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Leila Marcier

Forms of sumud in the Jordan Valley

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Leila Marcier

Forms of sumud in the Jordan Valley

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Biography

The author holds an M.A. degree in International Relations from the University Jean Moulin, Lyon, and an M.A. degree in Human Rights and Democracy from the Saint Joseph University of Beirut. She engages in academic research, international advocacy and grassroots mobilization in Palestine and abroad. Along this path, she is continuously examining the significance and impact of different avenues of contribution to the Palestinian struggle for liberation.

Abstract

This paper focuses on the daily practices of Palestinians to resist the advancement of the Zionist settler colonial project of elimination in the Jordan Valley, Palestine. The analysis attempts to unfold the continuities and transformations of *sumud* throughout generations by examining the role of internal and external dynamics in shaping the modes of local everyday resistance. Placing Jordan Valley Palestinian youth, farmers, shepherds and activists interviewed at the core of the production of knowledge, this dissertation underlines the role of the multiform resistance of peasants in countering the advancement of colonisation in rural Palestine.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to present my deep thanks to the members of the Jordan Valley Solidarity campaign who gave me the warmest welcome and shared their daily life of struggle with me for several weeks in the Jordan Valley. In particular, I would like to convey my special thanks and gratitude to the coordinator of the campaign, whose help, knowledge and unwavering determination have been crucial for the achievement of this thesis. Moreover, I am extremely grateful for all the persons I met in the Jordan Valley, those who accepted to participate in this work through their precious accounts of the situation on the ground, and those with whom I simply shared a moment around a meal or a cup of coffee.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Amira Silmi, whose guidance was precious to the conduction of this thesis. This research is deeply liable to her dedicated involvement in every step of the research and her relevant analysis, in particular through her invaluable inputs in delineating the scope of the research and finding the theoretical framework. I especially appreciated the discussions we had together through which she shared with me her enlightening outlook on the research topic and on the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle as a whole.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the activists and lawyers I met in Palestine, from Stop the Wall, the Jerusalem Legal Aid & Human Rights Center and Hemam, whose relentless commitment to the defence of Palestinian rights also contributed very much to my understanding of the Palestinian resistance. Finally, I am extremely grateful to the Birzeit University and Saint Joseph University for offering me the opportunity to realise this thesis.

Table of Abbreviations

CoE	Council of Europe
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISM	International Solidarity Movement
JLAC	Jerusalem Legal Aid & Human Rights Center
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PA	Palestinian Authority
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PSCC	Popular Struggle Coordination Committee
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America

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Introduction

‘Sumud, translated roughly as “steadfastness”, has no fixed meaning; it incarnates a multiplicity of significations and practices. It can only be approximated through an assemblage of the singular practices of Palestinians-in-sumud.’¹ This account, extracted from Meari’s contribution about the practice of sumud in colonial prisons, highlights the great diversity of the understandings of this Palestinian concept. However, while academic research abounds with analyses of the diverse discourses and practices of sumud, surprisingly few have focused on the repertoire of action triggered by one of its most established meanings: to stay on the land.

Indeed, the significance of sumud has evolved, shaped by the historical phases of the Palestinian struggle against settler colonialism. As Rijke and Teeffelen highlighted, sumud ‘*is identified with a diverse set of actions*’ and ‘*moved from nationalist symbolism and strategic discussions towards a way of life*’.² Indeed, after the Zionist capture of most of Palestine in 1948, sumud appeared in the 1960s as a national symbol within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) framing of the Palestinian cause. In the refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan from where the concept emerged, being *samidin* (the one who practices sumud) meant insisting on being Palestinian through a cultural and discourse practice.³ Following the 1967 war and the Zionist capture of the rest of Palestine, the concept of sumud gained ground among Palestinians living within the historical homeland. In a context where Palestinians were directly facing a regime of oppression and the incremental expansion of the settler colonial project on their ancestral lands, sumud started to be associated with other forms of struggle and acts of non-cooperation with the coloniser. As Palestinians were (and still

¹ L Meari, ‘Sumud: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons’ (2014) 113(3) *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 547, 549.

² A Rijke and T van Teeffelen, ‘To Exist Is To Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday’ (2014) 59 *Jerusalem Quarterly* 86.

³ L Schiocchet, ‘Palestinian Sumud: Steadfastness, Ritual and Time among Palestinian Refugees’ (Birzeit University Working Paper 2011/51).

are) facing Israeli settler colonialism in every aspect of their daily lives, the meanings of *sumud* progressively included everyday acts of survival that Palestinians would use to stay on their lands. Thus, this *samidin* way of life came to be part of a discourse over strategies promoting self-sufficiency and a decrease in dependency on the Israeli economy. In consequence, the concept gained a significance firmly connected to the land and to the everyday agency employed by Palestinians to ensure indigenous permanence on their lands.

Over the course of these changes in the meanings of *sumud*, steadfastness understood as quotidian actions to stay on the land came to be associated with mere survival. Therefore, within the activist and academic realms, some disagreed with labelling *sumud* as resistance, as they were opposing the alleged ‘passivity’ of everyday steadfastness in a context of survival with more active forms of resistance such as demonstrations or armed struggle.⁴ However, taking *sumud*’s meaning of survival on the land, the concept entails actions that directly counter the colonist objective of uprooting Palestinians, therefore allowing for equating existence and resistance. Indeed, as Wolfe underlined, ‘all the native has to do is to stay at home’.⁵ Moreover, doubting *sumud*’s qualification as a form of resistance might be driven by a Western liberal understanding of resistance as ‘*centralized, organized, or calculated*’.⁶ While we do not aim to engage in this resistance/survival debate, this research about the forms of *sumud* in the Jordan Valley will present findings highlighting forms of steadfastness that are not passive. Rather, they entail a repertoire of strategies that are confrontational in nature, including when considering the mere permanence on the land, which we found not passive but demanding positive action amounting to resistance. Therefore, in this paper, we will be interested in the repertoire of strategies and actions of *sumud* in the rural context of the Jordan Valley, analysed through the glance of the everyday forms of resistance framework⁷ combined with a

⁴ A Rijke and T van Teeffelen, ‘To Exist Is To Resist: *Sumud*, Heroism, and the Everyday’ (2014) 59 *Jerusalem Quarterly* 86.

⁵ P Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology, The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (Cassel 1999) 388.

⁶ C Ryan, ‘Everyday Resilience as Resistance: Palestinian Women Practicing *Sumud*’ (2015) 9(4) *International Political Sociology* 299.

⁷ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985)

colonial studies perspective using Fanon and Wolfe. The objective of this research lies in the analysis of the transformations that take place within this repertoire and what informs these changes in the forms of resistance.

We believe that this research provides a valuable contribution to the study of forms of sumud as it takes a glance at that which has been slightly over-looked within the English literature: the repertoire of methods and strategies of the everyday forms of resistance aiming at staying on the land in the rural context of the Jordan Valley. Especially when looking at this particular area, as well as at the scale of Palestine, the focus has mostly been on the mechanisms employed by the settler colonial structure to uproot the native population rather than on Palestinian resistance.⁸ Moreover, when scholars look at popular and civil resistance, they focus mainly on the most visible actions, in particular collectively organised movements and mass demonstrations during the two Intifadas and the anti-wall and anti-occupation movement that followed. Therefore, they marginally tackle the everyday practices, actions and methods undertaken in rural spaces that are particularly targeted by the settler colonial project. However, they usually recognised the importance of everyday practices of sumud in rural areas in the study of resistance in Palestine.⁹ However, few undertook a deep analysis of this issue: within Jeyda and Tribe's attempt to provide a thorough literature review focusing on research studies on sumud,¹⁰ there are scarce mentions of contributions tackling the forms of sumud we identified through this research. Indeed, while several scholars elaborated on the idea of staying on one's land, they do not engage in the investigation of which repertoire of actions underlies steadfastness. Similarly, while these scholars often found Scott's framework on everyday

⁸ N Alkhalili, *Between Sumud and Submission, Palestinian Popular Practices on the Land in the Edge Areas of Jerusalem* (Lund University 2017) 34.

⁹ M Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine, A History of Hope and Empowerment* (Pluto Press 2011) 235; M Darweish and A Rigby, *Popular Protest in Palestine, The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (Pluto Press 2015) 90-94; M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) 242-48.

