Survival, Leverage, and Rural Development in Palestine

A Sociological Assessment of Association France Palestine Solidarité's (AFPS) Support for Farmers in the Jordan Valley and Halhul

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1. Introduction

Research into rural and agricultural sociology indicates the non-homogenized effects of globalization and the diversity of cases in relation to rural societies and agriculture. However, many issues such as the rise of capital, individualization, and globalization; have an important impact on rural life. The rural populations of Arabic Mediterranean areas; such as Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria; have grown in contrast to the experiences of the Global North. Accordingly, agriculture is still of strategic importance for understanding social formations (Hervieu & Purseigle, 2009).

While much research is focused on development, solidarity, and humanitarian aid in post-conflict settings, less research had focused on understanding what this means in ongoing situations of conflict and settler-colonial encounters such as the case of Palestine (Mackie et al., 2017). Despite a rise in research studies on "violent conflict" and development in recent decades, it is argued that the lives of populations, and their interactions, and development interventions within such settings, remain not well understood (Brück et al., 2017, p. 1,13). Research indicates, that understanding the effect of aid in Palestine, should address the role of political economy and the role of development in supporting the rights and self-determination of Palestinians (Seidel, 2019). Understanding such issues is facilitated by doing research focusing on how people are impacted by such interventions, as suggested by the study, while also developing a deeper understanding of the social, political, and economic situation of people living in areas most affected by violence.

The role of agriculture in the Palestinian context, particularly in frontier areas – the majority of rural areas – is important not just economically, but also politically, socially, and symbolically. It is thus, also important to understand, that the social, political, and economic realities of rural Palestine are constantly and rapidly changing in relation to the settler-colonial reality, and its expanding omnipresence.

This research focuses on these complex intersections through 2 case studies, aiming to understand the role of farming, cooperatives, and development aid in participants' lives. This is done through assessing the impact of 2 interrelated development projects carried out by the Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS), with support by Agence Française de Développement (AFD), which have focused on supporting farmers in the Jordan Valley and Hebron (Hahul) in Palestine. The case studies include work that had begun in different periods and forms between 2006 and 2010

and continued beyond 2020. In the Jordan Valley, support was provided to farmers concerning the growing and production of dates, beginning with the provision of trees and technical know-how, in addition to progressions of the project in cooperation with local organizations and the provision of cooling rooms for produce storage and a production line. In Halhul, the support was provided in terms of equipment, network building, and financial support, to support the advancement of the Al Sanabel cooperative which was founded to produce natural grape juice and provide farmers with more bargaining power in the market.

The AFPS is the largest association for solidarity with Palestine in France. It is a merger of two associations that have existed since the 1970s. It is organized through hundreds of groups in the different French cities aiming to exert more pressure on the French government concerning the Palestinian cause, to recognize Palestine, exert pressure on the Israeli government, in addition to carrying out several projects in Palestine. In an interview with one of the project members, he stated that the projects are usually small and at the time of the interview, around 40-50 projects were running in Palestine, the largest of which are the dates and grapes projects which this research focuses on. The AFPS argue that their work in Palestine, while it appears to be humanitarian aid, is politically constituted and aims at giving Palestinians more options in resisting the occupation. This is based on their positioning in relation to international law and the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Accordingly, the involvement of AFPS is peculiar in a sense, in relation to international funding, as they are a solidarity group with Palestine, and work within a political understanding of development. While this means some advantages in terms of the relationships and work they conducted, there are also theoretical critiques on the notions of solidarity, particularly as they have appeared since the Second Intifada in Palestine today and have blurred the line between humanitarian aid and political activism (Tabar, 2017). It is however important to note the involvement of many local actors on various levels who also interact with intervention, an aspect that warrants further research. This also means critically examining funding, aid, development, and not necessarily viewing it through binary categories which understand all funding bodies alike. Moreover, it is important to understand how this is linked to the agency of Palestinians, who are not solely passive recipients of aid.

2. The Case Studies in the Jordan Valley and Halhul

Halhul's population is historically rural, as with the Northern Jordan Valley, while more Southern areas of the Jordan Valley include a large population who have been refugees from South Palestine since 1948, and have Bedouin origins, as confirmed by interview partners originating from the region. With time, many have transformed their practices and have come to practice a rural lifestyle.

Date Palm cultivation in Palestine had existed historically in the Jericho region and Gaza, with Jericho being dubbed the palm city. However, post-1967, Medjool was being grown extensively and with new techniques by Israeli settlers in the Jordan Valley. There has been a significant increase in date palm cultivation by Palestinians in recent years. It is argued to provide work opportunities for farmers, particularly in relation to closures and the practices of the Israeli occupation (Abu-Qaoud, 2015, pp. 423–432). While other perspectives present a more complex and negative aspect linked to date palm cultivation. The Jordan Valley's agricultural history is very much shaped by Israeli control over water and land. A besieged export economy with a lack of access to water moved to plant vegetables in the early years of the occupation, with reliance on family agriculture. On the other hand, it is also argued that the recent trend of palm date cultivation had come to replace vegetable growing and affected the social and political characteristics of many farmers by giving more power to large companies, and had altered social formations linked to agriculture towards paid labor. This led to dispossession and reduced the population of Palestinians in the valley, in addition to a move from agriculture to work in the settlements (Hneiti, 2020a).

While Halhul in Hebron is technically classified as an urban area, it has historically been a rural area and agriculture still plays an important role in people's lives. In 2009, agriculture was contributing to 50% of economic activities, compared to 25% in the employment sector, and 15% in the Israeli labor market. The closures during the Second Intifada had a significant impact on Halhul more than the other neighboring villages and towns particularly due to its location as a junction (Rabah, 2011, pp. 26–28). This led farmers to organize and protest as a result of the declining grape prices, as grapes are a central crop in the Hebron region. Grape is particularly significant for people in the Hebron area, and is part of the cultural heritage and a central food ingredient. However, farmers face many difficulties in marketing. Grapes have

several uses, including the production of juice, dried fruit, molasses (dibbs), and other organic compounds (Milhem, 2014, p. 1).

The 2 projects which are the case studies of this research were conceptualized based on connections members of AFPS made with Palestinian individuals, community organizations, and unions, during visits to Palestine. The project in the Jordan Valley had resulted from a year and a half of visits and discussions by AFPS to the area. The idea developed to support small scale farmers to grow dates in the Jordan Valley in order to improve their economic conditions. The project was started in 2010 in cooperation with local organizations such as the Palestinian Farmers Union in areas such as Al Malih and Al Farisiyah, and then proceeded to more southern areas such as Al Ojah and Al Jiftlik in cooperation with Ma'an Development Center. In total, there were around 3500 trees provided for a total of 180 beneficiaries, and 6 cold rooms between 2010 and 2020, in addition to the development of a production and packaging line in Al Jiftlik with Abna' al Jiftlik cooperative. The cold rooms aimed to give small-scale farmers more power and control over prices, in order to reduce their exploitation from large capital.

The connection with the Halhul project began as a result of farmers organizing in 2005-2006 and forming a cooperative, as a result of the grape prices crisis in Halhul, which began as a result of the effects of the occupation's practices during the Second Intifada. One of the key organizers in Halhul, had connections with AFPS as he studied in France earlier. With time, both projects developed further, in the Jordan Valley, in coordination with Palestinian community organizations, and in Halhul, through working with the cooperative of grape farmers which was formed to produce grape juice.

The common framework which linked both projects together is working with small-scale farmers based on noting the difficult conditions they have faced due to the occupation, and the related social, political, and economic realities which have resulted. In 2020, we have been contacted by AFPS, who were seeking to evaluate the impact of their project, adopting a sociological perspective to form a deeper understanding of farmer realities and the effect of the support. A key element is understanding whether the support of AFPS had contributed to supporting the farmers in gaining more power locally in relation to these difficult conditions, in addition to understanding whether it has supported their capacity to stay in the land in confrontation with Israeli settler colonialism.

3. Research Questions

The research thus aimed to answer the following questions:

- In what ways has the support project of AFPS influenced the lives of small-scale farmers in the Jordan Valley and Halhul?
- Did the intervention give the small-scale farmers more power? In what ways?
- Did the intervention facilitate their capacity to stay in the land?
- How did the various actors in the project interact with each other and with the projects?
- How is the project understood within the context of development in Palestine?

4. Theoretical Framework

Literature on international aid in Palestine had revealed many negative structural effects, particularly reflecting on the negative impact of aid in conflict situations. Whether through the ideological and political drivers of donors, the focus on governmental and institutional building, or even through the humanitarian aid that is argued to allow Israel to continue its' colonial and violent practices without taking responsibility for the Palestinian population. Another element concerning humanitarian aid is negating the urgency of confronting the political situation. Moreover, many donor policies do not sufficiently connect the economic realities of Palestinians to the overwhelming political realities they are confronted with (Taghdisi Rad, 2015). Still, it is argued, that emerging studies within the field of Palestinian Development Studies are highlighting the importance of focusing on the agency of Palestinians particularly in the context of development. The question of agency, while at times ignored, should be incorporated in the analysis, at the same time, not be over essentialized. It should be thought of critically in relation to notions of development aid recipients as passive, and how to critically re-examine development in relation to the needs of Palestinians and in relation to a political economy perspective (Khalidi, 2016). Hneiti (2020b) argues that foreign aid and institutional-led development in Palestine, including development practices led by local Palestinian organizations, follow a survival-based model that they conceptualize as development or resistance. A central example for him is the Jordan Valley, and the damage being done by foreign funding and survival-based notions of development today. A central element is that these initiatives do not confront the causes of the problems, and work on supporting coping

mechanisms, lacking a direct political substance capable of creating change.

