession and destruction operated by the Israeli state vis-à-vis Palestinians (Hilal 1976; Jabbur 1970; Sayegh 1965). According to Sayigh (1988, 269), settler colonialism is a set of 'continuous process rather than (...) a one-time act of vengefulness'. These ideas have been taken up and extended in the last decades by Wolfe (2006), according to whom settler colonialism is characterized by three features: the acquisition of as much indigenous territory as possible, the elimination of the indigenous people by displacing them from their land, and the permanent settlement of the colonizers. His conceptualization of settler colonialism however has been criticized for not taking into consideration class, and thus labor exploitation, nor imperialism, resulting in a failure to recognize the significance of indigenous resistance and national liberation politics (Ajl 2023). Such shortcomings have been addressed in recent years by other scholars who have analysed settler colonialism in relation to capitalist expansion, with a view to bridging a certain analytical gap between the literature on settler colonialism – more focused on race and the logic of elimination – and the literature on capitalism – more focused on class and the logic of exploitation (Busbridge 2018; Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995). They consider settler colonialism and capitalism as mutually imbricated structures of domination that dispossess and eliminate on the one hand, and exploit and accumulate on the other hand (Coulthard 2014; Englert 2020; Tabar and Desai 2017). This has been the case in Israel/Palestine since 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank and opened its labor market to Palestinian laborers, especially in the agricultural and construction sectors.

With wage labor becoming the main livelihood source among Palestinian rural communities in the 1980s, various sociologists and anthropologists have explored the impact of Israeli labor policies, agreeing that the latter were fostering de-agrarianization in the rural highlands of the West Bank (Escribano and El-Joubeh 1981). Many of them focused on whether this led to the emergence of a rural-based proletariat in the West Bank (Graham-Brown 1990; Tamari 1981). Yet, there is a certain agreement that the process had in fact more to do with semi-proletarianization as Palestinian workers maintained their residency in their villages and often mixed on-farm and non-farm activities to make a living. For instance, the enduring importance of farming in rural communities' livelihoods is visible when looking at the persistence of sharecropping practices in the Jordan Valley (Pollock 1990), as well as the continuance of rain-fed farming in the 1980s (Al-'Aalul 1987; Awartani 1982; Tesdell, Othman, and Alkhoury 2018). This was made possible by a restructuring of the gendered division of labor in agriculture, with women playing an increasingly central role (Moors 1990).

However, very few studies have examined rural livelihood transformations in relation to the continuing struggle for land control in the West Bank. Notable exceptions are those by Tesdell, Othman, and Alkhoury (2018) and by Kohlbry (2022b). Yet, scholars such as Ross (2019) have called for more nuanced analyses of 'how Palestinians earn their livelihoods and under what browbeaten circumstances', inviting to look at how the imbrication between settler colonial dispossession and exploitation have shaped indigenous livelihood strategies over time and space. Indigenous scholars such as Byrd (2014) call for moving the analytical focus from the settler to the indigenous populations, to how they negotiate, contest and oppose processes of settler colonial dispossession, violence and elimination, causing the settler project to remain always incomplete (Barakat 2017).

Studying farmers' livelihood transformations in relation to the land struggle in the West Bank

In this article, we consider land dispossession not as an isolated event, but as a continuing political process whose outcome is largely determined by social struggle (De Angelis 2004). Building on the concepts of bundle of rights (Schlager and Ostrom 1992) and bundle of powers (Ribot and Peluso 2009) over the land, we consider land dispossession as a situation whereby land users lose all or part of their rights over, or access to, the land under external pressure and thus against their full will. Land dispossession is still very much alive in our global present (Levien 2013; Lloyd and Wolfe 2016; White et al. 2012). Its persistence spurs different kinds of reactions, from resistance to the lack of it. Where resistance is effectively deployed, over time, land struggles take various forms, depending on historically and context specific terrains of struggle (Barakat 2017; Hall et al. 2015).

Following Mezzadra and Neilson (2019, 186), we define a terrain of struggle as an arena, or a field, 'in which political actors encounter power relations, natural elements, and contingencies that they negotiate and attempt to turn to their advantage, violently or otherwise, without ever fully mastering the situation.' Within this perspective, we analyse a terrain of land struggle as a space of antagonism in which different social actors use a variety of means, practices, and strategies to advance claims over the land. These means include property law, different kinds of physical or institutional violence, and territorialization that is the establishment by the state, in concert with other entities as the case may be, of a set of power relationships which aim to control people and resources, and often restrict access to land for certain categories (Peluso and Lund 2011). This approach allows us to focus on the mutual shaping, in the long run, of processes of settler colonial dispossession and exploitation, of resistance to them, and of livelihood transformations (Brown 2014; Gago and Mezzadra 2017).