¹⁰ J Hammad and R Tribe, 'Culturally informed resilience in conflict settings: a literature review of Sumud in the occupied Palestinian territories' (2020) 33(1-2) *International Review of Psychiatry* 132.

forms of resistance relevant in examining Palestinian sumud,¹¹ they rarely applied it to a rural context facing settler colonialism in a thorough manner. However, few studies do engage with the pre-occupations of our paper understood as the everyday forms of sumud and resistance not limited to organised popular demonstrations but broaden to any action aiming at strengthening the permanence of Palestinians' lifestyle on their land in a rural context.¹² Hence, we aim to add to the catalogue of the repertoire of sumud they built – to Meari's '*assemblage of the singular practices of Palestinians-in-sumud*' – and analyse it through the glance of transformations. Indeed, from replanting trees to building a school for the community, discreetly connecting water pipelines with the Mekorot company network or working to build a culture about Palestinian rurality towards the urban youth, Jordan Valley inhabitants highlighted diverse aspects of their daily lives that they deem confronting the settler colonial system. One of this research's primary contributions is to bring into academic discourse an account of these specific everyday forms of peasant resistance in Palestine.

Theoretical framework

Scott's account of everyday forms of resistance constitutes a particularly relevant theoretical framework for the analysis of the repertoire of action used by Palestinians in a rural context to stay on their land and challenge settler colonial policies and practices.¹³ Indeed, the concept he describes in *Weapons of the Weak* allows

¹¹ T van Teeffelen, *Sumud: Soul of the Palestinian People* (Arab Educational Institute 2011); C Ryan, 'Everyday Resilience as Resistance: Palestinian Women Practicing Sumud' (2015) 9(4) *International Political Sociology* 299; A Johansson and S Vinthagen, 'Dimensions of Everyday Resistance: the Palestinian Sumud' (2015) 8(1) *Journal of Political Power* 1; T Seidel, "'We Refuse to be Enemies': Political Geographies of Violence and Resistance in Palestine' (2017) 12(3) *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 25; J Busse, 'Everyday life in the face of conflict: Sumud as a spatial quotidian practice in Palestine' (2022) 25(2) *Journal of International Relations and Development* 583.

¹² S Abdelnour, A Tartir and R Zurayk, 'Farming Palestine for Freedom' (*Al Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network*, 2 July 2012) <<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/farming-palestine-freedom-policy-brief/>> accessed 22 June 2022; J Simaan, 'Olive growing in Palestine: A decolonial ethnographic study of collective daily-forms-of-resistance' (2017) 24(4) *Journal of Occupational Science* 510; F Salem, 'Palestinian Daily Sumud to Confront Israeli Settler Violence in Area C: Al-Qasra Village as a Case Study' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 20 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650378> accessed 22 June 2022.

¹³ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985).

for enlarging the scope of resistance from organised, direct and confrontational actions to smaller-scale quotidian acts that aim at challenging a superior power. Under this frame, the fighter and the activist do not hold the monopoly on the forms of resistance; the farmer, the shepherd, the families and communities challenging the Israeli settler colonial power on a daily basis are also actors of resistance. This aspect is both an interest and an outcome of the application of Scott's concept of everyday resistance: it allows for framing the peasantry as a historical actor *on a daily basis*, as their quotidian acts aiming at challenging oppression might have equal – or even more – consequences on shaping the patterns of power and their materialisation in the rural landscape.¹⁴ Looking at the historical role of the daily struggle of Palestinians in 'Area C' entails a different approach than the one we find in many studies focusing predominantly on the impact of colonial oppression and domination. In other words, through the framework of everyday resistance, Jordan Valley communities are not confined to the mere role of victims but are recognised as historical actors of resistance.

A second interest of *Weapons of the Weak* lies in the analytical structure it provides for considering forms of everyday resistance, which can be briefly apprehended in Scott's words: '*it is perfectly legitimate – even important – to distinguish between various levels and forms of resistance: formal-informal, individual-collective, public-anonymous, those that challenge the system of domination – those that aim at marginal gains*'.¹⁵ While privileging Scott's framework to study sumud, we will take distance from other concepts that have been used to analyse Palestinian forms of resistance, such as resilience and non-violence. Derived from Western thought, these notions can entail problematic romanticisation,¹⁶ contain Orientalist expectations¹⁷ or frame sumud as an adaptation to a colonist rule described as unchallengeable.¹⁸

¹⁴ G Fields, 'Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror' (2010) 42(1) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 63.

¹⁵ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 299.

¹⁶ M Shwaikh, 'The Dehumanizing Discourse of Resilience' (*Progressive Policy Review*, 28 May 2021) <<https://ppr.hkspublications.org/2021/05/28/resilience-discourse/>> accessed 22 June 2022.

¹⁷ A Alazeh, *Locating Nonviolence: the people, the past and resistance in Palestinian political activism* (Rice University 2014).

¹⁸ J Busse, 'Everyday life in the face of conflict: Sumud as a spatial quotidian practice in Palestine' (2022) 25(2) *Journal of International Relations and Development* 583.

On the other hand, there are also certain limits in using the work of Scott in the Palestinian context, as his analysis relies on empirical findings coming from a class struggle context, not a colonial one. While we clearly see the relevance of the concept of everyday forms of resistance to analyse acts of *sumud*, a framework with class struggle structuring the binary logic of dominance/resistance cannot alone provide appropriate theoretical orientations in the context of colonisation. Fanon underlined this issue in *The Wretched of the Earth*, his landmark account on colonialism:

The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. [...] That is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue.¹⁹

Indeed, within a colonial context, the separation that drives the logic of dominance/resistance is not delineated by socio-economic lines nor '*aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo*', but by a demonstration of a '*language of pure violence*' from the part of the coloniser.²⁰

Therefore, while Scott's everyday forms of resistance framework will structure our analysis of the acts themselves, Fanon and Wolfe will guide us in approaching the actors involved, and in particular the intentions and meanings they give to their agency of resistance. Wolfe is particularly useful in understanding the logic behind the oppression of the settler colonial power – a logic that is determinant for the structure of the forms of resistance that will be waged against it. Indeed, while Scott is describing peasant forms of resistance directed against an actor whose exploitation is primarily driven by the search for profit, the settler sets a struggle over elimination and territorial expansion on the land of the native.²¹ Thus, in the Palestinian case, the peasantry is facing an existential threat – therefore conducting to the creation of an

¹⁹ F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press 1963) 5.

²⁰ *ibid* 3-4.

²¹ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

existential agency of resistance. In other words, Wolfe's logic of elimination adds to Scott's framework by highlighting a determinant difference in what stands behind the need for resistance – not the risk of exploitation, but the one of elimination.

Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* also contains some important incentives to capture the relationship between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Jordan Valley communities. Indeed, Fanon's account of the emergence of the post-independence bourgeois leadership echoes with the position that has been taken by the PA, which traded its revolutionary potential against limited recognition with the signature of the Oslo Accords. While in the case of Palestine we are still situated in a colonial context, Fanon's analysis of the neo-colonial scheme highlights the logic that underlies the PA's agency in the valley, in particular its ideological support for a humanitarian discourse that does not empower national liberation. In these conditions, we will see that the practice of sumud by the rural masses, which we could somehow equate with Fanon's 'combat breathing',²² contains a greater potential for national liberation. Finally, some aspects of the study of the multi-form resistance undertaken in the Palestinian rural context will echo Fanon's contribution on the use of cultural practices against the rule of the colonist oppressor.²³ In consequence, drawing from Fanon's anti-colonial theory and Wolfe's account of the logic of elimination entailed in settler colonialism, this research will also attempt to provide a theoretical contribution within a discussion on Scott's concept of everyday forms of resistance within a colonial setting.

Scope and methodology

This research is interested in the repertoire of actions undertaken by Palestinians in the Jordan Valley in their daily confrontation against the mechanisms of control and removal of the Israeli settler colonial system. As it focuses on the forms of resistance taking place in a rural context, we restricted the scope of our research within a geographical frame – the Jordan Valley – as this area is predominantly agricultural, with Palestinians relying mostly

²² F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 65.