Atani-Duault and Dozon (2011) discuss the emergence of the "developing countries" discourse, particularly in France, in relation to the emergence of movements of emancipation to colonialism in what was called the "Third World". Economic models implemented by development economists and planners in that context, were very much geared to the growth of the metropoles and inapplicable in the colonies and former colonies. Relationships of dominance were furthered and imposed and inspired many critiques on development as a tool of imperialism. Interest in utilizing social sciences in relation to development had increased in the 1940s and 1950s in France, and had necessitated an applied sociology that was inclined to form solidarity with groups, focus on rural societies, and the cooperative and socialist movements connected to Marxist perspectives. This had transformed towards a more critical perspective influenced by the writings of Rosa Luxembourg on the reality of development practice and the reproduction of colonial relations. This had led to a highly critical perspective on the social sciences' involvement in development and brought into question much of the fieldwork and anthropological work done in the U.S in the 1970s. This moved the field towards the study of remote localities while declaring solidarity with them, through a Marxist perspective towards practicing ethnography. Still, within these research practices, it became difficult to avoid dealing with the "Development" which researchers were critiquing. Particularly, as a global context of development has come to exist and needed closer examination on various levels. Development, while having political implications, was still generating social transformation and change that warranted closer study.

In the 1970s and 1980s, more interest in focusing on local configurations in rural societies offered a conceptual focus on development projects and how they were even resisted by local people, regardless of their liberal or socialist agendas, as development was also being appropriated by rural populations. A closer study of local situations had necessitated turning the "anthropological gaze" also towards the developers and agents of development, allowing for a more balanced analysis (Atlani-Duault & Dozon, 2011, p. 14).

Since 2000, more interest in an analysis of development aid, sociology, and anthropology had emerged, specifically defining development through situations where interactions of development agents aiming to create change through interventions and their interactions with various social forces and actors in local communities (Atlani-Duault & Dozon, 2011, p. 24). Atlani-Duault and Dozon (2011) particularly note a shift in practice from "Development" to

"Aid", and a blurring of the lines between them. This had translated into a call for an analysis of the reality of aid and development today. With the spread of small and fragmented projects, it becomes important to incorporate a critical political analysis that engages with the perspectives of local people to the processes and interventions themselves, but also seeks to understand how these interventions are experienced. The discussion on development in Palestine lends a particular context from which to understand development interventions in relation to communities, but also through a complex configuration of power structures.

Rutten et. al (2017, pp. 891–892) discuss the importance of taking the magnifying glass and looking into the power of smallholder farmers through bargaining power. They particularly look into their bargaining power in terms of accepting and rejecting large land purchases and large-scale land acquisitions. Their focus is on Southeast Asia, where they also discuss the importance of understanding how market forces are politically shaped and favor certain groups over others. They lend important analytical importance to the means by which farmers can access bargaining power or the factors that can also limit such access. Within their analysis, social relations and interdependencies are the central factors to consider.

Interdependency is thus linked to a relational analysis of smallholder farmers in relation to the various power configurations in which they are positioned. Whether in relation to the state, large companies, large-scale farmers, international organizations (Rutten et al., 2017, p. 893), and more specifically for the case of Palestine; the ongoing settler-colonial encounter. While Ribot and Peluso's (2009) theory of access is concerned with the power configurations and people's practices in relation to accessing and deriving benefits from natural resources; here the focus is more on accessing a bargaining power relationally to the other forces within such webs of power. Analytically, this could mean the capacity to exert pressure on the market, large-scale companies, other farmers, in addition to other organizational and formal actors, and the capacity to resist settler colonialism. Rutten et al. (2017, p. 894) argue that farmers often need to create and forge new networks with key contacts, other farmers, or investors to change the power constellations and have better positions, and access legitimating forms of power. Accordingly, relationships, present the central analytical category within theory as a way to understand how small-scale farmers acquire bargaining power, and what it means in relation to the various other actors. Through that, the research utilizes the issue of relationships and interdependencies as a way to understand power dynamics within the context of rural development.

5. Methodology

Methods and approaches in rural development have changed over the past decades. An important shift was the focus on bottom-up approaches attempting to utilize more learning and participatory approaches that incorporate farmers in the research process. These range of approaches included applied anthropology, activist research, and more prominently rapid and participatory rural appraisal which were prominent in the 1990's which have developed out of farming systems research and center the focus on the issues of whose knowledge counts. While some of these approaches became less popular in favor of policy research, they remain infused in development research and practice, and are seen to be important discussions and approaches to be reinvigorated in Development Studies, particularly noting a selective amnesia as new fads appear in Development Studies (Chambers, 1994; Cornwall & Pratt, 2010). The methodology adopted for this research is what I will call Critical Rapid Development Research, building on critical perspectives on several rural sociology approaches and their implementation in settings of Development Studies; such as rapid and participatory rural appraisal methods. However, the reason for the "rapidity" in the research here, is not epistemological per se, rather, in relation to producing critical research on rural development within time and funding constraints by the funding bodies, clearly put, but also due to the necessities of doing research in various distant localities simultaneously, during the Covid-19 crises and its' implications on mobility. With all these factors combined, a general methodological challenge was already present.

Rapid Rural Appraisal had emerged in the 1970s and is related to other methods such as indigenous technical knowledge, and ways from which to further understandings on rural life. Of the founding premises was the dissatisfaction with survey research and the need for the recognition of the knowledge of local rural residents on issues related to their lives. The method is argued to have gained more attention in the mid-1980s in terms of cost-effectiveness, time, rigor, and reliability. Compared to its' more participatory modes, rapid rural appraisal remains more extractive, however, it still takes into consideration the importance of local knowledge. While later work on rural appraisals had gained more interest in participatory forms, there are still questions on what such interest means in relation to research, particularly when practiced uncritically (Chambers, 1994, pp. 956–957).

The Rapid Rural Appraisal methodology was developed to assess and understand rural realities within limited resources and time frames;

while focusing on developing these understandings by focusing on the perspectives of local people. It is linked to farming systems research as well. Theoretically, the methodology can be carried out by single, or teams of researchers, and can combine different data collection methods including group discussions, observations, and semi-structured interviewing; focusing on participant perspectives. The value of utilizing research teams is in offering different triangulation techniques in the collection of data. The purpose of the methodology is also to avoid various kinds of bias and thus assumes a sample of maximum variation (Guijt & Cornwall, 1995; Schoonmaker Freudenberger, 2008).

Kapoor (2002) offers an in-depth critique of participatory rural appraisals, an off-shoot of the rapid model, by challenging their theoretical grounding, philosophical foundations – or lack of, and the over imposition of technique and the focus on results. This stems from being popular within result-focused implementation within international development and NGO circles. Kapoor indicates the importance of addressing the essentialization in such approaches such as the over-romanticization of local people, or the focus on the public sphere, and group learning techniques, as with the rapid model. These approaches could very well conceal the private sphere, which is an important element for uncovering injustice for women, for example. Such research settings can also enforce disciplining mechanisms which affect the types of knowledge being produced. This also includes the role of funding bodies and implementing organizations and their presence in such group settings.

A central weakness in participatory rural appraisals is the focus on consensus rather than difference. Another challenge is the focus on the many tools and techniques, such as the over-reliance on the visual, which carries with it assumptions of the need to simplify discussions in community settings, in contradiction with the originating drivers behind the development of this method. Accordingly, the methodology applied for this research was informed by such a critique and sought to focus on difference rather than consensus, while still incorporating group discussions, albeit in a limited way. The methodological implication is that it is important to assess the different perspectives and inter-group power relations, in addition to recognizing that people's experiences do vary. Moreover, the issue of the presence of facilitating organizations during fieldwork is addressed by limiting their presence and thus allowing for more unbiased research. Still, some issues related to bias remain, particularly due to the involvement of partner organizations in the sampling and facilitation. The local partner organizations have facilitated access to

the beneficiaries, which otherwise would not have been possible. While this is necessary to ensure access, this carries elements of bias. However, this is at many times inherent in evaluation research. Still, the first methodology proposed by AFPS was more quantitative, and in our discussions, we have advocated for a qualitative assessment approach which allows for a deeper understanding of reality in relation to the interventions, and allows reducing the effects of power relations through deeper engagement and analysis.

Another important issue raised by Kapoor (2002, p. 112), in reference to anti-colonial knowledge, is the importance of challenging binaries of colonial and development circles and the construction of others such as the local, rural, North/South, etc. This is implied methodologically that in being able to evaluate or appraise development practices, there should be an analysis of the facilitators, funding bodies, etc., as part of the research process. This gives important insight into the power relations, not just internally within the group, but also in relation to development as a process. As discussed earlier, these methodological aspects in relation to sampling provide important findings in relation to evaluation research. In the case of this research, power relations were present that certainly influenced the collection of data. Whether through the close involvement of the partner organizations in facilitating fieldwork, or through AFPS involvement in the research development. This, in addition to time constraints, created limitations, but still did not undermine the research which still acquired rich data and incorporated these limitations into the analysis. Accordingly, the methodology adopted here deviates from traditional rural appraisals in giving more privilege to individual interviews, the turning of the anthropological gaze also towards the agents of development and their partners, while at the same time, shares with rural appraisals the necessity for conducting qualitative work that entails the incorporation of data collection teams, and the limitations of funding and time.

Accordingly, data collection tools had focused on mainly conducting individual interviews, complemented by focus group discussions. The research entailed an analysis of the background of the participants, and the impact of foreign funding, and their perceptions concerning these issues. The research aimed to understand whether the support to farmers had facilitated changes in their lives and whether it formed a structure that can present participants further than just their economic activities. The study aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the realities of farmers and cooperatives based on these two cases. It also sought to assess how the project had influenced gender relations, the realities of youths, civil society, and how sustainable the interventions are.

Accordingly, the interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, and with pre-set themes that were composed to answer the research questions and gain more insight into participant experiences and everyday lives. Access to the field was acquired through working closely with the partner organizations and AFPS. The interviews were conducted by me, and a team of fieldworkers in each of the project areas, who were trained in relation to the project. This posed some challenges as well and necessitated continuous follow-up.