To capture patterns of livelihood transformation, we have developed a combined framework. Drawing on Bebbington (1999), we consider livelihoods assets, particularly land in our case studies, as the means by which people make their material living, as well as elaborate the meaning of their life and may acquire the capability to challenge and change institutions, notably those governing land control and access. As for the material aspects of livelihoods, we used the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to interview farmers and collect data on their assets (more or less limited natural, physical, human, social or financial capital), their objectives, constraints and ensuing activities,

farming and non-farming. In order to gain a deep understanding of agricultural activities, we articulated the SLF to a series of concepts derived from the francophone Agrarian System Analysis (ASA) approach. The ASA considers agricultural development as a continuous, long-term transformation made of combined biophysical and social processes (Mazoyer and Roudart 2006). It includes the concepts of cropping or livestock system – to analyse practices at the field or herd level –, the concept of farming system – to analyse the combination of resources and activities at the farm level, taking into account the social relationships of production and trade – and the concept of agrarian system – to analyse agricultural activities and farmers' social categories at the level of a region. All these elements are shaped by both local conditions and structural, contextual factors that, in the West Bank, depend largely on the features of the land struggle. This combined approach is dynamic, systemic and multi-scale (Kapgen and Roudart 2022; Scoones 2015)

The article focuses on the period from 1979 to the mid-1990s as it significantly differs, from a legal, political, and economic point of view, from the preceding and following decades. We concentrate our analysis on the rural village of Wadi Fukin. However, in order to take into account contextual variegations and geographical peculiarities in the dynamics of livelihood and agrarian change, we also examine the rural village of Al-Walaja that, although located only a few kilometers away from Wadi Fukin, did not experience the same trajectory. We chose these two villages because they were both transformed into border villages and lost a large part of their land base in 1948, experiencing further loss after 1967 as a result of Israeli settlements' expansion. Despite these similarities, in the 1980s, these villages differed from each other for the degree of dependency on wage work in Israel: in Al-Walaja, over seventy per cent of the households were dependent on it, whereas it was the case for only around thirty per cent in Wadi Fukin.

One of this article's authors carried out over seven months of fieldwork in these two villages between 2018 and 2019. She participated in villages' everyday life, joining farmers in the fields, sharing meals and spending time with families after sunset. She conducted extensive qualitative interviews with farmers (55) and village council members (4). She also interviewed civil society actors, governmental employees, and lawyers (14) in Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Jerusalem. She collected archival materials, land use/land cover maps and other documents in various libraries located across the West Bank and in Jerusalem. In 2021, she carried out fieldwork during one month in Jordan where most of the Palestinian cadastral material is still stored, and where over two thirds of the original 1948 population of Wadi Fukin and Al-Walaja and their descendants still live as refugees. In Jordan, as well as in the two villages, she collected the life stories of elders, who were able to provide first-hand testimonies of the events that they had experienced since 1948, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. Based on these interviews, we now turn to the presentation of farmers' livelihoods in these two villages in the 1970s.

Livelihoods based on farming in Wadi Fukin and in Al-Walaja in the 1970s

In Wadi Fukin, villagers who returned in 1972 had access to only one of the seven valleys which formed their village before 1948. In fact, these villagers had never completely left Wadi Fukin as, during the 1950s and 1960s, they had continued to cultivate parcels by commuting from nearby villages or from the refugee camp of Dheisheh, at night in

many cases. From 1972 on, they managed to rebuild their farming systems in the three agro-ecological zones of the 'new' village: irrigated crops in the fertile valley which still had eleven water springs; rainfed crops and trees on the surrounding rocky hills which had interspersions of *terra rossa*, a soil typical of the Mediterranean region; animal grazing on the hilltops.

All village's land was partitioned between extended families (*hamail*), except for some *waqf* land possessed by religious institutions. Each extended family had parcels in the three zones and considered them as private property, that they might indeed sell or donate even if these parcels had not been registered and titled as such. The owner, generally the oldest man of each extended family, had the responsibility to distribute parcels among smaller families, composed of parents, their children and the paternal grandparents (Panosetti and Roudart 2022). Each smaller family thus enjoyed use and usufruct rights on several plots scattered in the landscape and, relying on various crops and animals, practiced some kind of mixed farming system. The main activity was irrigated cropping on squared bed gardens: farmers were practicing complex crop rotations lasting 5–6 years, combining in sequence a variety of vegetables (tomatoes, aubergines, cucumbers, melons ...), legumes such as fava beans which supplied the soil with nitrogen, and some cereals like barley and wheat. Farmers had access to irrigation water according to a rotation system called in vernacular *nizam*: for each water spring, the rotation schedule lasted 192 hours (8 days) and each extended family could secure water during a number of hours depending on its land area. The head of each extended family then organized the distribution of water shares among smaller families. Rainfed cropping of cereals (barley, wheat, white sorghum for humans, other sorghum for animals) and legumes (chickpeas and lentils for humans, vetch and clover for animals) was only partially resumed after more than 20 years of displacement. Families made flour from wheat and white sorghum and baked bread in the traditional ovens named *tabun*. Farmers were taking care of some fruit trees also (figs, apricots, apples, loquats, plums, cherries) and of a few old olive trees. Almost all agricultural tasks were done by hand or with manual tools, except for land tilling and the transport of materials which were carried out with donkeys and, more rarely, with a tractor owned by one villager.

Animal husbandry was an important component of each farming system and, according to elders, also an integral part of the villagers' cultural identity. Almost every family raised goats and sheep, from 30 to 50 animals per family, poultry, and some families had honeybee colonies. At that time, Wadi Fukin was well known for its production of honey. Grown-up goats and sheep were grazed on natural pastures on hillslopes and hilltops, on grain crops' residues after harvest in the fields, and were supplied with feed by farmers. They were sheltered in caves at the bottom of the hills or in sheds in the village. There, farmers collected animal droppings to fertilize cropped land, meaning that the renewal of fertility of arable land originated mainly in grass growing in natural pastures. They did not use any input from outside the village, whether fertilizer or else.