²³ *ibid.*

on farming and pastoralism as means of livelihood. Furthermore, the particular relevance of studying sumud within the geographical frame of the Jordan Valley lies in the special significance this area takes for the Zionist settler colonial project. Indeed, certain characteristics of the valley qualify it to fall within Wolfe's conceptualisation of the frontier as a singular place within the logic of elimination contained in any settler colonial agency. Within the Zionist project, the frontier marks both the boundary and the index of expansion of the settler colonial state.²⁴ The first characteristic of the Jordan Valley that qualifies it as the index of expansion of Israeli settler colonialism lies in its strategic emplacement along the Jordanian border, which is one of the potential boundaries of the so-called 'Greater Israel' that lies at the core of the Zionist imaginary. The second characteristic is the important proportion of 'Area C' (87% of the valley) that has been designed by the Oslo process. As highlighted by Meari, 'Area C' is the Zionist new imagined frontier within which it aims to pursue its settler colonial expansion.²⁵ Therefore, it is possible to apply Wolfe's concept of the frontier to the Jordan Valley, which entails a particular interest in a study about resistance. Indeed, between Wolfe's words about the historical process of territorial invasion, the frontier is perceived as the place where the logic of elimination of the native population takes its most violent form. In consequence, the practice of resistance is particularly existential in a context where Israeli settler colonialism deploys its most oppressive structure. Therefore, conducting our research about sumud in the Jordan Valley appears particularly relevant. Regarding temporality, the paper will be developed mainly within the timeframe of the period opened by the Oslo Accords, as some of our empirical findings underlined to what extent the so-called 'peace process' constitutes rather a crucial instrument for the continuation and expansion of the Zionist settler colonial project.

Within this geographical frame, our object of study remains sumud and the transformations within its repertoire of resistance against settler colonial expansion. To decide what actions would qualify for being part of the repertoire of sumud and everyday

²⁴ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

²⁵ L Meari, 'Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in "Area C": the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village' (2017) 52(3) *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* 506.

resistance, I choose to look at any practice or initiative whose actors would label as ‘sumud’ or ‘resistance’ (*muqawama*) when talking about the means they employ to stay on their lands. In considering the people concerned as the most relevant stakeholders to qualify the nature of their own actions against the settler colonial oppression they face, I underline their constitutive role in constructing and articulating resistance²⁶. By doing so, I also aim to follow Meari’s suggestion to ‘*avoid generalizations and abstractions and follow the particularity of multiple singular occurrences*’ while researching forms of sumud.²⁷ Secondly, in the West Bank context, sumud is a reaction framed against a 55-year-old occupation and dispossession process that is constantly adapting and changing its strategies to pursue settler colonial expansion. Therefore, as steadfastness has been practiced by several generations of Palestinians, I believe that acts of sumud are not fixed, but the subject of transformations throughout generations. In consequence, the object of research will also consist of the transformations within the repertoire of actions of sumud in the context of the Jordan Valley. Thus, I will include the perspective of the youth, its understanding and practices of resistance against Israeli settler colonialism. In consequence, the main question this research will aim to address is what are the transformations of the practices of everyday resistance and sumud across generations of Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley?

For this research, I employed a qualitative research methodology consisting of formal and informal, open-ended, semi-structured interviews, as well as site observation in various areas of the Jordan Valley. The paper also relies marginally on news reports and online data produced by Palestinian grassroots movements and human rights organisations. However, the empirical data for this research is mainly derived from the 14 interviews that have been conducted between March and May 2022 in the Jordan Valley and Ramallah. The participants include youth from 17 to 28 years old, activists and community leaders from the valley, as well as West Bank Palestinian activists and lawyers involved in supporting rural communities in challenging Israeli settler colonial policies and practices. Mainly conducted in the Northern part

²⁶ T Seidel, ‘“We Refuse to be Enemies”: Political Geographies of Violence and Resistance in Palestine’ (2017) 12(3) *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 25.

²⁷ L Meari, ‘*Sumud*: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons’ (2014) 113(3) *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 547, 553.

of the Jordan Valley, interviews with local inhabitants have taken place in different communities: Ibziq, Bardala, Al Hama, Mak-hul, Al Hadidiya, Humsa and Al Auja. The choice of this sample allows for the study of sumud in diverse contexts against different forms of oppression. As the Israeli settler colonial logic of elimination often relies on impeding Palestinian means of livelihood, the policies and practices employed may differ whether the community is predominantly depending on farming or shepherding. In consequence, the study includes both predominantly farmer villages (Ibziq, Bardala and Al Auja) and small Bedouin communities relying mostly on pastoralism (Al Hama, Mak-hul, Al Hadidiya and Humsa). Moreover, the choice of certain specific localities aims to tackle the resistance that is waged against particularly violent forms of oppression that I find in some of these communities, from an especially brutal and massive campaign of forcible displacement conducted in a restricted amount of time (Humsa) to the regular practice of military training exercises in the hearth of a community (Ibziq). Other localities were chosen for their particular history of resistance (Bardala) or due to the conduct of new forms of proactive strategies of sumud (Al Hama).

The research methodology contains certain limits that are important to tackle before starting to dig into the analysis of the empirical findings. First, as the realisation of the interviews required translation, they have been conducted with a third party, therefore implying some slight interferences in content and terminology. Moreover, as the qualitative research has been realised mostly in the Northern part and with the support of the grassroots movement operating in the valley, the choice of the above-mentioned individuals and communities might focus on the local activist network. For instance, as few interviewees dedicated attention to the matter of Palestinians working in Israeli illegal settlements in the valley, this important issue will be marginally brought into the discussion. One should therefore refrain from taking these empirical findings as an exhaustive representation of the diverse realities of the Jordan Valley communities. Second, the nature of the object of research – resistance – involves legitimate trust issues from the part of the interviewees, as *'their safety may depend on silence and anonymity'*.²⁸ In addition, I faced another challenge in grasping the formulation of the ideas and practices of

resistance by the interviewees, which has also been encountered and examined by Scott: *'intentions may be so embedded in the peasant subculture and in the routine, taken-for-granted struggle to provide for the subsistence and survival of the household as to remain inarticulate'*.²⁹

Analysing transformations in the forms of sumud allows for looking at the factors, actors and processes that inform these changes. While Scott, in his landmark work on peasant resistance, identified the level of repression as the main factor structuring the degree and nature of the acts of resistance,³⁰ I found that other variables intervene in shaping the ways Palestinians resist to the settler colonial power. This question about the nature of the entity informing the repertoire of action undertaken by Jordan Valley Palestinians will provide the main structure for this research. After setting the historical, political and legal context framing the Palestinian dispossession in general and in the Jordan Valley in particular (Chapter 1), I will look at the confrontational engagement between the repertoire of settler colonial strategies and the repertoire of sumud (Chapter 2). While the former identifies the changes in colonial policies and practices as an important variable informing transformations in the forms of sumud, Palestinians themselves – through their lifestyle, social practices and structures of community support to face colonial attempts of forced displacement – are central actors defining both logics of continuities and transformations within their acts of resistance (Chapter 3). While less significant in shaping sumud, the role of external actors of diverse nature and origins – from the scale of Palestine to the international scale – acts as an additional factor of transformation (Chapter 4). Finally, I will build on this analysis of the actors informing permanence and transformations in the repertoire of sumud in a final chapter attempting to provide an outlook of the patterns of resistance against settler colonial expansion in the future. As rural areas labelled as 'Area C' are currently facing an acceleration in the colonial attempts to uproot the native population, I will look for patterns of current and future transformations within the repertoire of strategies employed to challenge the colonial mechanisms of ethnic cleansing in the Jordan Valley (Chapter 5).

²⁹ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 301.

³⁰ *ibid.*

1. Palestinian dispossession and the case of the Jordan Valley: Historical, political and legal context

Prior to the exposition of empirical findings highlighting how people resist settler colonial oppression, I should first set the context of daily violence and dispossession that triggers this resistance. Therefore, in this chapter, I will frame the political problem of Palestine and look at the mechanisms employed by the settler colonial system to pursue its project of dispossession and removal, with a particular focus on the Jordan Valley. Wolfe highlights that settler colonialism uses different mechanisms to pursue its logic of elimination, which range from homicide frontier to assimilation. In the Israeli case, the option that has been privileged by Zionists to capture Palestinian land is the one of removal.³¹ While this purpose of expulsion has shown a particularly violent face in the ethnic cleansing campaigns of 1948 and 1967, the Zionist agency of removal 'has not been limited to the unelaborated exercise of force'.³² As Wolfe demonstrated that 'invasion is a structure, not an event',³³ the ethnic cleansing of Palestine does not consist of the sole 'events' of 1948 and 1967 but entails a structure of uninterrupted settler colonial mechanisms aiming at progressive removal.

³¹ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

³² *ibid.*

³³ P Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology, The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (Cassel 1999).