5.1 Sample

The sample consisted of 63 in-depth interviews and 2 focus groups in total, in both the Jordan Valley and Halhul. This also includes the interviews conducted with the organizations who were involved in the project. The sample had originally included 7 additional interviews with farmers from the Northern Jordan Valley, in areas such as Al-Maleh and Al Farisiya, but accessing the beneficiaries in the Northern Jordan Valley was not successful due to the project having been conducted before more than 10 years, and due to changes in personnel in the partner organizations who were responsible at that time. Thus, interviews in the Jordan Valley had focused on the central and southern areas such as Al Ojah, Jiftlik, Marj el Gazal, Zbeidat, Deir al Hijleh, and Marj Na'jeh, focusing on several villages where the project was carried out for the past 7-8 years. The interviews focused on assessing the impact of the project on farmers' lives economically, socially, and politically; in relation to the provision of trees, cooling rooms, and the production line.

In Halhul, Hebron, the sample consisted of the head of the board of directors of Al Sanabel Cooperative, members of the board of directors, cooperative members, partner farmers, and family members of cooperative members, including youths and women. Al Sanabel cooperative which was established as a result of the 2005-2006 grapes crisis, aimed to preserve a fair price for grapes and to encourage youths to stay in the land and resist the occupation. It was supported by AFD since 2016 and is argued to have had a considerable impact on the farming sector.

The sample also included representatives of Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS) and the project partners in Palestine such as representatives of Ma'an Development Center, and a former representative of the Palestinian Farmers Union, who was responsible for the project in the Northern Jordan Valley. This is related to the methodological perspective, and the necessity for analyzing the project from their side, in addition to understanding their perceptions and motivations concerning the project. As the research is

qualitative, it did not seek to assess numerical relations, rather, it aimed to form a deeper understanding of how participants have been influenced by the project. This includes understanding economic, social and political impact; including the effect on gender relations, youths, the relationships with local organizations, and the sustainability of the project.

5.2 Sample Distribution

Table 1: Sample - Project administration and partners

French Palestine Solidarity	2 Interviews.
Project Partners	3 Interviews with partners linked to North and Central Jordan Valley, the interview with the Halhul project partner is included in the respective sample below.

Table 2.1: Sample - Central/South Jordan Valley

2. Area (Jordan Valley)	Support Received	Year of Support	Number of Interviews
Marj al Ghazal	Cooling room	2013	1
	Trees	2014	1
	Trees	2015	1
	Trees	2018	1
Marj al Na'ja	Trees	2014	2
	Trees	2015	2
	Trees	2018	2
Al Zbeidat	Trees	2014	2
	Trees	2015	1
	Trees	2018	1
Al Jiftlik	Cooling room	2011	1
	Cooling room	2014	1
	Trees	2017	3
	Trees	2018	1
	Production and packaging line/ Cooling room	2019/2020	1
Deir al Hijleh	Trees	2018	1
	Trees	2020	

2. Area (Jordan Valley)	Support Received	Year of Support	Number of Interviews
Al Ojah	Cooling room	2012	1
	Cooling room	2015	1
Al Ojah Region	Trees	2020	2
Kaabneh/Al Mujarra›at	Trees	2020	
Al Fasayil	Trees	2020	
Jericho	Trees	2020	
Total			26 Interviews

Table 2.2: Focus Group Discussions – South/Central Jordan Valley

Participants from different Areas in Northern Jordan Valley	1 Focus Group

Table 3: Interviews, North Jordan Valley

Project partners, previous project partners in the region, Palestinian Farmers Union	2 Interviews

Interview Themes - Jordan Valley:

- Background of respondents, familial life, work-life.
- The motivation for participation in the project.
- Impact of the project on their economic activities.
- Other effects of the project on the participants' lives.
- Challenges they have faced and the related solutions during the course of the project.
- Were the trees provided, a much-needed support? What about the cooling rooms?
- How do they perceive the project specifically and foreign funding in general?
- Did the project facilitate a return to land?
- Are their agricultural activities perceived as resistance? In what ways?
- What is the role of women in their community?
- Did women's roles change as a result of the project?
- Did the role of youths change as a result of the project?
- Did networks built through agricultural work, and the formation of

cooperatives (for those who are part of cooperatives), create a new body to represent farmers?

- What other support do they receive?
- How is their relationship with the government? Civil society? Did these relationships change in relation to the project?
- What are the ongoing challenges they face in their lives in general, and in relation to agriculture?
- What are their recommendations for the future?

Table 4.1: Sample in Halhul, Hebron - Interviews

Cooperative board members	4 Interviews
Cooperative members and family members	15 Interviews, 10 of which were with cooperative members, in addition to 5 interviews with family members of cooperative members, including women, and youths)
Workers in the cooperative	2 Interviews
Partner farmers	9 Interviews
Organizations in the Area	4 Interviews (Including Halhul Trade Chamber, Halhul Municipality)
Total	34 Interviews

Table 4.2 Focus Group, Halhul, Hebron

Cooperative members, board members, and other members who have participated in the research.	1 Focus Group

Interview Themes – Halhul:

- Background of respondents, familial life, work-life.
- Their motivation for participation in the project.
- Are their economic activities limited to grapes? What other economic activities are they part of?
- Is the cooperative something participants believe in? In what ways?
- Did the cooperative create a collective movement, a collective identity, or new social relations?
- What is the impact of the project on their economic activities?
- Other effects of the project on the participants' lives.

- Challenges they have faced and the related solutions during the course of the project.
- How do they perceive the project and foreign funding?
- Did the project facilitate a return to land?
- Are their agricultural activities perceived as resistance? In what ways?
- What is the role of women in their community?
- Did women's roles change as a result of the project?
- Did the role of youths change as a result of the project?
- Did the cooperative create a new body to represent farmers?
- How is their relationship with the government? Civil society? Did these relationships change in relation to the project?
- What are the ongoing challenges they face in their lives in general, and in relation to agriculture?
- What are their recommendations for the future?

6. Analysis of Data

Palestinians living in rural areas are confronted with a complex reality as a result of the Israeli occupation and Israeli settler colonialism. The effects of the prolonged and expanding practices of the Israeli occupation, settlement construction, and imposition of control over all aspects of Palestinian life, create a myriad of effects on people's lives. While agriculture has been symbolically attached to the Palestinian identity in confrontation with the Israeli settler-colonial project, the Palestinian agricultural sector is besieged (UNCTAD, 2015). This creates challenges for Palestinian farmers and the viability of agriculture as an economic, and subsequently, as a political activity as well. Agriculture is also generally marginalized from the Palestinian Authority's budget and programs, particularly smallholder farmers, which have to compete with development policies that favor big capital. This raises particular questions on the importance of a development policy that recognizes the importance of political economy, particularly, in a settler-colonial situation (Jaber & Sayrafi, 2014).

Analyzing the data thus had to incorporate the analysis of the context as well, and how it is manifested in the case studies, also considering the differences in the contexts between the project areas, and how the projects had influenced the lives of farmers in these areas. The project areas, Halhul and the Jordan Valley, are both areas of Israeli settlement expansion and expanded control.

The analysis of the data thus first presents the development of the projects and provides a general overview of the lives of farmers and their agricultural practices in the case studies, and the effects of the occupation and settlements in farmers lives, before moving towards a more direct discussion of the project impact on the various levels, the issue of bargaining power, control over prices, perceptions of development, in addition to discussion social implications of the project as well.

The findings are analyzed through discussing how these themes have manifested in the case studies, how the case studies can help understand the reality of farmers in these areas, and the role of development aid and its' effects.

6.1 The Development of the Projects

The development of the projects entailed differences particularly as the project in Hebron, as the data indicates, was more farmer-led, in that the farmers in Halhul started the project and self-organized, and then, connections were made with AFPS subsequently. This shows what was referred to by Rutten et al. (2017, p. 894) on how farmers forge networks necessary to alter power constellations. While the project in the Jordan Valley began as a result of discussions between AFPS with local organizations over a period of a year and a half. A central difference between both projects is that the project in Halhul entailed a direct connection between AFPS and the head of the cooperatives, while in the Jordan Valley, the connection was through Palestinian partner organizations. The project in Halhul, however, is understood to be more owned by the farmers in that it developed directly out of their perspectives and necessities and was subsequently supported by AFPS.

> In 2006, we faced a problem as farmers in marketing grapes. There were severe closures. For example, grapes were stuck on the checkpoint for 3 days and were turned back, so we had to throw away our produce. There was a problem in selling our product, as it was prevented from entering Gaza and the north. So, this idea, [of the cooperative] was born out of this situation. We thought, why not make juice that can last for a year? From there, we decided to set up the cooperative. (Interview, Board Member of Al Sanabel Cooperative, 27/3/2021)

In Halhul, the development of the production mechanisms for the grape juice took some time, training, trial and error, until they were able to start producing juice. This included a research aspect on the part of the cooperative members, participation in trainings on juice production, and the production and tasting of juice; many aspects which were also supported by AFPS.

It seems less clear in the case of the Jordan Valley whether the idea of date palm cultivation came from partner organizations or AFPS themselves, as it seems to have resulted from these discussions, but the idea faced challenges in the first years of implementation in the Northern Jordan Valley, but developed further in the central and southern areas of the Jordan Valley. One interview partner noted that the idea came as a result of noticing some farmers in the central Jordan Valley growing dates, and that AFPS carried the idea forward.

> We discussed possibilities of different forms of support, such as providing sheep for Bedouins in the region. After that, we discussed the possibility of working with them [the Palestinian Farmers Union] on the idea of palm date cultivation. They confirmed that it was reasonable, and that it was not a bad idea. (Interview, project member of AFPS, 12/2/2021)

However, AFPS themselves recognize some weaknesses in the early stage of the project in the Jordan Valley. The choice of the localities was not well thought in the North, and there were more challenges in working in that area in relation to the Israeli occupation's practices. Also, there was insufficient knowledge on the part of the farmers and partner organizations in relation to date palm cultivation at the beginning of the project. One of the middlemen involved in the project in the North Jordan Valley finds that the project had failed in the North but rather was more successful in the more Southern areas. To him, the needs of the communities were not taken into consideration, such as ideas that came from farmers in the areas which included the provision of animals and needed agricultural tools. From the perspective of AFPS, these were not the needs communicated, rather, it was other needs that were communicated and provided, in addition to stating that there were challenges in the relationship with middlemen which contributed to a partial failure in the North. It was not possible to access the beneficiaries in the North Jordan Valley for the sake of the research, due to the project being carried out a long time ago, and thus the data was limited to 2 interviews with previous partners, middlemen, and the interviews with AFPS. Thus, the reasons for failures in the North from the perspectives of the beneficiaries could not be further investigated. In the central and southern areas, cultivation was more successful and led to increased income for the farmers. Many of whom were facing challenges in relation to water access, essential for vegetable farming, before moving to dates, which require less water, and thus for many, dates became the only viable option. Yet farmers in these areas today still face

complex realities with the prices of dates and exploitation by traders. In the Jordan Valley, other interventions within the project aimed at giving leverage to the farmers in relation to such exploitation, such as the provision of cooling rooms, and a production line in Al Jiftlik. Farmers described the complex situation with water, which had led them to think of date palm as the future, with vegetable farming becoming unviable.