In spring, villagers used to roam the hills around to pick edible wild plants such as thyme, sage, rosemary, oregano, *Gundelia*, *Cichorium intybus* and Solomon's lily (*Arum palaestinum*). Wild plants, crop and animal products were used by villagers for their own consumption. The surpluses of vegetables and wild plants were sold on markets in Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Jerusalem. The surpluses of cheese, labneh¹, butter, yogurt, goats, and sheep were sold in the nearby villages of Nahalin and Husan. Thus, in Wadi

Fukin in the 1970s, farming had become again the primary activity by far, providing food and cash that covered the families' needs for a large part.

Agriculture was somewhat less important in Al-Walaja, which is located closer to the Green Line, in an area which is less favorable to agriculture due to the scarcity of water for irrigation. There, when part of the people returned to the West Bank side of their village in the 1960s, they had to build new houses as the old village fell on the Israeli side of the Green Line. Electricity was brought to the new village in 1982 only. They were left with three out of more than 20 water springs they had before 1948, and with one valley only. In spite of a disadvantageous biophysical environment, they progressively rebuilt agriculture in three agro-ecological zones: the hill, the terraced gentle slopes at the bottom of the hill, and the valley surrounding the hill. Villagers' land rights were similar to those described above for Wadi Fukin. At the beginning of the 1970s, most of the families were practicing mixed farming systems looking like those in Wadi Fukin. The main differences were the preponderance of rainfed over irrigated cropping and the presence of large vineyards in Al-Walaja. The agricultural produce was intended for own-consumption and exchanges within extended families. Some of them had a marketable surplus. However, during the 1970s, the contribution of farming to households' livelihoods decreased in Al-Walaja as Palestinian men started turning towards Israel for wage labor, a phenomenon that, as observed by Tamari (1981), concerned all the West Bank.

In the next section, we will explore how the 1979 adoption of the 'state land doctrine' opened a new terrain of land struggle between the Israeli state and Palestinians, which deeply reshaped rural communities' livelihoods.

The terrain of land struggle: Israeli dispossession policies and Palestinian resistance

The 'state land doctrine'

With the arrival of the Likud to power in Israel in 1977, a new agenda for Israeli-Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem was set. The new government seized Palestinian land through various *de facto* and *de jure* mechanisms, among which expropriation for military needs was primary. Yet, in 1979, the Israeli High Court of Justice ruled that building Israeli-Jewish settlements on land seized for 'defence' reasons was no longer permitted.² About one month later, the Government resolved the legal complexities created by the court ruling by adopting the Decision N° 145, which claimed 'to expand the settlement in Judea, Samaria, the Jordan Valley, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights by increasing the population of the existing communities and by establishing new communities on *state-owned land*' (cited in Shalev 2012, 13, emphasis added by the author).

Declaring certain land, especially 'uncultivated' land, as *state-owned land* was nothing new in Palestine: this had been done previously under the Ottoman rule and the British rule (1914–1948). From 1979 on, the so-called 'state land doctrine' has relied on the principle that all uncultivated and unregistered lands are state property unless the person who claims

¹Labneh is a salted and strained yogurt which is typical of the Middle Eastern cuisine.

²This decision was taken by the Israeli Supreme Court in the frame of the 'Elon Moreh case'.

ownership over it can prove otherwise. Although enforced mainly in the 1980s, this doctrine is still valid today, hence the use of the present tense in the following paragraphs.

When assessing the cultivation status of a land parcel, the Israeli state authorities take into consideration two criteria: duration and percentage. As for duration, land parcels left uncultivated for at least 3 consecutive years, or cultivated for less than 10 years³, are targeted. As for percentage, the 50 percent rule applies: if less than 50 percent of a plot surface is under active cultivation, then the whole plot is considered uncultivated, regardless of its biophysical characteristics (Forman 2009; Kedar 2001). When applying these criteria, the Israeli authorities obviously disregard the reasons why the land has been left uncultivated. This means, in particular, that non-cultivable land used as pastures might be declared as state land. This also ignores the question of Palestinian farmers' bundles of powers over land and their effective capacity to cultivate it (Braverman 2008; Ribot and Peluso 2009).

Since 1979, the Israeli state has carried out systematic topographical and land use mapping, especially by conducting biennial aerial photo surveys, to identify all uncultivated and untitled lands in the West Bank. As Braverman (2008), as well as other scholars and activists have noted, the main problem posed by this survey method is visibility: if trees are permanent crops that may be spotted all year round, seasonal crops as well as goats and sheep cannot appear on photos at certain times of the year, leaving much room for interpretation by Israeli officers.

Declarations of state land property are issued by the Custodian of Absentee and State Lands of the West Bank, which is a department of the Israeli Land Authority. In most cases, Palestinian land users do not receive any notification. The latter is in fact often left on the plot by Israeli officers, and thus exposed to wind, rain and sun that damage the notification order and render it no longer readable (Clarno 2017). As a result, the first sign that indicates that a piece of land has been declared as state land is often the arrival of bulldozers that cut down trees and level the land to prepare it for the construction or the expansion of an Israeli settlement (Shehadeh 1982). In the rare cases when family heads receive a written notification, they have 45 days to make an appeal to the Israeli military Objection Committee. Then, once the exact location of the land under threat of confiscation is identified, the head of the family must provide different documents, including land titles if available, as well as a survey map prepared by a licensed surveyor which can be extremely expensive. Even when they manage to meet these high standards of proof, the custody of their land may still be challenged by the Objection Committee.