1.1 Ethnic cleansing as an event: 1948 and 1967

At the dawn of the 19th century, a minority of European Jews, inspired by their Western counterparts' experiences of colonialism and ethnocentric nationalism, formulated a project of a demographically exclusive Jewish state that they soon decided to propel on the Palestinian land. However, Jewish exclusiveness was not achievable in the existing situation due to the already inhabited character of the land. Therefore, the Zionist movement set three processes to realise exclusiveness: take land, expel the native Palestinian population and encourage Jews all over the world to immigrate to Palestine. Despite Western powers' sponsorship of the Zionist project, Jewish exclusive presence on the land of Palestine has not been achieved; therefore, Israeli settler colonialism continues to undertake processes of removal. While doing so, it follows one requirement: capturing as much land as possible with the less Palestinian demography on it. In addition, Zionism adopted a religious-racial supremacy over Palestinians that it has not succeeded to drive off from their homeland in 1948.³⁴ After 1967, Israeli settler colonialism enlarged this apartheid rule to all Palestinians remaining in the homeland but with different legal characterisations depending on the area where they live, therefore creating a 'deliberate fragmentation of the Palestinian social body'.³⁵ As Zionism aims for a Jewish-only liberal democracy, settler colonial processes of removal and apartheid rule are deemed to last as long as elimination is not complete.

Land and demography are at the core of the Zionist project. Therefore, in the roughly 150 years of its existence, Zionism tried to achieve complete control of both. In 1917, on the eve of the establishment of the British Mandate on Palestine (1922-48), the Jewish immigrated population reached about 60,000 persons, and the land was still 93% Palestinian-owned and controlled.³⁶ Today, the entirety of the land is controlled by the Israeli state, while the Jewish group forms about 50% of the total population residing in

³⁴ J Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question, Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (Routledge 2006).

³⁵ A Alazzeh, 'Seeking popular participation: nostalgia for the first intifada in the West Bank' (2015) 5(3) *Settler Colonial Studies* 251.

³⁶ M Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine, A History of Hope and Empowerment* (Pluto Press 2011) 14-15.

Palestine.³⁷ This profound demographic and spatial transformation has been realised mostly through the use of *manu militari* ethnic cleansing on the land of Palestine. About half of the Palestinian population – more than 800,000 persons – were dispossessed from their lands and scattered through the region in 1948. During the military campaign of 1967, when the Israeli army seized control over the West Bank and Gaza, nearly 300,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced. Many of them were from the Jordan Valley: this second ethnic cleansing campaign expelled about 88% of the population of this area, entailing therefore a geographically selective character driven by the particular settler colonial greed for the valley.³⁸ However, while the Nakba allowed the newly formed Israeli state to have a clear Jewish demographic majority over 88% of the Palestinian land, the 1967 war resulted in a different situation. Facing an important native population within the captured West Bank, Israeli settler colonialism set in place different mechanisms to pursue its logic of elimination.

1.2 Ethnic cleansing as a structure: Settler colonial instruments for progressive removal in the Jordan Valley since 1967

While the most important territorial and demographic transformation over Palestinian land has been realised through Zionist military campaigns, it is important to recall that ‘elimination is an organizing principle of settler colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence’.³⁹ Therefore, this part will expose the structural long-term mechanisms of ethnic cleansing that Israeli settler colonialism established in the Jordan Valley.

³⁷ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 305.

³⁸ M Nuseibah, ‘The Second Nakba: Displacement of Palestinians in and after the 1967 Occupation’ (*Orient XXI*, 1 June 2017) <<https://orientxxi.info/magazine/the-second-nakba-displacement-of-palestinians-in-and-after-the-1967-occupation,1875>> accessed 22 June 2022.

³⁹ P Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology, The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (Cassel 1999).

1.2.1 In the wake of the 1967 war:

Dispossession as a means for removal

While, at the wake of the Six Day War, members of the Israeli government contemplated the possibility to carry out an ethnic cleansing campaign at the scale of the Nakba against the Palestinians in the territories they just captured,⁴⁰ the decision they reached was rather to pursue their logic of elimination incrementally. The Allon Plan, although never ratified, proposed to use settlements to advance Jewish sovereignty over the West Bank after absorbing primarily the Jordan Valley – up to 15 kilometres west of the Jordan river – within the Israeli state.⁴¹ The particular interest of Israeli settler colonialism in this area, confirmed by the geographically selective character of the 1967 ethnic cleansing, lies in the strategic potential of the valley. Consisting of about 30% of the West Bank, this area makes up 50% of its fertile agricultural lands⁴² and contains key land reserves for Palestinian natural expansion. These lands have a multiform economic potential, from agriculture to industry, tourism, transport and exploitation of the Dead Sea minerals. Most importantly, the Jordan Valley is one of the most important water reserves in Palestine, making up to one-third of the underground water resources of the West Bank.⁴³ Lying on 1,200 kilometres along the Jordanian border, from the Green Line in the North to the Dead Sea in the South, this area is also the only gate to the external world for Palestinians. From the Zionist perspective, this consequent strategic potential must primarily be confiscated, as its resources and geographical location could largely improve Palestinian self-reliance and economic sustainability. The grip over the Jordanian border also entails great geopolitical value for the Israeli state, as its confiscation from Palestinians is key in preventing them from reaching any form of self-determination.

For Palestinians in the Jordan Valley, it has been very clear from the beginning that the Zionist military occupier wanted them to leave their ancestral lands. AS, a seventy-years old Palestinian from Al-Hadidiya, recalls:

⁴⁰ I Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oneworld Publications 2006) 191-92.

⁴¹ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 185-86, 286.

⁴² M Shqair, 'Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley' (2022) 2 *Transactions of the Jewish National Fund* 4.

⁴³ M Melon, 'Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley exposed' (*Al-Haq*, 31 January 2018) <www.alhaq.org/publications/8057.html> accessed 14 April 2022.

After 1967, the Israelis started direct attacks and harassments, asking Palestinians to leave from their communities to other communities, explaining to them that in these other communities it would be easier for them to live, that Israelis would not attack them there nor destroy their houses. (...) They started to attack the shepherds and shoot and kill the sheep.⁴⁴

However, direct violence is just one of the many tools the settler colonial system started to put in place to pursue its removal of Palestinians from the valley. Performing dispossession has been key in organising both the incremental removal of Palestinians and the installation of Jewish settlements. Control over water resources was the first confiscation to be achieved by the Israeli army: through a series of military orders, it secured unconditional access to the settler colonial system while preventing Palestinians from constructing any new water installations.⁴⁵ Back then, Palestinians were relying mostly on access to the Jordan river, water springs, wells and natural dams for their agricultural and drinkable needs. While banning access to the river, the Israeli army organised the destruction of many of the other sources of water, from the sealing of springs to the destruction of community wells. As for the dams, which were ‘formed naturally from the winter rain’, ‘all of them were destroyed’, according to RL, a Jordan Valley farmer and activist.⁴⁶ Curtailing access to these vital water resources rendered the life and work of the local inhabitants unsustainable, as most of them relied on farming and herding.

After hindering agricultural means of livelihood through water and land dispossession, in the 1970s and 1980s the settler colonial system produced economic incentives to encourage Palestinians to leave their lands, find wage labour within the Israeli economy and abandon the rural lifestyle.⁴⁷ Capitalist policies introduced in the valley by the coloniser – mechanisation, technology and chemicals, as well as the integration of the Palestinian agricultural economy within the colonial system – posed further challenges to

⁴⁴ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

⁴⁵ Military Order 158, Order Concerning Amendment of the Supervision Over Water Law, November 1967.

⁴⁶ Interview with RL (Bardala, 23 April 2022).

⁴⁷ P Kohlby, ‘Owning the Homeland: Property, Markets, and Land Defense in the West Bank’ (2018) 47(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30.

Palestinian ancestral modes of production. Indeed, the impossibility for Palestinian traditional agriculture to compete with faster and cheaper Zionist farming production created further negative incentives to push native farmers to desert their lands and become wage labourers. In addition, Palestinian farmers who kept on their agricultural activity were pushed to adopt a labour-intensive mono-cropping system ‘that has left farmers vulnerable to middlemen who dictate prices and crop varieties’.⁴⁸ Clearly, capitalism has served colonial interests in the Jordan Valley by creating economic obstacles to Palestinian permanence on ancestral lands by impeding the preservation of traditional means of livelihood and encouraging a rural exodus that goes hand in hand with the settler colonial project to ethnically cleanse rural areas.