> Al-Ojah village is an agricultural village. 90 percent of agricultural lands here depend on the water of the Al-Ojah spring. In recent years, water from Al-Ojah spring has been cut off [by the occupation]. People have thus moved to the cultivation of palms, which became more popular than vegetables. Vegetables are no longer beneficial and their prices are low. Date palms have more economic benefit for the future. The nature of people's work today is different than how it was in the past. Al Ojah used to cultivate a lot of bananas and citrus fruits. But many people left their lands due to the lack of water. Some started working in settlements as a result, while others stayed in their lands and moved to date palm cultivation. In the winter season, people return to growing traditional crops such as cucumbers, tomatoes, and zucchini. There are also people who moved to work in trade. Many left the land because there is no water. Many of the residents here are either workers in the settlements or the agricultural sector.
>
> Water is the biggest problem. We told the French and we told other organizations. The solution is that the occupation lifts their hands off of our water. Our land [area] is rich in water, but the occupation forces stole our water. The nations of the world that love peace and love the land should stand with us and help us in accessing our water. (Interview with a farmer from Al Ojah, 6/4/2021)

Both in the Jordan Valley and Halhul, the projects were processes in that it took time to see results, and some challenges have been present. Similarly, in the Jordan Valley, beyond the provision of trees and the provision of cooling rooms, it took time to also incorporate a production line in one of the areas, Al Jiftlik. The local project partner in the Central/South Jordan Valley, found it more feasible to do this in Al Jiftlik, as they are working there with a cooperative, which allows a better assurance of sustainability. Another central element to understand, which is also discussed further in the analysis, is that the beneficiaries, regardless of the term, were not all just passive recipients of aid, but have also contributed financially, and through various means in both of the projects. This is important for understanding the impact of projects to

be not solely related to donor, or partner institutional practices; but also on project beneficiaries' roles in producing the projects.

> We wanted to have a separate building far from people's houses. Part of it was funded by AFPS while the other part was funded by our members, because the number of members reached approximately 65 members by 2010, all of whom were, of course, farmers. We bought the land and constructed a building. The building had an area of 480 square meters. We put machines in it and tried to develop our technical knowledge of production, which we started in 2012-2013. We went to see how grape juice is produced in France, Belgium, and Switzerland. We learned the basic information on the production of pasteurized grape juice which is free of preservatives. During my visits, I also searched for machines that could be used in Palestine, because there are things that cannot be used here in relation to size, energy requirements, and the type of grapes that are used. In the end, we were able to get the basic machines needed for the process of pressing the grapes. (Interview, board member of al Sanabel Cooperative, 20/3/2021)

6.2 Activities and Lives of the Farmers

The farmers in the project areas rely on farming as a central and complementary source of income. Part of the sample included various people who have activities related to farming, such as workers in the cooperative, farmers, or family members of farmers. In Halhul, many farmers rely on grapes as a source of income in addition to growing other varieties of produce such as vegetables and other trees as well. According to several farmers interviewed, different regions in Halhul are fit for different forms of grapes. The western area has a slightly colder weather than the eastern area and is more fit for white grapes for example, while the Eastern area has more valleys and is more suitable for grapes with later seasons, and colder weather in the mornings and at night. The eastern/valley area also has more fertile soil and more capacity to grow most types of grapes. Many farmers depend on family agriculture, with the main agricultural season being in the summer, and the help of family members is necessary. Some families also hire workers to help with agricultural work as well during agricultural seasons.

> The agricultural season is in the summer, and we are all be involved in it. My father is usually overseeing everything, because he is the one with the most experience and knowledge. My brothers and I work

> in sowing/planting when we want to plant, while the workers who are with us work in the sprinkling and spraying. The more sensitive jobs are done by my father. The jobs that require physical strength are done by me and my brothers because we are young. Women do not always help us, because the structure of the female body does not bear the work that we do. (Interview with a youth member of the family of a farmer, Halhul, 29/3/2021)

Some families depend on different income sources, one interview partner works as an employee in a local organization, while he works in agriculture in family-owned lands, and the private lands of others in the village with the help of his children. This provides the family with additional income as well. For his son, it also helps with his university costs and daily expenditures, and thus he participates and helps his family with agriculture. Some farmers express the complexity of depending on agriculture and depending on the summer season for the year's income. Some are also engaged with agricultural work with other farmers in addition to their own farms. One interview partner, a farmer from Halhul, expressed that while farmers aim to develop themselves and develop their agricultural practices, they have limited support in their efforts. Despite differing views in the data on the role of women in agriculture, in general, women play an important role in agriculture within the family in Halhul. Some activities are mainly done by men, while some roles are usually done by women. A female interview partner had stated that women participate in many activities such as spraying, picking leaves, picking fruits, and also growing vegetables in house gardens. Some women also help with filling the boxes with grapes.

> A Palestinian woman is always a partner in agricultural work, she cannot be thought of as separate in relation to agricultural work. While I am a farmer who does not have female family members working with me, I am still aware of many other farmers and relatives who have that situation. Many agricultural operations, such as collecting grape leaves and selling them are done by women. You will find the wife, the mother, and the daughters assisting with such activities. However, they do not carry out the same agricultural work which the man does. The work of women is mainly concentrated in collecting grape/vine leaves, selling them, in addition to some aspects of production. (Interview with a male partner farmer who sells produce to Al Sanabel cooperative, 30/3/2021)

In the Jordan Valley, the majority of the farmers interviewed were small-scale farmers as was aimed for by the project. A field coordinator from Ma'an Development Center noted that none of the beneficiaries hold more than 10 donums of land. Many of the residents of these regions are refugees, also many of the lands they cultivate are rented lands or government lands. Land is limited in areas such as Marj Na'hej, Marj el Ghazal, and Al Zbeidat, when compared to Al Jiftlek and Al Ojah. The majority work in agriculture primarily, with a large number also working in Israeli settlements, in addition to those working in the public employment sector of the Palestinian Authority. As stated earlier, a large number of the residents in the Jordan Valley are refugees, excluding the families originating from Jericho. There are different Ashayer and tribes with different histories of seeking refuge in 1948, some coming from Beer al Sabe', and some moving more than once, such as going first to Hebron or Jordan, before moving to the Jordan Valley. Marj Na'je's residents, however, are refugees from North Palestine, Wadi' Ara', and the triangle area. From the sea until the Marj Naje' area, is a region with similar characteristics, while North of Marj Naje' is locally considered part of the Northern Jorden Valley, or the farmlands of Tubas and Tammoun. The residents of the Northern Jordan Valley are historically peasants with clear land ownership and Tabo land registration, while the areas to the south have changed their lifestyle from being Bedouin herders towards agriculture. Still, some areas in the northern Jordan Valley are inhabited by Bedouins.

The interviews depict a family-based agriculture, while previous research on the Jordan Valley had indicated a transformation from family-based agriculture to worker-based (Hneiti, 2020a), this doesn't seem to be always the case, as the data indicates.

> Everyone in my family helps. My children help me with cleaning the thorns, when the date palm clusters grow and open up, we add a hormone. We buy this hormone. When the dates take hold, we stop the hormone. Then, within a week or two, my children come with the scissors to cut the clusters from the front, tie them up, and prepare them. Then we add fertilizers so that the date fruits grow. When they become yellowish, we bring the packaging sacks. The children also help with filling the sacks. […] When it is ready, usually traders come around and start to negotiate the prices. In the end, the trader usually decides/imposes the price he has in mind. (Interview, date palm farmer from Marj Ghazal, 1/4/2021)

The Jordan Valley is considered the food basket of Palestine, however, according to interview partners, the move towards date farming is recent, and at the beginning of the project, in 2010, there were only a limited number of farmers that grew dates. Various reasons contributed to the increase in dates farming. It was influenced by the cultivation of date palms in settlements, the saline soil, problems with water access due to settlements, the lack of a clear development strategy to solve the problem of the soil, in addition to the economic potential of dates for farmers. However, dates have expanded, according to interview partners, in that it has come to replace traditional vegetable agriculture which was dominant in the region.

> Because vegetables do not always work, sometimes the production/ yield is bad for years. Date palms give increased income. It has become an important season that helps strengthen our presence in the land. The date season comes in July, and thus you start to plan and anticipate that you will have income in that period. (A female housewife who does farming as well, Marj Na'jeh, 3/4/2021)

> People work in the settlements, more so in Al Zbeidat than Marj Na'jeh. Marj el Ghazal's farmers work in the settlements. All of our lands are cultivated with date palms. 90%. Remaining vegetable farming covers only about 5% of our lands. We used to grow vegetables, but many uprooted their vegetables and replaced them with date palms. Since 5- or 6-years, vegetable farming became increasingly difficult. The water is saline. Prior to that, vegetables used to bring good income. (Participant in Focus Group discussion, Jordan Valley, 12/4/2021)

The farmers of the Jordan Valley, however, face many challenges in relation to exploitation by large companies, the effects of the occupation, and some are moving towards finding solutions to saline water, returning to growing vegetables again, and building greenhouses. Some solutions include desalination machines, or utilizing fish farming to improve water quality. Still, the farmers of the Jordan Valley have described a difficult situation in relation to agriculture, whether through vegetable farming, which moved them towards date palm cultivation. But with time, they are also facing challenges with date palm and some are even moving back to vegetable farming for many reasons such as the lack of control over prices. Moreover, small-holder farmers find that traders prefer buying from larger farmers that can provide larger quantities. Even when they do deal with traders, they describe that their produce is being bought for very cheap prices, and payments are at many times delayed. Sometimes traders buy from small-scale farmers produce for 6-8 shekels per

kilo and sell it for 25; with farmers' asking price being around 15 at times. Some who have benefited from cooling rooms were able to wait and were able to sell at 13 shekels for example, closer to their asking price. Marketing, thus, remains a central problem for small-time farmers. The Covid-19 crisis had even created a more difficult situation for the farmers, as it had limited their access to both local markers, and reduced export, and thus made them more prone to exploitation by traders.