Once a Palestinian land parcel is declared as state land, the Israeli authorities lease it out to a variety of organizations, for the purpose of settlement construction or for other land development projects. The Jewish National Fund for instance has planted pines or cypresses on many Palestinian lands turned state property in the highlands of Jerusalem (Cohen 1993). These trees are considered to symbolize Jewish rootedness in the territory. Moreover, from a material point of view, they grow quickly and produce acidic needles which, by covering the soil, prevent other plants from growing (Weizman 2007). Hence, such lands can no longer be used for planting crops, or collecting wild plants, or grazing animals.

³According to an Ottoman law, someone who would cultivate a piece of land during at least 10 years would become the owner. This kind of provision, named acquisitive prescription, exists in other land regimes.

The Israeli state also encourages private companies to purchase land from Palestinians, at prices set to be attractive, especially for the poorest. This kind of transaction being highly sensitive, it is covered by state land declarations so that sellers and buyers remain anonymous (Clarno 2017).

In addition to the use of property law to confiscate land, the Israeli government implemented a series of economic measures strongly limiting the rights and access of Palestinian farmers over their land.

Limitations to Palestinian farming

From 1979 on, the Israeli authorities used various Military Orders (MOs) to impose constraints on Palestinian farming (Farsakh 2005). In 1982, MO 1015⁴ prevented farmers from planting fruit trees ‘without first obtaining the permission of military authorities’ (Rabah and Fairweather 1995). Regarding olive trees, tree-nurseries were required to obtain a license for the production of saplings, while and voluntary agencies had to acquire permission for distributing subsidized saplings. Additionally, both these agencies and tree-nurseries had to provide lists of recipient farmers and designated planting locations (Awartani 1982). In 1983, MO 1039⁵ added certain vegetables such as tomatoes and aubergines to the list of plants that required permission to be grown. In 1985, MO 1147⁶ stated that any agricultural activity in the West Bank required licensing from the Israeli authorities. More widely, a whole set of MOs, some of which dating back to 1967, have imposed restrictions on the use of water for irrigation, of fertilizers, seeds, seedlings, and on the planting of decorative flowers.⁷ Moreover, the limitation of exports to Jordan and to Israel reduced Palestinian farmers’ outlets, while competition from imports sharpened as local markets were flooded with low-priced, subsidized products from Israel such as poultry, eggs, citrus, vegetables, and flowers (Farsakh 2005).

To sum up, the land dispossession policy led by the Israeli government vis-à-vis Palestinian farmers in the West Bank in the 1980s was based on both outright confiscation of the full bundle of land rights through state land declarations, and on the annihilation of part of the use rights through various prohibitions.

We now turn to the reactions this prompted among Palestinian people.

Palestinian resistance

An indigenous analysis of the situation

Zionism as a political, spiritual and territorial nationalist project has been interpreted for long by many Palestinians as a settler colonial project aimed at seizing all land of historic Palestine, eliminating the indigenous population and settling Jewish people (Salamanca

⁴Military Order No. 1015, *Order concerning planting of fruit trees*, 27 August 1982.

⁵Military Order No. 1039, *Order concerning control over the plating of fruit trees*, Amendment to Military order 1015, 5 January 1983.

⁶Military Order No. 1147, *Order concerning supervision over fruit trees and vegetables*, Amendment 2 to Military Order 1015, 30 July 1985.

⁷Military Order No. 653, *Order concerning material subject to control*, 15 April 1976; Military Order No. 92, *Order concerning Jurisdiction over water regulations*, Amendment to Jordanian Law concerning Water, 15 August 1967; Military Order No. 158, *Order Concerning settlement of disputes over land and water*, 19 November 1967; Military Order No. 818, *Order concerning the planting of certain decorative flowers*, 22 January 1980.

et al. 2012; Sayigh 1988). Among Palestinian scholars and other intellectuals, the prevailing interpretation of the 1967 and following events was that, in addition to land dispossession, the Israeli state aimed at undermining any Palestinian path to self-reliance by establishing a structural, deep and multi-pronged economic dependency of the West Bank on Israel. It did so by prohibiting the development of productive activities in most economic sectors through military orders, by destroying productive capacities, by absorbing Palestinian labor force as wage workers and by exporting low-priced consumer goods to the West Bank (Farsakh 2005). As a result, a process of 'de-development' unfolded (Roy 1987, 1999). In the words of Samara (1988), echoing the analysis in terms of core and periphery which is central to the dependency theory, this is how the Palestinian economy was 'peripheralized' to the Israeli economy.

In the 1980s, and particularly after Israel's victory in Lebanon in 1982, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) shifted the core of its political strategy from the diaspora to the occupied territory (Khalidi 2014). Large sums of money donated by Arab countries were channeled to the occupied territories through the Joint Palestinian-Jordanian Committee (JPJC), with the aim of supporting Palestinian steadfastness (*sumud*). According to Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO from 1969 to 2004, the crucial point of *sumud* was that Palestinians remain and live on the land, with a view to engaging in armed struggles later on (Schultz and Hammer 2003). However, this strategy of *sumud* was criticized by part of the Palestinians living in the occupied territories for being too static and conservative. As a result, a series of grassroot development planning conferences, entitled 'Development in the Service of Steadfastness', was organized by the Arab Thought Forum in Jerusalem between 1981 and 1982. The main objectives of these conferences were to elaborate development strategies that would more openly challenge the occupation, reduce economic dependency on Israel, and promote self-reliance (Abed 1988). It is within this context that the concept and the praxis of *sumud muqawim*, as it was later termed by Dakkak (1988), was elaborated.