While this destruction of the rural lifestyle and economy of the native population was taking place, Israeli settler colonialism was advancing its project of *de facto* capture of the Jordan Valley. Of the 20 settlements implemented in the West Bank during the first decade of the military occupation, most of them were established in the valley⁴⁹ in violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁵⁰ Most of them appeared on land that was previously devoted to the Israeli military bases implemented in the wake of the Six Day war, therefore forming what Gordon labelled ‘strategic settlements’.⁵¹ Administered as cities by the Israeli authorities, these settlements are under the jurisdiction of the regional and local settlement councils (‘Aryot Hayarden’ and ‘Megilot’ in the Jordan Valley) that are invested with more power over their development (rights to zoning, urban and planning, tax levies) than Palestinian communities.⁵² Mostly relying on farming huge agricultural fields in monoculture, these settlements confiscated an important amount of land from Palestinians and reshaped the landscape of the valley, in an attempt to change the ethnoreligious character

⁴⁸ V Sansour and A Tartir, ‘Palestinian Farmers: A Last Stronghold of Resistance’ (*Al Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network*, 1 July 2014) <<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-farmers-a-last-stronghold-of-resistance/>> accessed 22 June 2022.

⁴⁹ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 187.

⁵⁰ IV Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

⁵¹ N Gordon and M Ram, ‘Ethnic cleansing and the formation of settler colonial geographies’ (2016) 53 *Political Geography* 20.

⁵² M Melon, ‘Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley exposed’ (*Al-Haq*, 31 January 2018) <www.alhaq.org/publications/8057.html> accessed 14 April 2022.

and identity of the land.⁵³ This settler colonial project of ‘unmaking’ Palestine through the transformation of the economy, demography and culture of the Jordan Valley was to be furthered by the Oslo Accords and the greater latitude it allowed for Israeli settler colonialism to pursue its logic of elimination.

1.2.2 Oslo: The establishment of new settler colonial mechanisms of control

The First Intifada made Israeli settler colonialism realise that it needed new mechanisms of control over the occupied Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. One of the main outcomes of the signature of Oslo II in September 1995 has been for the coloniser to outsource the governance of the native population to the PA whose limited civil and security jurisdiction would consist of urban islets without territorial contiguity, labelled as ‘Area A’. While ensuring civil control in the land designated as ‘Area B’ as well, the PA has no power in 60% of the West Bank: ‘Area C’, whose security, planning and zoning and land-related matters remain under full Israeli control. It is crucial to note that the PA has only control over the population, not the territory, which remains in the hands of the Israeli state.⁵⁴ Furthermore, while the welfare, health care and basic services of Palestinians residing in so-called ‘Area C’ are at the charge of the PA, the settler colonial measures and their negative impact on freedom of movement and the development of infrastructure severely constrain this requirement.⁵⁵ Therefore, this so-called ‘peace process’ left no power in the hands of Palestinians over key sovereignty issues such as land, security, natural resources or borders, leaving total latitude for the ‘procession and expansion of the Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine’.⁵⁶

⁵³ G Fields, ‘Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror’ (2010) 42(1) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 63.

⁵⁴ G Giacca and E Nohle, ‘Positive Obligations of the Occupying Power: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories’ (2019) 19 *Human Rights Law Review* 491.

⁵⁵ However, as the Occupying Power, the Israeli state is still responsible for ensuring adequate conditions of life to the occupied population, as will be underlined in the following parts of the dissertation.

⁵⁶ L Meari, ‘Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in “Area C”: the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village’ (2017) 52(3) *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* 506.

In addition, the Paris Protocols signed in 1994 maintain Palestinian economic dependence on the Israeli system.⁵⁷ While imposing a neoliberal framework, the Paris Protocol left Palestinian farmers further unprotected from the outpouring of Zionist agribusiness products on local Palestinian markets. The PA followed this trend by pursuing a modernisation agenda encouraging urbanisation, thus fostering the process of rural exodus and serving the settler colonial expansion scheme. At the same time, Western powers ‘turned aid into the driver of the Palestinian economy’,⁵⁸ therefore reinforcing its dependency while depoliticising the issue of the impossibility of development under settler colonialism. Therefore, the Oslo Accords and the PA have furthered the process of destruction of Palestinian traditional agriculture rather than reversing it.⁵⁹

As Gordon and Ram noted, ethnic cleansing has a spatial dimension that is vital to the definition of violence.⁶⁰ In Palestine since Oslo, ‘Area C’ is the geographical space where the settler colonial mechanisms of dispossession and removal are the most at play. Imagined by Israeli officials, this area contains the most land and natural resources for as few Palestinians as possible (around 180,000-300,000).⁶¹ The invention of this space gave greater latitude for settlement expansion: since Oslo, the number of Israeli settlers has quadrupled, reaching nearly half a million in late 2021 in the West Bank (without considering settlements established in Jerusalem).⁶² It also allowed Israeli authorities to reshape Palestinian communities’ municipal boundaries in order for the built-up areas to correspond to settler colonial plans.⁶³ This process of

⁵⁷ T Seidel, ‘“We Refuse to be Enemies”: Political Geographies of Violence and Resistance in Palestine’ (2017) 12(3) *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 25.

⁵⁸ R El Zein, ‘Developing a Palestinian Resistance Economy through Agricultural Labor’ (2017) 46(3) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7.

⁵⁹ V Sansour and A Tartir, ‘Palestinian Farmers: A Last Stronghold of Resistance’ (*Al Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network*, 1 July 2014) <<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-farmers-a-last-stronghold-of-resistance/>> accessed 22 June 2022.

⁶⁰ N Gordon and M Ram, ‘Ethnic cleansing and the formation of settler colonial geographies’ (2016) 53 *Political Geography* 20.

⁶¹ L Meari, ‘Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in “Area C”: the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village’ (2017) 52 *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* 506.

⁶² European Union, ‘Six-Month Report on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Reporting period July – December 2020’ (*Office of the European Union Representative*, 22 November 2021) <www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EURPTSETTLE_221121.pdf> accessed 23 April 2022.

⁶³ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 302.

rearranging coveted rural areas and separating them from the urban centres can fall within what Fanon calls colonialism's tendency of 'organizing the petrification of the peasantry'.⁶⁴ While the Segregation Wall and the blockade over the Gaza strip completed the separation of Palestinians across their homeland and their division into 'mutable groups with different legal characterization',⁶⁵ the territorial fragmentation of the West Bank through enclaves and checkpoints set in place a separation between rural and urban populations, and most importantly Jordan Valley inhabitants from the rest of Palestine.

Furthermore, the creation of 'Area A', 'Area B' and 'Area C' seems to act as the new spatial organising principle for the continuation of the reasoning that organised the 1948 ethnic cleansing. The same logic – maximum of land for a minimum of native demography – is applied, ordaining therefore in which direction the removal of the native population must go: from the rural 'Area C' much coveted by the Zionist project to the 'ever-smaller territorial footprint' of 'Area A' and 'Area B'.⁶⁶ While the PA modernisation agenda and its systematic incentive for urbanisation serve this spatial frame of removal, the coercive environment created by the Israeli system in 'Area C' forces rural Palestinians to relocate to the urban enclaves ruled by the PA, as even recognised by mainstream non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations.⁶⁷ This process of removal from 'Area C' to 'Area A' and 'Area B' takes a particularly coercive form in the Jordan Valley, as I demonstrated above that this territory lies at the core of the Zionist imaginary of the frontier.⁶⁸ In consequence, in the Jordan Valley, the mechanisms for removal act as impediments to every aspect of Palestinian life, with the weaponisation of basic human

⁶⁴ F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press 1963) 65.

⁶⁵ A Alazzeh, 'Seeking popular participation: nostalgia for the first intifada in the West Bank' (2015) 5(3) *Settler Colonial Studies* 251.

⁶⁶ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 316-17.

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, 'A Threshold Crossed, Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution' (*Human Rights Watch*, 27 April 2021) 185 <www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution> accessed 3 March 2022; Human Rights Council, 'Report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem' (7 February 2013) A/HCR/22/63 107.

⁶⁸ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

rights at the core of the settler colonial strategy. Indeed, the methods of removal used by Israeli settler colonialism to evict Palestinians from ‘Area C’ do not take the form of a direct removal through a timebound episode of military violence, but consist of the establishment of a coercive environment targeting every detail of Palestinians’ lives and therefore effectively forcing people out of their ancestral lands.

1.2.3 Removal as an organising principle in the Jordan Valley

Here, I contend that the Zionist objective of incremental ethnic cleansing in ‘Area C’, and in particular in the Jordan Valley, is developed through a range of policies and practices whose common ultimate goal is to grab lands for the settler colonial project while dispossessing Palestinians, rendering their lives unsustainable and therefore pushing them to leave the area. Indeed, in the Jordan Valley, there are approximately 55,000 Palestinians while 12,700 settlers were established there, according to the PLO.⁶⁹ Israeli settler colonialism’s process of elimination is therefore incomplete, and the use of a whole repertoire of policies and practices is put in place to pursue incremental ethnic cleansing.