> The situation before Covid-19 was much better. My wife used to help me and we would box and sell the dates in Nablus and these areas. Now I had to rent out my land (Interview with a farmer from Marj al-Ghazal, 3/4/2021).

6.3 Effects of the Occupation and Israeli Settler Colonialism in the Project Areas

Besides the effects of the occupation on the Palestinian population in general, such as the structural aspects of control, and the effects of expanding settler colonialism, both project areas face specific challenges in relation to the occupation. This has of course been argued in relation to the complexities and manifestations of development within colonial constraints (Roy, 1999; Tabar & Jabary Salamanca, 2015). As for the research case study, a central aspect is not to think of the project areas without understanding the structural aspects of development under colonization and occupation. The Jordan Valley faces the expansion of settlements and restriction of movement, military zones, firing zones, restricted natural reserves, and minefields. Some of the farmers who were beneficiaries in the project were farming in areas close to settlements, the Jordanian border, and zones such as those discussed here. Some of the farmers were given notices or warned by the Israeli army to uproot their trees.

> In general, the Israeli occupation has a strong impact on the Jordan Valley, especially in the areas of the so-called "Area C" and other similar divisions of land. Unfortunately, we in Jordan Valley areas have many challenges; we have a structural plan of approximately 244 dunams, thus we have around 1200 people living in 244 dunams. The area has become more like a refugee camp. Our lands in Area C are about 2000 dunams. We cannot utilize them, we cannot put anything there, and we cannot construct structures. We are only allowed to use them for agriculture and within limited hours. After sunset, we are not allowed to enter as it is a border area. (Interview, a farmer from Marj Na'jeh, 2/4/2021)

Another issue is of course the privilege of settler agriculture in terms of resources and access to markets. In many areas of the Jordan Valley, electricity cuts are prominent and affect their farming. This, for example, affected the cooling rooms which rely on electricity. In the Northern Jordan Valley, the confiscation of land is increasing at an alarming rate. Water was a central issue that caused failures in date palm cultivation in the Northern Jordan Valley. Settler date palm cultivation also affects that of the Palestinians. Many in the Jordan Valley work in the settlements for additional income. Date palm farmers have also referred to the interference of Israeli date palm traders in the local market, and the marketing of stolen date palms.

In Halhul, the effects of the occupation are described by interview partners on multiple levels. The control over the export of grapes is one aspect that affects their marketing capacity. Moreover, many have lands that have been taken over by settlements or close to the settlement or occupation's infrastructures and are faced with violence, such as the confiscation and detaining of agricultural equipment, and the prevention of farmers from reaching their lands, such as lands near Highway 60, and near the settlement of Karmei Tzur.

> We have land that is inside the settlement. We try to go there every chance we get. We do not go there solely for the grapevines, but we go there because we don't want to lose our land and want to protect it. If we don't go there continuously, they will take it and confiscate it. It is an issue of existence; it is not only about grapes. (A grape farmer from Halhul, interview, 29/3/2021)

6.4 Perceptions of AFPS and International Funding

Research indicates that the Palestinian public has negative views of Western donors particularly in light of their development work under the colonial reality (Suleiman, 2021, pp. 72–73). The data indicates this to be true on the general level, however, there are important points to note. In general, the perceptions of AFPS specifically have been positive in the research, particularly by the partner organizations. In relation to the interviews with farmers, there are positive impressions on AFPS, and more general critiques of foreign funding. The general perception, particularly from the project partner organizations, civil society organizations, and several interview partners, is that AFPS is a better donor due to their funding being not politically conditioned toward a certain agenda, such as that of U.S. or British funding organizations.

> We appreciate this project. This is a good effort. As for foreign funding in general, it is directed to specific goals. Much of foreign funding serves goals that are not in our interest as Palestinians, and we must be wary of any foreign funding and its outputs. (Interview, a farmer in al Ojah, 13/4/2021)

In Halhul, farmers have acknowledged AFPS participation in the olive seasons in the past, as moral support, and recognize that AFPS is a solidarity group. However, critiques from farmers were more in relation to the entirety of foreign funding in Palestine and not AFPS. A central aspect discussed is the uncoordinated work done by many development agencies which are at times in contradiction with each other. In addition, limited coordination between international development agencies, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and local organizations, creates different challenges on the ground. The AFPS views its projects as supportive of resistance, as discussed in interviews with former board members. While this is possible to an extent, by providing farmers with more power, it is still theoretically constituted as an agent of development, in that it is seeking to intervene and create change (Atlani-Duault & Dozon, 2011). This seems more apparent in the Jordan Valley case than in Halhul. The engagement of AFPS is mainly with local organizations rather than political parties or national movements. This, while having the power to support farmers in resisting the occupation in the everyday, still implies a certain notion of solidarity which had been argued to have marked international solidarity in Palestine after the Second Intifada, and has become linked to the work of NGO's, and North to South solidarity (Tabar, 2017). This also is indicated in the fragmented forms of development in Palestine today. Yet, with that in mind, the support was beneficial in relation to the agency of the farmers. This is a central issue, in that any impact cannot be attributed to the support of development agencies alone, while beneficial; rather, in how local individuals and groups utilize this support and contribute to the impact it creates themselves. The recognition by AFPS of the role of the Palestinians themselves in leading the process was perceived as positive in comparison to other funding bodies.

6.5 Impact of the Projects

The projects of AFPS in the Jordan Valley and Halhul had a myriad of effects on the farmers in the region. At the starting point, they contributed to advancing a new mode of production that is currently used by the farmers. This had different effects on their lives and varied between the 2 case studies, but certainly contributed to better economic conditions for the farmers in both case studies, aspects which have also had social implications

and manifestations. In that sense, the projects achieved their main goals in improving economic conditions for beneficiaries/farmers in the Jordan Valley and provided more control over prices for farmers in Halhul. The provision of trees in the Jordan Valley contributed to the rise of a cash crop, the date, at the same time contributed to better income for the farmers, who were facing many challenges in vegetable farming due to the occupation policies. While dates do provide food security and are used in the households, they are more geared for sale in the market, also towards export, and had come to replace vegetables as the dominant crop grown. This, however, was more economically viable for the farmers in securing a livelihood, but has subsequently transformed agriculture in the area, and can thus have consequences worthy of further research over time. For many, it allowed a dependable income that wasn't possible from vegetable farming, particularly due to the effects of Israeli policies on water.

> Many of the farmers here were below zero economically, before date palm agriculture. I swear to God, farmers were not safe and secure, they were at risk. They could barely afford bread to eat. Some took twenty trees, some 15, and some took 30. People planted the remainder of their lands and have been able to produce fruit and work. We thus had an income and we could live better. We started being able to travel to Nablus for recreation and move around, where before, we were really living in terrible conditions (Interview, farmer from Marj el Ghazal, 1/4/2021).

With time, however, date palms had placed farmers in competition, and more prone to exploitation by large companies, which have, in the past years, increased their investments in date palms, particularly for its' large export potential. One interview partner had indicated that some farmers in the Jordan Valley are returning to vegetable farming as a result. This effect is not uniform between farmers, however. For some, date palms remain the better, or the only option. Many have originally moved to date palm as vegetables were unstable economically. Some practice both forms of agriculture simultaneously. In more recent years, larger companies have taken even more control over the date palm market. The spread of date palms also reduced the variance of crops grown by farmers. While the project targeted small farmers, rather than companies, small farmers are still subject to the market forces which are shaped by large companies, who are particularly in control of market price. The cooling rooms contributed more to the issue of bargaining power, and the protection of farmers, in relation to large companies producing dates, as with the case of the juice factory founded by Al Sanabel cooperative in Halhul.

However, in the Jordan Valley, not all farmers can access cooling rooms, plus not all farmers have the capacity to wait out the traders via cooling rooms and might have to sell their product early for income. But for those who do, it had given them more safety in terms of prices, and they could sell at a price which they think is fair. In assessing the impact, it was important to assess the economic, social, and political dimensions of the effects of the support in the Jordan Valley, and how the various actors linked to the cooperative perceive the role of the cooperative in Halhul. Research on development evaluation particularly notes the necessity to focus on outcomes of development rather than inputs and outputs; recognizing that many complex interactions are linked to these outcomes (Conlin & Stirrat, 2008, p. 194,200), which is further confirmed through the research.

6.6 New Modes of Production

Previous research had indicated that new agrarian systems emerge as a result of changes in means of production, practices, and the introduction of new crops (Soumaré et al., 2021, p. 1). The case studies show the introduction of new modes of production, whether by promoting the growing of palm trees, cooling rooms, a production line, or the introduction of new production tools to press grapes. For grapes, this included a learning process that included acquiring new technologies through visits to France and Europe, but also showing the agency of Palestinians in creating these modes of production as well. In Halhul, cooperative members have adapted technologies and techniques that were inapplicable as they were in the Palestinian context, due to temperature differences. For example, as part of the process, the cooperative members developed techniques where instead of cooling the juice, they would heat it, establishing similar results. These new modes of production in both the Jordan Valley and Halhul have various effects that can be noted in the case studies. There are the direct effects of increased income for the farmers, but also a social effect, in that it encouraged other farmers to follow suit. This is certainly the case in both case studies. Many farmers have expanded their production of certain crops due to the economic value of crops. In Halhul, some have expanded grape cultivation in relation to other crops, while in the Jordan Valley, dates have come to replace other crops as well. A central aspect is also the bargaining power that farmers had come to acquire particularly as a result of the possibility of producing juice and molasses/dibbs in Halhul, and the provision of cooling rooms in the Jordan Valley, albeit a more complex case in the Jordan Valley. Farmers have been able to increase their production, as one interview partner stated, his production of dibbs (Molasses) had risen

from 200 kilos to a Tonne. For farmers in Jordan Valley, palm trees and dates are less costly to grow than other crops. As one farmer from Al Zbeidat stated, he used to grow vegetables, but they are too costly and the market buys them at a low price, so date palms were a better alternative for him from an economic perspective. New modes of production have a social impact as well, the increased income, had social effects such as families having more capacity to invest in university education for children, for example. This was a case in both case studies. Education improves the family's capacity to negotiate different income opportunities over time and gives them more options.