Sumud muqawim as a concept and a praxis

As a concept, *sumud* means steadfastness and *muqawim* resistance. Taking up the concept of *sumud muqawim*, Palestinian political parties such as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) considered mass-based organizations, direct action and voluntary work as the only possible means to halt dispossession, develop productive activities and effectively counter Israeli power (Kuttab 2018; Tabar 2015). As explained by an ex-member of the Palestine Communist Party (PCP): 'The PCP didn't believe in armed resistance, it believed in people, the power of the people. [...] We believed that if we included people in decision-making and in production, we would defeat the occupation.'⁸ Within this movement, agriculture was a priority (Teddell 2013), with a view to reclaim sovereignty over the land and to increase self-reliance.

As a praxis in the agricultural sector, *sumud muqawim* involved 'going back to the land, make it productive, land reclamation, rainwater collection, any agricultural work that

⁸Author interview with an ex-member of the PCP, Wadi Fukin, 30 April 2018.

could keep us on the land'.⁹ This consisted mainly in expanding the area under cultivation by reclaiming marginal land and in improving already cultivated land which often meant removing rocks, constructing terraces, opening new pathways, digging water wells, installing cisterns for rainwater collection and planting crops. Due to the enormous amount of hard work and substantial costs that those activities required, it soon became clear that providing assistance to farmers would be necessary for agricultural expansion to materialize.

For this purpose, various organizations and voluntary work committees were set up (Kohlby 2022b). For instance, the Rural Research Centre was founded in 1980 at the an-Najah university in Nablus, the Palestinian Agriculture Relied Committee (PARC) and the Union of Agricultural Work Committee (UAWC) were created respectively in 1983 and 1986. Within these organizations, women often created their own groups (Kuttab 2018). At the same time, activist scientists such as Al-'Aalul (1987) undertook field research with professional extensionists and farmers to identify local land uses and elaborate concrete solutions to overcome political, economic, or biophysical constraints to agriculture. In many places of the rural highlands, the plantation of olive trees was recommended as this specie can grow under poor biophysical conditions, with little inputs and labor, and olive oil might be sold on domestic markets rather than being confronted to Israeli export restrictions.

Moreover, in order to oppose state land declarations, rural communities used legal-administrative means such as filing appeals and submitting documents like deeds and maps (Kohlby 2022a).

Overall, these collective efforts carried out in the frame of *sumud muqawim* culminated in the First Intifada, the popular uprising of 1987–1993. This First Intifada challenged the Israeli structures of power through a variety of popular initiatives that ranged from boycotting Israeli goods and refusing to pay taxes to colonial authorities, to creating an alternative economy by reclaiming land, establishing community gardens and agricultural cooperatives, as well as organizing the distribution of food provisions at the local level (Nassar and Heacock 1990; Tabar 2015). According to the magazine *Democratic Palestine* (1988a, 10), the uprising 'imposed a situation of "dual power" in the occupied territories'.

In the next section, we will explain how the Israeli land and economic policies and Palestinian opposition to them transformed villagers' livelihoods in Wadi Fukin and in Al-Walaja.

Livelihood transformations in Wadi Fukin and Al-Walaja in the 1980s until the mid-1990s

De-agrarianization in both villages

Land confiscation, other Israeli land and economic policy measures, and resistance to them, all shaped villagers' livelihood trajectories in Wadi Fukin as well as in Al-Walaja. Their location near the Green Line facilitated the commuting of men to Israel for wage work and had another consequence: herders who used to lead their goats and sheep to graze on the other side of the Green Line were affected by a law enforced in Israel,

⁹Author interview with the Director of ARIJ, Bethlehem, 5 January 2016.

known as the 'Black Goat Act'. To limit the damages caused by goats to forestation projects, this law stipulated that 'a human shall not possess or graze goats except on lands in his tenure and according to the allowed ration [that is] one goat for each 40 dunums'¹⁰ (Tanous and Eghbariah 2022). Following the creation of the Green Patrol in 1976, breaching this law exposed herders to fines and confiscation of their animals. As recalled by Omar, a villager of Wadi Fukin: 'Once they caught a shepherd who had crossed the Green Line [with his flock]. The police loaded all the animals on the truck and took them to the Negev. To get the animals back, the shepherd had to bail them out. This happened in the 1980s.'¹¹

Although no exact figures are available, in Wadi Fukin and Al-Walaja, large swaths of land were declared as state property in the 1980s. In addition to land access and use restrictions, villagers also faced competition from Israeli low-priced agricultural products on the market. This generated a decrease in agricultural incomes which, over time, were no longer sufficient to meet the basic needs of more and more households:

The land was no longer enough to make a living and so people had to look for other working opportunities. In the '80s, daily wages [in Israel] used to be high. Some people used to leave their jobs, as a teacher for example, to work in Israel.¹²

Our surveys indicate that in the 1980s, at least one male member in each household was employed as wage worker in Israel, mainly as 'stone men'¹³ in the construction sector. Others worked in the Israeli agricultural sector. Some ran small businesses in nearby cities or worked in the education and service sectors in the West Bank. A few migrated abroad, particularly to Gulf countries.