01 —Denial of rights to land, territorial confiscation and obstacles to Palestinian access

As indigenous peasants, Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley should enjoy a well-established special protection regime enshrined in the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 and the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which guarantee a ‘right to land’ and establish interrelated rights and state obligations concerning these lands.⁷⁰ However, from 1967 until now, Israeli settler colonialism has developed a range of policies in order to deprive them of their lands. According to the PLO, the settlers and soldiers control about 95%

⁶⁹ S Erakat, ‘Settlements expansion in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea Areas is part of the implementation of the annexation, theft and settlements plan (the theft of the century)’ (*PLO*, 24 March 2020) <www.plo.ps/en/article/169/> accessed 22 June 2022.

⁷⁰ ILO, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (adopted 27 June 1989, entered into force 5 September 1991) C169 arts 13-19; Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (adopted 13 September 2007 UNGA Res 61 295 (UNDRIP) art 26.

of the land in the Jordan Valley.⁷¹ Circumventing article 43 of the Hague Regulations which compels the Occupying Power to respect the laws of the territory it occupies,⁷² Israeli authorities have deployed legal instruments to advance settler colonial expansion.

To reassign Palestinian land as property of the Israeli state, the settler colonial system first used the Absentee Property Law to seize the possessions of the 1967 refugees, therefore appropriating roughly 8% of the West Bank – mostly in the Jordan Valley area.⁷³ Lands held by the Jordanian government, also mainly located in the valley and the Dead Sea areas, were similarly appropriated right after the Six Day War.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the Israeli authorities stopped the process of land survey that had been initiated by the British and pursued by the Jordanians. Wael Abdul Raheem, a Palestinian lawyer from the Jerusalem Legal Aid & Human Rights Center (JLAC), underlined that this process ‘left lands with unclear property or ownership documents’ and is still ‘influenc[ing] the current picture of property situation and forcible transfer cases in Palestine, including in the Jordan Valley’.⁷⁵ Indeed, the halt in land registration provided an appropriate basis for the application of the widespread ‘state land’ policy that emerged in 1979 to allow the seizure of ‘unassigned’ or ‘uncultivated’ land.⁷⁶ Most of the land designated as ‘state land’ is located in the Jordan Valley.⁷⁷ While article 46 of the Hague Regulations prohibits the confiscation of private property,⁷⁸ Jordan Valley Palestinians are witnessing an extensive capture of their lands and a denial of their property rights in complete impunity since 1967.

⁷¹ S Erakat, ‘Settlements expansion in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea Areas is part of the implementation of the annexation, theft and settlements plan (the theft of the century)’ (*PLO*, 24 March 2020) <www.plo.ps/en/article/169/> accessed 22 June 2022.

⁷² IV Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (The Hague, 18 October 1907).

⁷³ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 288.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

⁷⁶ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 292-93.

⁷⁷ M Melon, ‘Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley exposed’ (*Al-Haq*, 31 January 2018) <www.alhaq.org/publications/8057.html> accessed 14 April 2022.

⁷⁸ IV Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (The Hague, 18 October 1907).

Furthermore, many policies and practices are restricting Palestinian access to lands that they own or use since ancestral times. While most settlements in the Jordan Valley are built on land that has been appropriated through the legal processes described above, their territorial footprint, including their surroundings, constitute vast areas inaccessible to Palestinians. In addition, access to agricultural fields near confiscated land as well as grazing areas is severely curtailed by settler violence.⁷⁹ Most importantly, the Jordan Valley witnesses a particularly harsh policy in terms of access denial through the designation of vast territories as closed military areas or firing zone areas. While Palestinian presence is forbidden within these zones, many have been declared over local communities, therefore putting them at high risk of forced displacement as attested by AA, a 50-year-old Palestinian from Humsa, a community that has been massively evicted over the course of the years 2020-2021:

They mention the whole area as a closed military firing zone area. You can see the blocks in front of the road. But settlers can come to this area, building outposts. This law is just for us. This is part of the challenges: Israelis create the area, give it a different name, just to impose more challenges for the families and lessen their chances to live there.⁸⁰

Whereas purportedly created for security reasons and military training, in 80% of the cases, no training is taking place in these zones.⁸¹ On the other hand, the possibility for communities living at risk of forced displacement within these closed military areas to perform legal actions against their evictions is severely impeded, as noted by Wael Abdul Raheem:

⁷⁹ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 303.

⁸⁰ Interview with AA (Humsa, 13 May 2022).

⁸¹ M Melon, 'Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley exposed' (*Al-Haq*, 31 January 2018) <www.alhaq.org/publications/8057.html> accessed 14 April 2022.

There, they can simply restrict any Palestinian activity (...) And I can say clearly, based on my experience in the military courts here in the West Bank, that the cases we adopt in such areas are the most difficult, the most challenging, and [dis-
pose of] the shortest period of time where we can provide legal protection – in comparison to other areas in general.⁸²

In addition, Israeli settler colonialism produces other policies to restrict Palestinian access and cultivation in the Jordan Valley through the designation of large sections as natural reserves. These areas, often paradoxically overlapping with closed military areas, cover with the latter over 60% of the Jordan Valley.⁸³ This provision forbids Palestinian residential, agricultural and grazing activities.⁸⁴ This denial of access and use of lands that are determinant for rural Palestinian livelihood is combined with impediments to Palestinian freedom of movement, as the Jordan Valley is separated from the rest of the West Bank by many movement obstacles, including checkpoints on four of the five access roads, in violation of article 12(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁸⁵

02 –The weaponisation of the right to access water

The human right to water, enshrined in articles 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),⁸⁶ is also severely restricted in the case of the Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley. Pursuing its confiscation of water resources in the wake of the 1967 war, Israeli settler colonialism organised the very restricted rationing of Palestinian rural communities while redirecting the confiscated water to its illegal settlements. In the valley, while the state-owned water company Mekorot sells a limited amount of water to certain localities (such

⁸² Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

⁸³ M Melon, 'Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley exposed' (*Al-Haq*, 31 January 2018) <www.alhaq.org/publications/8057.html> accessed 14 April 2022.

⁸⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'Settlement expansion around an Israeli-declared "nature reserve"', *The Monthly Humanitarian Bulletin* (OCHA, 31 October 2014) <www.ochaopt.org/content/settlement-expansion-around-israeli-declared-nature-reserve> accessed 23 April 2022.

⁸⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976) 999 UNTS 171 (ICCPR).

⁸⁶ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 993 UNTS 3 (ICESCR); UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 'General Comment 15: The Right to Water' (2003) E/C/12/2000/5 3.

as Bardala, Kardala or Ein el Beida), most of the villages, especially small Bedouin communities, are deprived of any kind of water infrastructure and have no choice but to buy tanked water. These Palestinians have to travel to the nearest 'Area A' or 'Area B', sometimes crossing checkpoints, to fill their tanks at a high price, thus disbursing as much as half of a monthly income for certain families.⁸⁷ This situation harshly limits the important agricultural potential of the valley, as attested by EZ, a 21-year-old farmer from Bardala:

There used to be a lot of families – around 200 families – who came from Jenin, Aqaba village, Jericho, Tubas, to work in Bardala village. They were renting a land, they had water, and they could plant vegetables and have a good project. But now you cannot find 200 families doing that, only about 70. Because the water problem is very limiting. I think that in the coming years there will be less families coming from outside to work here.⁸⁸

In addition, the water that is extracted from Palestinian land is redirected to the settlements implanted in the valley, irrigating their intensive agricultural fields directed towards export. The settler population consumes at least four times more than average Palestinians, while Bedouin communities are left with 20 litres per person per day.⁸⁹ Moreover, the settler colonial authorities impose a strict oversight system, with Mekorot officials visiting regularly the few accessible water resources in the area in order to 'control how Palestinians use the water'.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Amnesty International, 'The Occupation of Water' (*Amnesty International*, 29 November 2017) <www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/> accessed 14 April 2022.

⁸⁸ Interview with EZ (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

⁸⁹ Amnesty International, 'The Occupation of Water' (*Amnesty International*, 29 November 2017) <www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/> accessed 14 April 2022.

⁹⁰ Interview with RL (Bardala, 23 May 2022).