6.7 Bargaining Power

It is argued that small-scale farmers can gain bargaining power through horizontal organization and the pooling of outputs (Velázquez et al., 2017, p. 2). However, the research shows different case studies and complexities in relation to that aspect. In terms of bargaining power, the effect is clear for many farmers interviewed in Halhul. Basically, the project exemplified a leveraging strategy. Basically, they were provided with more options for their produce, in addition to its being a sustainable option that reduces food waste due to economic relations of dominance. However, farmers have warned that it is necessary to put things into perspective. Particularly noting that the prices of grapes still constitute a problem, especially during the harvest season, but also due to the limited capacity of the cooperative in absorbing the huge grape production in the area. Still, farmers can now split their produce between selling part of it to the market, and utilizing the rest for making Dibbs and juice. Moreover, the juice and Dibbs allow the utilization of different qualities of grape that would be more difficult to utilize in the edible versions. Moreover, this also helped with the farmers' livelihoods in that while they have traditionally had more income in the summer, with the option of producing juice and Dibbs, they have better economic situations in the winter as well. The cooperative is perceived to have provided more options for the farmers and offered a solution to a common problem they face. It offered some control over prices through the relationship with the cooperative and fixed prices for those who are able to access the cooperative's services.

> For example, the price today starts from twenty. I no longer fear that I will still have grapes piled-up or worry about marketing. Prices increased from 20 to 30, to 35, and even 40 for good grapes. Lesser quality grapes that we used to throw away in the past are now used, as it is only marginally of lower quality than market grapes, and today it

> can be sold for 20. We do not have a problem with time with the juice grape. We take it to the cooperative with more flexibility because it is not tied to a timeframe of the market. It is also not influenced directly by holidays or the closure of crossings and checkpoints. (Interview, A farmer, and a board member in Al Sanabel Cooperative, 27/3/2021)

Moreover, the cooperative has different strategies to try to influence the price and acquire bargaining power, such as buying grapes from the market to influence the price. In addition, another cooperative board member stated that grape farming had expanded, citing that a shop sells 70,000 vine seedlings a year. While traditionally, farmers had a more limited capacity for producing juice and Dibbs as this was done manually, this had improved with the cooperative, gradually, as the cooperative started with simple tools and proceeded towards more advanced machinery.

> The cooperative made it easier for people to produce juice. It takes less effort than doing it manually. They also set the price for these things and you can sell them at a fixed price. This helped people who are not able to produce the juice by themselves manually and sell it. (Interview, a youth school student and family member of a farmer in Halhul who helps his family in agriculture, 29/3/2021)

In the Jordan Valley, the situation is more complex. The provision of trees allowed economic feasibility for many farmers, at the same time, it put them in competition with large companies and became prone to exploitation by big capital and traders.

> Let us be clear that we are small farmers, in the Jordan Valley there is competition. There are companies with factories, in which the largest farmers have large areas of land. Of course, there is competition in production and marketing, in addition to the monopolization over products. The large companies and traders control the prices completely (Interview, a farmer, from Marj Najeh 12/4/2021)

Despite the increased income, which is a significant livelihood effect for farmers, in terms of trees, farmers feel that they have no control over prices and that the market is controlled completely by traders and big companies, which some farmers even described as resembling price "mafias".

> I am telling you they are mafias, they were competing over prices, and they were also competing over how to buy from us at the lowest price and with our own consent.

> Things have changed since 2010. Let's say [for the sake of argument] that the quantity of dates in Palestine was 200,000 tons, today it is in millions.[1] Today it is also increasing. In the beginning, it was needed for the local market and for export. But today, no. Today there is a surplus. Every year there is an increase of 10-15-20 thousand tons (Interview with a farmer from al Jiftlik, 4/4/2021).
>
> The merchants, and I mean the big merchants, who export date palms abroad, control us and control the market. This year we had to sell at the kilo price of 8 shekels. The year before it, we sold it for 12 shekels.
>
> The big merchants always take advantage of our circumstances. The Corona situation this year is an example. I mean, in addition to lowering the price to 8 shekels per kilo, they also made many impossible requests. Such as asking us to remove the yellow dates and the bad dates from the produce we sell them. (Interview, a farmer from Deir il Hijleh, 6/4/2021)

The quote above also shows the impact of date palms as an export-oriented trade on small farmers, who become subject to these market forces, thereby receiving a limited income, compared to the large profit made by traders.

While at the same time, cooling rooms did provide bargaining power for farmers and could influence the price, but that is not the case for all farmers. Cooling rooms are expensive for farmers as well, particularly with the lack of a cooperative structure in many of the areas, excluding Al Jiftlik, but also due to Israeli electricity cuts.

> We benefited from the refrigerator [cooling room] a lot, because our produce was not sold to the traders at exploitative prices. When they did buy our produce, it had been stored in the refrigerators for one month, sometimes even three. Still, we do have problems. When the Israelis cut off the electricity, I had to search for a factory and use their cooling rooms. (Interview, a farmer from al Jiftlik who benefited from storing in cooling room, linked to Abna' al Jiftlik cooperative, 3/4/2021)

Still, other areas, without cooperatives, have some farmers who describe better control over prices due to cooling rooms such as Al Ojah, in that it allowed them to exercise more power on traders, and were able to sell at prices closer to their asking price, thus gaining better bargaining power.

1 The figures used by the interview partner are used as an example, and do not reflect the real production size of date palms in Palestine, he only sought to demonstrate the increased production size.

> Farmers have become reassured that even if they couldn't sell in the season, they could store their dates. So this was a reassurance for the farmer. This means that even if I do not sell [the dates], I still would not be forced into the merchant's conditions and prices. This gives us more control over the market). (Interview, a farmer from al Ojah, 6/4/2021).

Big capital was less of an issue for Halhul, as the natural grape juice produced by the cooperative is not seen as having any competitors in the market. Still, market prices remain an issue, and the possibility of exploitation by the traders and market forces is there. While in the Jordan Valley, competition with big companies is a central issue, in addition to exploitation by traders and having to sell dates at lower costs. So in terms of bargaining power, farmers have gained more power in Halhul, as the data indicates, but a more complex situation in many areas of the Jordan Valley, where the effect of the project in terms of trees, had put them in competition, and thus farmers who do not have access to cooling rooms have limited bargaining power in relation to traders. Yet, bargaining power was gained for those who could utilize cooling rooms. Still, for many, the palm trees also protected their land from confiscation, and thus gave them more bargaining power in terms of their survival in relation to the settler-colonial expansion.

> Palms protect the land. If I don't farm the land, it will become empty. The Israelis will take over any land that they see is not being used. Vegetables became too costly to grow and we did not have support. We used to buy expensive medicines for the Zucchini plant for example, and ended up indebted. That's why at some point, many left agriculture. By the end of the year, people used to have huge debts. So much of the support we received in date palm, from Ma'an, or even other organizations, really helped us protect the land. (Participant in Focus Group Discussion, 12/4/2021)

6.8 Relations and Networks of Farmers

A central analytical aspect in relation to bargaining power is the issue of relationships (Rutten et al., 2017, p. 894). At the central level, a number of farmers built relationships that led to the development of the projects. Such as the relationships they created with AFPS and the partner organizations with the projects. This allowed the farmers to gain legitimating power and to gain resources that allowed them to access more power. A central aspect for the farmers in Halhul was the role of the cooperative in creating new social relations

between farmers. The cooperative became a location where the farmers would meet while waiting to produce their juice which led to new social relations and connections between farmers. An interview partner had exclaimed that some members, particularly leading figures in the cooperative, had more increased visibility and the effect of new social relations is more apparent for them than the other farmers. For farmers, these relations had extended for the entire area and not just Halhul, as various farmers come to the cooperative to process their product. During their visits to the cooperatives, they have had more interaction and discussions of their common problems as farmers as well.

> The meeting of the farmers in the cooperative factory, while waiting for their turns, sometimes an hour or two, gives them the chance to get to know each other. They chat and share stories. This had weaved new social relations between them, even among people from other villages and cities like Sa'ir, Nuba, and Kharas, who bring their grapes to the cooperative. So, we would meet, and through these meetings people would discuss their concerns, daily lives, and other common issues. (Interview, partner farmer who presses his grapes in the cooperative, 30/3/2021)

The cooperative and its' members have also formed relationships and networks with civil society organizations and government organizations. The Union of Agricultural Work Committees was involved, for example, in some aspects of the development of a grape juice with added soda, which could be more popular with the youths. The head of the Agricultural Relief Committees in Bethlehem stated that there are good relations with the cooperative and shared participation in events, workshops, trainings, and festivals that are focused on agriculture. One example is the grape tent which Al Sanabel participated in and sold its products. Civil society organizations view the cooperative positively and that it helped in providing solutions for the marketing of grape produce. However, they also note that while it reduced the problem, it did not solve it completely, and a comprehensive solution would require partnership with government organizations such as the Ministry of Agriculture.