With such jobs, men did not have much time and energy left to look after their fields. They could do so in the evenings or during the weekends, but they had to disengage from labor-intensive rainfed cropping and animal husbandry. Even if women and elders participated more than before to agricultural work, part of the fields were left idle, entailing a drop in production. This echoes Tamari's (1981) finding regarding the correlation between the number of years spent working in Israel and land abandonment. However, this process did not lead to a full proletarianization of men, nor to the depopulation of both villages. Beyond these commonalities, Al-Walaja and Wadi Fukin experienced different trajectories of change.

Livelihood adaptation in Wadi Fukin

In Wadi Fukin, from the beginning of the 1980s on, villagers adopted a preventive strategy of fruit tree planting on marginal lands, in an attempt to protect them from seizure as state land. Indeed, trees were considered as the most effective crop to prove continuous cultivation, as seasonal field crops or animals might have not appeared on the aerial photos taken by the Israeli Authorities to determine the cultivation status of land parcels. Villagers interpreted the concept of *sumud muqawim* as follows 'stay on your land, do whatever you can do for your land: preserve it, work on it, eat from it, stay on

¹⁰1 dunum corresponds to 0.1 ha.

¹¹Author interview with Omar, Wadi Fukin, 7 May 2018. Omar is a fictitious name.

¹²Author interview with Saleh, Wadi Fukin, 30 April 2018. Saleh is a fictitious name.

¹³We use this phrase after Ross's book title: *Stone men: the Palestinians who built Israel* (2019).

it'.¹⁴ This involved planting mainly olive trees on the slopes located on the eastern and southern hills of the village, and on land patches that they had previously used for growing rainfed grains and forage legumes or for animal grazing, or not used at all. As Mohammad explained, 'when we plant olive trees on mountainous land, they protect it from Israeli settlements.'¹⁵ Moreover, these trees were adapted to the poor soil conditions of the hills, required less labor and provided higher returns than grains. Massive tree planting was made possible by *sumud muqawim* interventions carried out by Palestinian grass-root organizations such as PARC, which distributed millions of saplings in the region. Furthermore, in order to place as much land as possible under cultivation, oral arrangements of land borrowing emerged among members of extended families (Panosetti and Roudart 2022).

As a result, at the end of the 1980s, there were two main farming systems in Wadi Fukin. An emerging one, made of olive trees only, was practiced by a minority of households. The vast majority were still operating mixed farming systems combining irrigated vegetables, rainfed grains, forages and trees, as well as goat and sheep husbandry. However, as compared with the 1970s, trees had replaced much of the rainfed grains, and animal flocks had been largely reduced. The agricultural produce was used for own-consumption and still for marketing, especially in the central market of Bethlehem.

According to our surveys, at the end of the 1980s again, for the majority of the households, on-farm activities still constituted a non-negligible source of income, combined with wage work in Israel which partly financed farming.

Livelihood diversification in Al-Walaja

In Al-Walaja also, under the threat of losing access to and control over lands, villagers planted olive and some other fruit trees in the 1980s. Olive groves gradually came to replace vineyards on the western side of the village, as they are less labor intensive and more resistant to water scarcity, a problem which aggravated with the nearby Israeli settlements pumping water in the underground aquifer. With many men working in Israel and women taking up salaried jobs in the West Bank as cleaners, cooks or nurses, agricultural production decreased even more than in Wadi Fukin. By the end of the 1980s, only a few households still practiced mixed farming systems. All the households had stopped labor-intensive rainfed vegetable cropping. The agricultural produce was intended mainly for own consumption, as women were no longer selling products in local markets. As a result, farming was no longer the primary source of income for any household in Al-Walaja. According to our surveys, there were two types of activity portfolios: one with mostly non-farm activities and growing trees yielding a marginal income; the other one where the farming income was still an important supplement to the wage income.

De-agrarianization, farming persistence, and resistance

At the end of the 1980s, both in Wadi Fukin and Al-Walaja, most rural households no longer derived the bulk of their income from agriculture. De-agrarianization had

¹⁴Author interview with Tareq, Wadi Fukin, 2 April 2018. Tareq is a fictitious name.

¹⁵Author interview with Mohammad, Wadi Fukin, 20 March 2018. Mohammad is a fictitious name.

unfolded, as it had all over the West Bank: although official data might be biased, it is estimated that the share of agriculture in GDP decreased from 35 to 19 percent, and its share in employment shrunk from 40 to 19 percent between 1970 and 1987 (Hanieh 2013).

However, in these two villages, most households continued to combine wage work with farming activities. The extent of the latter depended on various factors, including landholding size and biophysical characteristics, as well as family labor availability (women, children, elders). The possibility – or not – to practice irrigated cropping was decisive in the livelihoods choices made by villagers as this kind of cultivation was still relatively profitable, as observed by Tamari (1981). Moreover, as the state land doctrine established a direct link between land use and land property, Palestinian sought to make land use visible in the eyes of the settler state by planting permanent crops. Hence the expansion of the olive tree area across the West Bank, to the point of overtaking all other cropped areas (Benvenisti and Khayat 1988), and of becoming a symbol of *sumud muqawim* in rural regions. In reaction to this, the Israeli authorities intensified their campaigns of land confiscation, tree uprooting, settlement construction and pine planting. The fact that ‘they changed all the natural landscape around us’¹⁶ is considered by villagers like Samir as a form of violence in itself.