03 —Right to housing, hindrances on Palestinian natural expansion and denial of education

Discrimination is also wide in the Jordan Valley's planning and zoning framework. The same military order prevents Palestinian village councils from issuing building permits while establishing a Settlement Subcommittee empowered with the capacity of ordaining planning and zoning in 'Area C'.⁹¹ In the Jordan Valley, this situation resulted in a lack of sufficient educational facilities for all children, as remote communities cannot build schools or kindergartens and must send their children to the overcrowded schools of other villages, triggering the highest illiteracy rate in the West Bank.⁹² Many children drop school because secondary or high school facilities are too far away. In addition, the Israeli army does not hesitate to destroy schools lacking permits, in violation of article 56 of the Hague Regulations⁹³ and article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In violating Palestinian children's right to education (article 13 of the ICESCR), Israeli settler colonialism creates an additional piece of a coercive environment pushing for removal, which disproportionately affects young couples' decision to remain in their ancestral communities.⁹⁴

In addition, the incremental ethnic cleansing implemented in 'Area C' relies heavily on the practice of home demolitions. Under the pretext of lacking permits for construction, the Israeli army regularly performs these demolitions, which particularly increased within the last years. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), between January 2009 and December 2022, 2,393 structures were demolished in the Jordan Valley, forcibly transferring 3,141 people.⁹⁵ As Wael Abdul Raheem attests, this is partly due to the fact that 'closed military areas are the priority in the demolition agenda all the time.

⁹¹ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 289.

⁹² Stop the Wall, 'Report - Denial of education: An Israeli apartheid tool to annex the Jordan Valley' (*Stop the Wall*, April 2021) <www.stophthewall.org/right2exist/denial-of-education-an-israeli-apartheid-tool-to-colonize-the-jordan-valley/> accessed 14 April 2022.

⁹³ IV Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (The Hague, 18 October 1907).

⁹⁴ OCHA, 'Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank' (*OCHA*, 1 August 2011) <www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-200453/> accessed 1 March 2022.

⁹⁵ These numbers concern the total in Tubas and Jericho governorates. From OCHA, 'Data on Demolition and Displacement in the West Bank' <www.ochaopt.org/data/demolition> (*OCHA*) accessed 29 June 2023.

That's why we see – in Al Hadidiya, in the North of the Jordan Valley, in Humsa – that they repeatedly conduct demolitions against Palestinians there'.⁹⁶ Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that home demolitions are followed by a protracted period of displacement for Palestinians, with over half of families taking more than two years to build or find their next permanent residence.⁹⁷ Under this threat, it is very hard for communities to develop and pursue their natural expansion, which leads them to live in a precarious state as 'development plans (...) in effect, have been frozen for over forty years'.⁹⁸ While violating Palestinians' human right to adequate housing (article 11 of the ICESCR), the Israeli state breaches articles 49 and 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting the destruction of houses. The impossibility to build is a major piece of the coercive structure for native removal built by the settler colonial power, as it practically impedes Palestinians' ability to set the material structure (houses, schools, or any public use facility) supporting the establishment of new families in local communities.

04 — Safety on the land: Quotidian violence as a means of forcible displacement

The settler colonial system added to its range of legalised actions aiming to create a coercive environment for Palestinians the policy of military training exercises in the Jordan Valley. On a regular basis, the Israeli army temporarily displaces certain targeted communities and destroys their agricultural fields under the pretext that these villages are located in a closed military area, in violation of article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This policy is a death threat for the targeted communities, as explained by MJ, a member of the Ibziq local council: 'Three persons were killed from the Israeli mines and bullet (...) They enter, make army exercises, but they leave this kind of mines with the goal to kill

⁹⁶ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

⁹⁷ Palestinian Counselling Center, Save the Children UK and Welfare Association, 'Broken Homes: Addressing the Impact of House Demolitions on Palestinian Children & Families' (2009) 23 <<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/1497.pdf>> accessed 14 April 2022.

⁹⁸ K Khalil, 'Attempts to prevent displacement in the occupied Palestinian territories' (2012) 41 *Forced Migration Review* 36.

the Palestinians who live in the area. Some people are killed, and a lot are injured, from Ibziq'.⁹⁹ In addition, these mines are a threat to all the shepherds living around these targeted communities, as they are left in land used by Palestinians as grazing areas.

In addition to military violence, physical assaults, acts of intimidation or harassment, damage to private property, denied access to land and attacks on the means of livelihood are common practices for Israeli settlers. Settler violence as well as army violence is hindering every aspect of the life of Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley, from going to school to the ability to work in one's field or to be safe at home. Overall, this coercive environment created by the settler colonial system, where the logic of elimination acts as an organising principle, hinders the safety of Palestinian communities in every aspect, as RA, a 28-year-old mother from Mak-hul, expresses: 'Even our house is not a safe house to protect our family, our children. We don't really have a house where we could be safe from anything around. From animals, from soldiers, from settlers. This doesn't give a nice image for the future'.¹⁰⁰

Several academics analysed the cumulative effects of policies and practices that constitute the 'prolonged, multi-generational assault' of settler colonialism against Indigenous people.¹⁰¹ In the Jordan Valley, it is clear that several processes overlap – land and natural resources dispossession, deprivation of public services, structural socio-economic inequity, de-development – to support the logic of elimination. These processes, such as the closed military policy and its associated practices for example, are not only an impediment to access land but have combined repercussions on the rights to housing, to work, to access water, etc. Years after years, Israeli settler colonialism deploys a greater number of new policies and practices against Palestinian communities. A particularly important factor to achieve the Zionist prospect of removal is the impact of the cumulation of these settler colonial policies and practices on the Palestinians' ability to work. Indeed, this combination – denial of access to lands, restrictions on

⁹⁹ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with RA (Mak-hul, 24 April 2022).

¹⁰¹ P Wakeham, 'The Slow Violence of Settler Colonialism: Genocide, Attrition, and the Long Emergency of Invasion' (2022) 24(3) *Journal of Genocide Research* 337; M Shqair, 'Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley' (2022) 2 *Transactions of the Jewish National Fund* 4.

water, interdiction to build structures, settler violence – results in the reduction of agricultural and grazing lands, impeding Palestinian means of livelihood and self-reliance. The centrality of this issue has been highlighted by AS: ‘The whole Israeli policies, organisations, councils, governments, are working on just one policy: to destroy our agribusiness and our children agribusiness, to be sure that they can put us under control’.¹⁰² Without their agricultural activity, Jordan Valley Palestinians are not able to secure self-reliance and generate a sufficient income to stay on their ancestral lands. They might go work in the Israeli settlements or relocate to urban localities or to other parts of the West Bank.¹⁰³ As underlined by Al Haq, the decision to leave the valley is not informed by a genuine choice but results from the coercive environment created by Israeli settler colonialism and thus amounts to forcible displacement.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, this entails another violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention that prohibits the forcible transfer of protected persons. In consequence, this ‘prolonged, multi-generational assault’ constitutes an attempt from Israeli settler colonialism to incrementally complete the process of ethnic cleansing it began in the valley in 1967.

¹⁰² Interview with AS (Al-Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹⁰³ OCHA, ‘Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank’ (OCHA, 1 August 2011) <www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-200453/> accessed 1 March 2022.

¹⁰⁴ M Melon, ‘Settling Area C: The Jordan Valley exposed’ (*Al-Haq*, 31 January 2018) <www.alhaq.org/publications/8057.html> accessed 14 April 2022.

2. The confrontational engagement between the repertoire of settler colonial strategies and the repertoire of everyday forms of resistance

Any settler colonial endeavour is incomplete.¹⁰⁵ In Wolfe's 'logic of elimination', elimination is an intention – once it is achieved, then the settler colonial practices of the state can vanish. What interests us is that the incompleteness of the settler colonial project derives mainly from the presence – and therefore, the resistance – of the indigenous people on the land coveted or controlled by the colonisers. As highlighted by Svirsky, 'explaining strategic and tactical changes in the continuing implementation of elimination' cannot be limited to the settler's 'determination to eliminate (...) The Zionist capacity has always had to renew itself to cope with (...) the forms of Palestinian resistance'.¹⁰⁶ In the Jordan Valley, while most of the native population has been driven out by Zionist forces during the 1967 ethnic cleansing, Palestinians still outnumber Israeli settlers. Therefore, to complete its logic of elimination in this area it particularly covets, the settler colonial system is adopting a range of strategies that are faced by Palestinian's everyday forms of resistance. When a settler colonial policy or practice aiming for removal proves itself ineffective due to this resistance, the coloniser has to adapt his strategy. Both repertoires – the one of the colonisers and the one of the actors of resistance – thus enter into a confrontational engagement.