A representative of a civil society organization had noted that the cooperative had become a body that represents a percentage of the farmers in Halhul, but not all. There are still internal power dynamics between farmers that limit their awareness of the importance of cooperatives. Partner farmers, however, have stated that the cooperative had given them more access and did represent a union body. It allowed them better access, as a collective, to formal organizations such as the municipality and the Ministry of Agriculture

to put forth their problems and issues. Moreover, the cooperative had played an important role in protesting the prices of grapes, protesting against the presence of Israeli grapes in the market, and have had some success in various instances. It also became an "address" for the discussion of problems and solutions related to grape farming, improved production, and ensuring better yields and better quality. Moreover, the cooperative provided some aid to farmers in relation to challenges such as weather damage and setters uprooting vines.

The cooperative also tried to improve relations with the community through forms of social responsibility. For example, during Covid-19 closures, they distributed the juice to Palestinian security officers stationed at Covid-19 checkpoints.

In the Jordan Valley, new social relations were more linked to the issue of collective problems and more apparent in relation to cooling rooms, and the cooperative. An interview partner from Marj Na'je in the Jordan Valley had noted that while the community has strong social relations already, in terms of the trees, there is limited collective work between the farmers. An interview partner from Al Jiftlik stated that if there were indeed collective and strong relations between farmers, farmers should have been able to stick together and prevent exploitation by traders. Still, new social relations were important particularly in relation to collective problems. Representatives from Ma'an Development Center found working with individuals in the Jordan Valley to be more difficult in terms of ensuring project sustainability, and found working with cooperatives, such as Abna' Al Jiftlik Cooperative to have been more sustainable. The data indicates this also in various areas, and not just in Al Jiftlik and the cooperative there. For example, farmers who had access to cooling rooms, such as in Al Ojah, describe better and new social relations as well.

> Socially, I mean, there was an effect. Because we are a group, so it became a kind of interdependence, brotherhood, and an increased familiarity among farmers. (Interview, a farmer from al Ojah, 6/4/2021)

6.9 Social Implications

The social implications and impact of the project are various. For farmers in the Jordan Valley, some have had an increased income which allowed them for example, to send their children to study in universities, to better their living conditions. This also includes sending female children to universities. As one farmer indicated, this was a direct result of the increased income. However, at the same time, another farmer had stated that the role of the family in

agriculture, as being unpaid labor, is what allows him to produce at lower costs and thus compete with larger companies. This also indicates that for some, these complex relations, have also intensified some of the power dynamics in family agriculture. In previous fieldwork I have conducted in the Northern Jordan Valley and Jenin's rural areas on women in the informal economy, many women were confronted with exploitation through these power relations of family agriculture. While some women in Halhul expressed that there is more presence for women, the general impression is, that gender relations haven't really changed as a result of the project. Some instances show better presence for women, such as interview partners referring to a female board member in Al Sanabel cooperative. In general, however, agriculture remains tied to the traditional roles of women and men. One aspect in Halhul is the introduction of new production techniques for juice and Dibbs, which had reduced the labor burden on women, as many of these tasks were carried out traditionally by women. Project partners have noted that gender was not a direct aim of the project, and AFPS recognizes that while it is important for them and for AFD, it had been limited. Women do also come to the cooperative to produce grape juice and Dibbs, one example is a female interview partner, who works cooperatively with 3 other women, who come to the cooperative and press grapes. For them, this also brought additional income for the family that allows them to cover living costs such as education of their children, improvements in their house, and aspects beyond mere survival.

6.10 Impact in relation to Agriculture and the Occupation

It is generally understood, by AFPS, partner organizations, and many of the farmers interviewed; that support for farmers economically, particularly in areas close to settlements, is support to people's capacity to stay in the land and resist the occupation. Many interview partners see that the support they received facilitated staying in the land, but many farmers state that they are rooted in the land in principle, and not in connection to the project. Still, there are various ways in which actors consider the resistance to the occupation in relation to their acts. The cooperative in Halhul, for example, had come to practice some activities such as the planting of trees in lands being claimed by settlers. While for many, date palms can protect land from confiscation.

> 5 months ago, the occupation army was present on an area or plot of land, claiming that the land belongs to the settlers. The cooperative bought trees for planting/sowing and had encouraged us farmers to go plant these trees and go there. This was done in cooperation with the municipality. (Interview, partner farmer, 30/3/2021)

Another central issue is the production of local products, which allows self-reliance, and the end of reliance on the Israeli economy and Israeli products. This is linked to both the production of dates and grape juice. Farmers in general, perceive the many challenges they are confronted with in all aspects of agriculture as extreme, and thus any support they receive in helping them with these activities, is considered essential for their capacity to survive and stay on the land. In that sense, the project had an impact in increasing the income for many farmers. Still as discussed by interview partners in the Jordan Valley, the income is not always sufficient and many still depend on work in the settlements. As many lands have been taken over by Israel, any activity that is linked to supporting farmers in preventing confiscation and staying in the land is seen as resistance. Still, the complicated realities of agriculture in the Jordan Valley indicate the need for an analysis of how development can affect their reality in the long term. Farmers are moving towards diversifying agricultural activities for additional income and more bargaining power, this is an issue that should be noted in relation to development interventions, particularly paying attention to long-term implications of interventions. Still, farmers in the Jordan Valley also perceive date palms as having a role in protecting the land from the occupation and land confiscation. While for many, date palms were the only option in relation to the Israeli policies towards the Jordan Valley and their impact on other crops.

6.11 Challenges Faced by the Farmers

Farmers face numerous challenges in relation to their agricultural activities and their income. Marketing remains a challenge for farmers in both areas, with a relative improvement due to aspects of the projects which have focused on price, but yet do not exert a fundamental change, as there is still larger production than the scope of the projects. Interview partners discuss the necessity to develop new methods of marketing. In both projects' areas, the effects of the Israeli occupation's policies are seen as challenging, such as the issue of water, competition with Israeli settlers, and the inability to dig wells. Technical issues are described in relation to disease, and the high price of fertilizers and medicines. In the Jordan Valley, farmers discuss the importance of having experts study the soil and the need for better agricultural techniques. In addition, electricity and electricity cuts by Israel are seen as a central challenge for agriculture in the Jordan Valley. The issue of expert agricultural knowledge was mentioned in both areas, and the need for better governmental support for agriculture, and expert knowledge on crops, diseases, remedies, and how to improve techniques. The issue of water, salination, and Israeli control over

water, are central challenges in the Jordan Valley. In Halhul, the issue of insects is discussed by many interview partners and its effect on the produce. In addition, the lack of governmental support, or insurance for the losses which farmers incur, is another issue. Farmers also discussed challenges due to Israel's control over what medicines and fertilizers are allowed entry, which influences people's capacity to develop agricultural techniques.

6.12 Sustainability and Future Recommendations

In terms of sustainability, in general, many aspects of the projects show prospects for sustainability. Date palms are long-term investments as they are trees, and would indicate that they can be sustainable. The main threat in sustainability in relation to date palms is in relation to the farmers practicing agriculture in a market dominated by big companies, this can be risky over time, if they are not protected, and could lead to a situation where big companies can produce accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2005). In the data related to the beneficiaries of the project, there are only a few instances of that directly happening, such as one case where a farmer had to rent out his land during the Covid-19 crisis. Still, many farmers are shedding light on the challenges of the market being dominated by big capital, but also the dominant development policies that favor big capital. For now, date palm remains a viable option for many. Speaking more generally about the Jordan Valley, and beyond the project, there are also those who have stopped dealing with date palms. This should also be linked to the complex realities faced by farmers in the Jordan Valley, but also the complexities and the economic viability of date palm, and the differences between farmers. A central challenge is the growth of the date palm sector and the issue of marketing. This could pose challenges to the farmers and without sufficient protection, or the lack of diversification of agriculture, could lead to complications. Many farmers interviewed in the Jordan Valley discuss the necessity for diversification of agricultural activities, such as greenhouse farming, and the raising of herd animals. The cooling rooms seem to be sustainable in some locations more than others, and for some farmers more than others. This depends specifically on local power dynamics and how access to the cooling rooms is ensured for farmers. Again, cooling rooms are a sustainable option for many farmers who are able to utilize them and have the capacity to wait for better opportunities to market their product. While it is difficult to assess the sustainability of the production line introduced in Al Jiftlik, as it is relatively new, this would also depend on the marketing channels which are introduced, and how the product is marketed. For the interview partners that discussed the production line,

they perceive it to give them more safety from traders. They are also thinking of how to build marketing channels and export capacities, without big traders and companies being intermediaries. Of course, relying on export brings its own set of challenges particularly for development under occupation and colonialism. Still, marketing, and enabling development policies, are central factors that would influence the sustainability of date palms in the Jordan Valley. That is, how to influence consumption patterns locally, and differentiate large companies from small-time farmers, and provide small-time farmers with marketing channels. Agricultural cooperatives could be another option for small-time farmers to be better able to ensure sustainability. Moreover, an important development issue to address is the root problem of water, this would allow farmers to have better decisions on what to grow.

In Halhul, the cooperative appears to be doing well in terms of sustainability, based on the data. This seems more linked to thorough planning and mutually beneficial relationships created with farmers. Moreover, the cooperative is working towards expansion and has future vision, in addition to incorporating different practices to support marketing. Marketing is done in various ways, but there are innovative techniques of marketing that are being used, such as the partnerships being created with local organizations and society. Moreover, the lack of competition from big capital means that the cooperative was able to create new products and modes of production, which so far, have not changed the agricultural practices of the region, only worked to solve the problems being faced by the farmers directly. Still, as with date palms, the issue of marketing remains central, in addition to how development policy is enabling for such initiatives. For example, one interview partner noted the presence of Turkish Dibbs in the market, and that there should be more protection for the local farmers, as there is a surplus of Dibbs. Similarly, the cooperative›s sustainability depends on how marketing channels are created both locally, but also, as interview partners noted, that there could be a capacity to export surpluses.

7. Conclusions

The research study aimed to evaluate the development interventions carried out in the Jordan Valley and Halhul through offering an in-depth analysis beyond the scope of simply understanding that the projects reached a number of beneficiaries and provided them with aid. While evaluation is a central aspect of the research, the research aimed to go beyond that, in that, how to understand these interventions within the framework of development,

offering a critical perspective on development in the Palestinian context. The projects did achieve what they set out to do as projects. Farmers have had an increased income in the Jordan Valley through date palm agriculture, while farmers linked to the cooperative in Halhul have exerted more control over the price of grapes, allowing them more bargaining power in the region. Cooling rooms and production lines did also increase the options of date palm farmers targeted in the project.