Semi-proletarianization in a settler colonial context

Labor exploitation as a means of land seizure

The fact that de-agrarianization was not concomitant with a structural transformation of the economy, characterized by the development of the industry and service sectors absorbing a large part of the agricultural labor force, was not specific to the West Bank: indeed, in the 1960s and beyond, most of the so-called third world countries did not follow the development path that Lewis (1954) had envisaged for them, based on the historical experience of the Western countries from the 18th to the twentieth century. Yet, in the West Bank, it was the occupying power that decided to stifle the development of industrial and service activities (Roy 1987).

In the West Bank, during the 1980s, the main mode of farmers’ livelihoods diversification was young male peasants engaging in unstable and part-time wage work in Israel. They thus became semi-proletarianized peasants, their livelihoods depending on a combination of wage and farm income sources. Again, this social status was not specific to the West Bank as it has been known for long (Kautsky 1900) and in many places around the world (Arrighi 1970; de Janvry, Sadoulet, and Young 1989). Factors that pushed Palestinian peasants to engage in wage work in Israel were exposure to land confiscation, decreased agricultural incomes due to the agricultural policy measures mentioned above, and the low availability of labor opportunities in the West Bank. Among the factors that pulled Palestinians in Israel, Tamari (1981) points to monetary wage. Furthermore, jobs were easier to find in Israel. And, given the kinds of jobs they had access to – informal, unstable, with a high turnover – villagers could interrupt them for several weeks when their labor force was needed on the farm, to harvest olives for example. However, the comparison of livelihood transformations in Wadi Fukin and Al-Walaja suggests that,

¹⁶Author interview with Samir, Wadi Fukin, 6 June 2018. Samir is a fictitious name.

overall, until long-established farmers could earn high enough agricultural incomes, they chose to maintain farming activities and to supplement them with some wage work in Israel, which is consistent with the findings of Davis, Di Giuseppe, and Zezza (2017) (see section 'De-agrarianization and terrain of land struggle'). This implies a certain agency in the elaboration of livelihoods strategies, although in a severely constrained environment including low wages in Israel. According to our interviewees, peasant families' incomes did rise in the West Bank in the 1970s and 1980s, and this enabled an increase in consumption. However, incomes remained meagre and virtually no household had the possibility to invest, which is consistent with Tamari's (1981) results. This is why, in the end, semi-proletarianization appears to have been much closer to 'distress diversification' than to 'positive diversification'.

According to several of our interviewees, attracting Palestinian rural labor to Israel was a deliberate strategy used by the occupier to induce land abandonment and facilitate state land declarations. For instance, Mohamed told us: 'It is an Israeli strategy to control more land and natural resources. By making people work in '48, Israel left people with no choice but to continue to work in '48. What is going on is part of an Israeli policy.'¹⁷ This is consistent with Farsakh's (2005) analysis, according to which the proletarianization and exploitation of the Palestinian labor force were not the aim *per se*: the objective was first and foremost to seize Palestinian rural land. As a matter of fact, in the 1980s, state land declarations proliferated across the West Bank. It is estimated that more than 90 000 hectares of land, that is around 16 percent of the region area, had been declared as state property by 1992 (B'Tselem 2010). These figures confirm that, as Weizman (2007) argues, the objective of the State land doctrine was to declare as much Palestinian land as possible as state property.

While land dispossession was certainly the primary objective of the Israeli state, several authors have asserted the importance of both land appropriation and labor exploitation in many settler colonial experiences (Englert 2020; Kelley 2017). In the West Bank, we could even talk of overexploitation if we follow the classical interpretation of peasant semi-proletarianization by Marxist scholars in the 1960s and 1970s: according to this interpretation, the agricultural production covers part of the costs of labor reproduction, so that wages are even lower than in the case of surplus value extraction from footloose proletarians (Arrighi 1970). In sum, in the West Bank, as non-cultivation of the land was the primary reason for land confiscation as state property, labor exploitation, de-agrarianization and land appropriation by the state were mutually reinforcing processes.

Hybrid peasantries: between elimination and resistance

In the two villages we studied, and more largely in the West Bank (Tamari 1981), more and more farming households engaged in hybridized livelihood configurations. However, while most households no longer derived the main share of their income from agriculture but from wage work, they continued to farm part of their lands, thus responding to a desire for material security, regarding especially income and food (Fairbairn et al. 2014; Losch, Freguin-Gresh, and White 2012). Beyond these fundamental material aspects, as

¹⁷Author interview with Mohamed, Al-Walaja, 5 March 2019. Mohamed is a fictitious name. Palestinians often refer to Israel by using the phrase 'in '48', which stands for 'the Palestinian land lost in 1948'.

Peemans (2018) has argued, hybrid peasantries generally show a strong attachment to their land and communities. In the West Bank in the 1980s, this link remained vivid as Palestinian laborers continued to reside in their village and to participate to its social life. Agricultural lands continued to be places of encounter, sociability, and exchange, alongside weddings, funerals, and other religious gatherings. By cultivating their land, farmers have also continued cultivating their relationships with other community members including future generations, and their engagements with other living or non-living entities (Zask 2022). As expressed by Ismael, a resident of Al-Walaja who, back in the 1980s, alternated wage work with farming on his medium-sized family land,

this is how I built the relationship between my sons and the trees, it is by removing the bad grass from the soil under the trees, by cutting the bad branches, by harvesting, by digging ... it is through the practice [that I built this relationship].¹⁸

Of course, these relationships encompassed tensions, contradictions, hardships and were not exempt from power relationships. The latter were changing among rural communities: while the extended families (*hamail*) continued to represent the pillar around which social life was built, elders' authority within the community was declining rapidly because of land loss and labor migration (Tamari 1981).

But, in a settler colonial context such as the Palestinian one, hybrid peasantries, by remaining on their land and cultivating it, were also struggling for the right to exist as Palestinians, individually and collectively. Reflecting on the relationship between Palestinian peasants and Zionist settlers, Sayigh (1979, 44) brings to the fore 'Zionism's blind refusal to admit the existence of the Palestinian people in general, and the peasants in particular', arguing that this leads to their 'elimination, or at least exploitation'. As Wolfe (2006) explains, the logic of elimination is not necessarily genocidal nor assimilationist as the 'dissolution of native societies' may take various forms. In this regard, Abed (1988) characterizes the Israeli occupation as a process aimed at both dispossessing and uprooting the indigenous population. By dispossession, he means 'robbing the affected population of the material basis to live and prosper as a community and (...) deny[ing] the Palestinian people's own culture and symbols of national identification' (8–9). Such a process transforms the way in which individuals and communities make a living. At the same time, the lives, and livelihoods of heterogenous Palestinian communities are also shaped by the set of practices and strategies that they adopt to oppose, navigate, and complicate processes of land dispossession and uprooting.

The emergence of an hybrid peasantry in the rural highlands of the West Bank thus led to the formation of 'new kinds of environmental subjects' and 'new sorts of common sense' (Peluso and Lund 2011, 677). Indigenous subjectivities changed within, against, and beyond the complex articulation between settler colonialism and capitalism expansion, the latter being marked notably by the hybridization of peasant households. Referring to Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard (2014, 16) asserts that

in contexts where colonial rule is not reproduced through force alone, the maintenance of settler-state hegemony requires the production of what he liked to call 'colonized subjects', that is individuals whose thinking, aspirations and practices comply with their continued domination.

¹⁸Author interview with Ismael, Al-Walaja, 20 March 2019. Ismael is a fictitious name.

Our case studies exemplify that, even if settler colonialism is aimed at the dissolution of a native society (Wolfe 2006), this process always engenders conflict and resistance, and is thus hardly stable or complete.

Conclusion

Relying on Palestinian voices, histories, and everyday practices, this article has unveiled the entanglements between the intense political struggle for land in the West Bank, economic activities, more precisely the organization of production and labor processes (Long 1990), and thus livelihood opportunities (Borras 2009). It focused on the period from 1979 to the Oslo Accords (1993–1995) because of the specificities that the terrain of land struggle and the wider political and economic context had at that time. In particular, during that period, state land declarations were at the core of the Israeli land dispossession policy, buttressed by economic policy measures, including a labor policy which favored the hiring of Palestinian workers in Israel.

We have argued that in the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, de-agrarianization proceeded in the West Bank, being strongly influenced by the land struggle. On the one hand, the Israeli policy – made of land confiscation, territorialization, military violence, limitations to Palestinian farming and opening of the labor market in Israel – pushed to de-agrarianization. On the other hand, Palestinian resistance, made of land reclamation and agricultural extensification, pushed against it. Semi-proletarianization, insofar as wages partly served to finance farming activities, also contributed to slow down de-agrarianization. However, by decreasing men's labor availability for farming and by favoring land idleness, semi-proletarianization also contributed to de-agrarianization and further land dispossession through state land declarations in a feedback loop.

The question of labor exploitation often remains underexplored in settler colonial and indigenous (Palestinian) studies, as more centrality is given to the land question. By bringing these studies in dialogue with the field of Agrarian Political Economy and Agrarian System Analysis, our research has sought to overcome the abstract theoretical dichotomy between land and labor. Such an approach has enabled us to untangle the very concrete microeconomic processes, particularly the interrelationships between indigenous labor exploitation and indigenous on-farm labor, which contributed, at that historical juncture, to uprooting Palestinian farmers from their land by undermining their land-based livelihoods, thus supporting the settler state's paramount aim of accumulating as much land as possible.

By foregrounding Palestinian rural communities' livelihoods and life meanings, this article has not framed settler colonialism as an ever-expanding force that produces its effects regardless of the contingencies, frictions and conflicts it encounters on the ground. On the contrary, it has advanced the idea that settler colonialism is a process that is never stable, always subject to change in relation to indigenous resistance as well to broader political-economic circumstances. As a matter of fact, following the multiplication of wild-cut strikes during the First Intifada and the neoliberal restructuring of the Israeli economy, the Israeli government imposed a much more restrictive labor regime for Palestinians on the eve of the Oslo Accords (Democratic Palestine 1988b). The signing of these Accords in itself paved the way for the emergence of a new terrain of land struggle in the rural highlands of the West Bank, and thus to new agrarian and livelihood transformations. This will be addressed in another article.

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