The study shows the importance of taking note of the agency of the residents, the relationships they constructed, and the legitimating and bargaining power they gain. This is most apparent in the formation of Al Sanabel Cooperative. In another sense, it also shows how farmers' agency is also influenced by different factors, the Israeli settler-colonial dynamics, but also the opportunities being provided within a complex configuration of power linked to the various actors of the development process. Farmers make use of the opportunities they have within this framework. Date palms offered the only solution for survival and protection of the land for many, in addition to receiving support that enables them to do so. However, development practice should also take note of how to challenge issues that could in fact change the future of the Jordan Valley, such as the issue of water. Moreover, the study shows an empirical case study, particularly in the Jordan Valley, that can contribute to our understanding of political ecology in the settler-colonial setting, in that how environmental relations are politically constituted, and their impact on social life. Particularly noting the centrality of colonial relations in the field of political ecology and the analysis of human-environment relations (Neumann, 2005, pp. 4–5) The issue of straining water sources, and the saline water, are central factors that caused destruction and uncertainty for farmers in the region. Significantly, the data indicates that some farmers are themselves developing solutions aimed at addressing the saline water problem, practices which are worthy to be taken note of by development practitioners and researchers. For farmers in the Jordan Valley, vegetable agriculture became too risky, leading many to move towards date palm cultivation. However, with date palms, they are also positioned in a market with big players, a risky position for small-scale farmers. This also gives insight into the complex realities farmers face by having to negotiate highly volatile situations for their survival. Government development policy should offer protection, to allow viability for farmers, at the same time, the structures of the occupation, and the settler-colonial situation; remain the central conceptual elements to be taken into consideration when thinking of development, and how development can be politically constituted and cross-cutting.

Theoretically speaking, and bringing back the issue of legitimating power and network formation (Rutten et al., 2017, p. 894), the data indicates that the potential for more politically constituted aspects takes form in how relationships between the farmers themselves can strengthen their positions, and move them towards more political- rather than- survival-based notions of development, based on their own forms of social and political organization taking lead in the process. There are already some indications of that in the case of Halhul, and the formation of collective structures, but these aspects, constitute the main challenges in the Jordan Valley. Cooperatives could be one option for farmers in establishing these forms of legitimating power capable of generating change, but there could be other, farmer-led initiatives, that could accomplish such aspects. Still, this can be seen in the study in the Jordan Valley as well, particularly in interdependency relations such as those linked to the cooling rooms, which could provide collective power through interdependency. Thus, new modes of production, when utilizing the strengths of interdependency, can induce more political and bargaining power. The research shows this truest in relation to leveraging tactics and strategies of farmers, which as the study suggests, are important analytical concepts that help understand how farmers gain bargaining power. This shifts the focus on tactics and strategies, whether they are farmer-led, or are institutional "interventions", aimed at gaining leverage and bargaining power, and how they can promote recognitions and manifestations of interdependency. In the Jordan Valley, for example, individual farmers are negatively and positively interdependent, in that, some farmers are inclined to sell at prices they are offered for fear of lowering prices, thereby, driving the prices down. Through leveraging tactics, such as cooling rooms, farmers are able to wait out for better prices, but also recognize the possibility of collective power. The production line in Al Jiftlik, expands this even further, through the cooperative having the capacity to provide larger supplies of date palms due to recognition and practice linked to interdependency. The effect remains to be seen in the future, as the production line is relatively new. In Halhul, a new mode of production provided a leveraging strategy to gain bargaining power and interdependency has also manifested as a result through Al Sanabel Cooperative's experience, which also demonstrated elements of resistance to settler colonialism. The study indicates that cooperatives themselves are also an important leveraging strategy, as they promote mutual benefit, even resistance, and promote more power for farmers in such complex settings. The cooperative domain as a topic of discussion in Palestine is complex however, and is beyond the scope of this research specifically.

A central element that remains, is that many development projects do not essentially challenge the occupation, settler colonialism, and eventually work within its' constraints. This is emblemic in the date palms, which were an important coping strategy, yet indicate that development interventions in the Jordan Valley have not dealt with the core problems imposed by the Israeli occupation and settler colonialism, such as the issue of water. This has an effect of producing a survival-based notion of development that accepts the occupation and the settler-colonial structure as inevitable and unchangeable. Accordingly, development within this framework remains geared towards coping and small changes that still do not have a structural impact in principle, but can provide leverage for farmers in relation to the complex dynamics of power in which they are positioned, and depending on the farmers own agency, could with time, generate a more politically constituted development. Still, the literature indicates the problematics of transforming economies towards export markets, at the expense of food for the local economies, as being linked of neo-colonial power relations and politics (Smith, 1996), particularly taking into consideration the centrality of the Jordan Valley as the food basket in the West Bank. Research had indicated that demand for dates in the local Palestinian market has been quite low, compared to other food products, while European markets have absorbed 50% of global production. However, according to the Ministry of National Economy, the local market absorbs 50% of local production while the other 50% is for export. Palestinian economists have also recommended dates as an alternative replacement for vegetable, banana, and citrus agriculture in the Jordan Valley, as a solution for the water problem, and as having more economic viability, to compensate for losses in other crops (Al Ja'fari & Lafi, 2004, p. 14,vi; *Āl'syly yd'w mṣdry āltmwr llāstfādh mn ifāʾ trky l3000 ـ ṭn tmwr snwyā [Al-Asaili calls on date exporters to benefit from a Turkish exemption for 3,000 tons of dates annually]*, 2021). While the intention of support in the Jordan Valley was to economically improve the lives of the small-scale farmers, and that was achieved, the question remains about the many development interventions and policies that have supported farmers, and even those that supported large companies towards date palm, and have effectively transformed the Jordan Valley's agriculture, and what this could mean for food security in the future and within changing circumstances. Particularly as agriculture and food security, has been a central aspect of Palestinian resistance in relation to the violence of the Israeli occupation and its' closure policies, and the discussion of a Palestinian resistance economy focuses on localizing the economy through creating self-sufficiency, albeit noting the complexity of a localized economy within the current institutional

reality, with some perspectives viewing that it would not even be possible without engagement with neoliberal development, and various actors such as the government, private sector, and international organizations. While it is argued that such a form of development through a resistance economy would only be possible through a radical reorganization of the complex institutional terrain in Palestine, particularly, due to the intersections between power configurations and struggles (Dana, 2020, pp. 7–9). This presents a complex dilemma on the need for survival, versus, the long-term implications in relation to the colonial reality that Palestinians are confronted with. This is also linked to global discussions which are calling for localization of economies and relinking consumption with production in a de-fetishized way, but also to various environmental discussions in relation to resource access and de-privatization (Pahnke et al., 2015, p. 1077).

8. Specific Recommendations for AFPS

The research was linked to the work done by AFPS and its' partners and thus also aimed to develop recommendations for AFPS which has implications for development in Palestine. At the first level, is the necessity for in-depth and scientific research to precede development interventions that would form expectations of the social, political, and economic impact of development interventions over time, but also to form abstract understandings necessary to conduct and conceptualize development interventions beyond basic needs. It is necessary to think of outcomes rather than inputs and outputs (Conlin & Stirrat, 2008, p. 194,200). The engagement of this project with a research aspect is particularly important and can allow AFPS and other development practitioners, including local, and international ones, to reflect on development as a process and better continue and design development interventions.

There is also a necessity to think of research and development interventions to go hand in hand, allowing a better understanding of reality and necessity. The research also indicates the importance of challenging the Israeli occupation by foreign governments, such as the French government, and taking this aspect seriously, as no real development is possible within the constraints of the occupation and Israeli settler colonialism. On another level, while AFPS' work is funded by AFD, it is important to note that in the Jordan Valley the AFD has also supported the private sector through PROPARCO *(10 Mlywn Dwlār Qrḍ Mn Brbārkw Ālfrnsyh Lšrkh Nẖyl Flsṭyn [$10 Million Loan from the French PROPARCO, to the Company Nakheel Palestine],* 2017). Accordingly, the data indicates that there is a contradiction in the development work carried out

with the private sector and small-scale farmers, and if there was an intention of integration, it seems not implemented, particularly due to exploitation of small-scale farmers as the data indicates. This is an issue that AFPS might have the ability to follow up on. A central aspect, in such a scenario, would be to think of ways to protect small-scale farmers in light of these interventions. Moreover, as the research indicates, the issue of water is a central issue in the Jordan Valley, it would be important to both do research and intervene in relation to water, to secure better access to water, and to understand the reality of the situation and the impact of any intervention on the social level. This can be another area where AFPS can support towards providing more options for farmers to choose as a result of better access to water. In terms of the work in Halhul, the cooperative shows important elements of social transformations as a result of grassroots initiatives, and the support by AFPS was important in facilitating this work. Thus, based on both case studies, we can recommend that support that facilitates networking, knowledge exchange, and the introduction of new agricultural tools and techniques is particularly important; as it fosters collective thinking and practice. Moreover, structures such as cooperatives, when based on real needs, and operating effectively, can become important structures capable of inducing change. Thus, recommendations include further support of such aspects, technical trainings, equipment, and the formation of collective structures and spaces of knowledge exchange that can create better social relations as well. Previous research had indicated the importance of horizontal structures and pooling of resources by small-scale farmers as able to protect them, and the case study indicates this to be an important avenue (Velázquez et al., 2017, p. 2). Technical training, soil research, and agricultural knowledge exchange; were all issues raised by farmers as those of importance for further support. A central element also raised in both case studies is the issue of marketing. This can be another avenue of further support to be provided by AFPS. The research thus, while providing these recommendations for AFPS, also stresses the necessity to think of development through an integrated approach and relying also on local knowledge and necessity. This would entail a deeper engagement with development research towards interventions capable of engaging constructively with grassroots movements on the ground.

9. References

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