This chapter looks at how the changing settler colonial policies and practices seeking to uproot Palestinians affect their different methods of everyday resistance. As will be demonstrated in the first part, this confrontational engagement between the settler colonial repertoire of strategies and the repertoire of sumud

¹⁰⁵ M Svirsky, 'Resistance is a structure not an event' (2016) 7(1) *Settler Colonial Studies* 19.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

is driven by an ‘action-reaction pattern’ that informs transformations in the ways Palestinians resist on their lands. While this chapter will be dedicated mainly to the presentation of this reactional framework, it is not to say that Palestinian sumud limits itself to mere reactions to the settler colonial forms of oppression; indeed, other patterns will be tackled in the following chapters. On the other hand, the settler colonial system poses several obstacles to resistance that shape the available options for sumud. Building on Scott’s analysis of the ‘boundary markers [that] serve to inhibit certain forms of open protest and defiance’,¹⁰⁷ I will explore how the settler colonial power expends these boundaries to impede the simplest forms of steadfastness.

2.1 Changes in colonial measures and strategies as the main variable for transformations of the forms of sumud

2.1.1 The action-reaction pattern, a trigger of transformations within repertoires of actions

Within the historical and geographical scope of Palestine and beyond, the interplay between the settler colonial repertoire of violence and the repertoire of actions of resistance has been highlighted within the academic literature.¹⁰⁸ Yet, at smaller scales, this confrontational engagement between the logic of elimination and the forms of resistance that are waged against it is taking a very direct, reactional form. While looking at the empirical findings analysed below, I noticed that this structural relationship between the coloniser and the colonised repertoires of strategies and actions is driven by what will be called here an ‘action-reaction pattern’, that was widely represented throughout our interviews with Jordan Valley Palestinians, broadly framed as following: ‘If they destroy, we will build. They cut a tree; we plant a tree’.¹⁰⁹ This confrontational engagement is not limited to systematic rebuilding and replanting but expands to a wider repertoire of actions. Indeed, the action-reaction pattern can be broadly described as the

¹⁰⁷ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 277.

¹⁰⁸ N Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation* (University of California Press 2008); F Salem, ‘Palestinian Daily Sumud to Confront Israeli Settler Violence in Area C: Al-Qasra Village as a Case Study’ (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 20 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650378> accessed 22 June 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with SH (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

implementation of a new settler colonial strategy; followed by a reaction of Palestinian communities against this new policy or practice; which might be followed again by an adaptation from the Israeli settler colonial system. As I will explain below, this reactional pattern does not necessarily take a linear form but often deploys in a multidimensional way. Before presenting in detail the variety of tactics and strategies employed by Palestinians within this confrontational engagement, I have to demonstrate how this reactional pattern triggers both changes in settler colonial practices and transformations of the forms of sumud.

A relevant illustration of the transformational capacity of this confrontational engagement in the changes that the settler colonial system undertook since Oslo can be found within its home demolition policy in the Jordan Valley, as well as in the transformations in the reactions of Palestinians facing these changes. Although the home demolition policy has been performed by the Israeli army throughout its 55-year occupation of the West Bank, several Jordan Valley inhabitants reported that this policy started in 1997 in their area, thus underlining the link between the rise of this settler colonial measure and the historical period opened by the Oslo process.¹¹⁰ Palestinians clearly see this policy as an adaptation from the colonial part to the persistent steadfastness of Palestinians, as AS highlighted: 'Later, in 1997, they saw that this [all the policies and practices implemented since 1967 against Palestinians] was not working enough to displace people outside, so they created the policy of home demolition'.¹¹¹ In the face of the incompleteness of its project of elimination, the settler colonial system decided to accelerate. However, Palestinians recount that in most cases they were able to rebuild their houses or tents after these demolitions started to occur. Therefore, the Israeli army progressively adjusted its strategy to be sure that 'the structures, or the house they had destroyed, would not be built again. Because when they destroyed it, they had to come back, come back, come back, to destroy it again and again'.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022); Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

In the face of this reaction of systematic rebuilding after repetitive demolitions, the settler colonial power adapted to this expression of Palestinian steadfastness by associating a new practice with the closed military area policy. This change occurred at the beginning of the 2010s, as recounted by RL, an activist from Bardala:

The house demolition, they started it in 1997, but in 2010 they made it harder and more difficult. How? From 1997 to 2010, they were just coming to destroy the tents – two tents, four tents, and then the soldiers would go back to their military bases, and it was easier to build it again. But later they started to declare more areas as closed military firing zones and install military jeeps and checkpoints to be sure that no one would be allowed to enter.¹¹³

Therefore, while the declaration of vast areas in the valley as closed military zones started after 1967, the Israeli settler colonial system adopted access restrictions following home demolitions with the goal to alleviate the ‘efficiency’ of its operations of displacement. Indeed, preventing access to a village that suffered home demolitions makes it more difficult for the inhabitants to rebuild their homes, as the affected families need to enter building materials, as underlined by the head of Ibziq community:

When soldiers come to destroy a house, or when they start army exercises or training, they close the whole roads to access Ibziq. There are four roads that they close, which means no one can enter or exit (...) It is entering the materials which is the hardest part. Not to build the tent, but to enter the community with this material – this is really hard.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, denying access to the affected communities also worsens the impact of the Israeli army’s use of destruction of food items and water tanks while pursuing home demolitions. While international organisations used to bring humanitarian material to victims of this policy to allow them to survive, the pretext

¹¹³ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹¹⁴ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

of the closed military area started to be used by Israeli authorities to deny them access to the communities, making it more difficult for the affected Palestinians to survive on their lands after losing their homes, food supplies and water items.

In response to this new practice within the repertoire of settler colonial strategies, Palestinians reacted with several tactics, often resorting to discrete actions. In reaction, the Israeli settler colonial system adapted through the practice of destruction or confiscation of much-needed materials for survival, issuing fines for retrieval ‘sometimes more expensive than the price of the confiscated tools’.¹¹⁵ RL highlights these changes in the settler colonial repertoire: ‘In 2011 they started first to confiscate any materials used for structure and building (...) Later they started to confiscate the water tanks, or the trucks that families use to bring water from “Area A” to “Area C”’.¹¹⁶ Jordan Valley activists directly link this practice of confiscation of water and electricity equipment driven from the settler colonial will to improve the efficiency of displacement through home demolitions to the practice of confiscation of agricultural material that developed particularly after 2018:

Before they were just preventing us from building structures. But during the last four years, they started a new strategy which is to confiscate the truck machines of the farmers, materials, plants, seeds, trees – anything we use to plant our fields, they started to confiscate them.¹¹⁷

This example allowed us to illustrate the transformations that occur within this action-reaction pattern that drives the confrontational engagement between the coloniser and the colonised repertoires of action. From home demolition to access restriction and confiscations using the closed military areas as a pretext, the changes in Israeli settler colonial policies and practices are informed by the resistance and persistence of Palestinians on their lands; in parallel, these adaptations from the coloniser part induce new strategies of resistance.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

¹¹⁶ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

2.1.2 A variety of forms of sumud within the action reaction pattern

In the Jordan Valley, Palestinians deployed a variety of actions in reaction to the changing settler colonial policies that fall within the framework of everyday resistance. This part will propose a typology of these forms of sumud. While I will look at these practices from the perspective of the action reaction pattern described above, it is important to recall that the variety of forms of everyday resistance underlined below can also be employed by Palestinians when following other patterns of resistance. Indeed, Palestinian sumud in the Jordan Valley is not limited to a mere reaction to the coercive environment set by the coloniser; in the following chapters, we will encounter again these tactics of sumud under other pro-active patterns aiming at developing and strengthening the community's steadfastness. On the other hand, the repertoire of action employed within a reactional frame can also take an anticipation form.

In addition, I should locate this confrontational engagement within the larger context of the struggle over land that is taking place in the Jordan Valley. Indeed, it is crucial to keep in mind that this action reaction pattern and the two repertoires of action – the one of the coloniser and the one of the colonised – are structurally shaped by the opposite political goals that they underlie. On the one hand, policies and practices used by the settler colonial system serve its logic of elimination, as the removal of the native and the prospect of 'unmak[ing] of Palestine as Palestinian' and 'redeem[ing] at Jewish' are at the core of the Zionist project in the Jordan Valley.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, the Palestinian repertoire of action is driven by the imperative of existence on the land to resist Zionist incremental ethnic cleansing.

¹¹⁸ G Fields, 'Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror' (2010) 42(1) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 63.

01 — Systematic reconstruction and reparation

The most common and evident form of sumud when looking at the frame of reaction against the settler colonial regime of oppression and dispossession is the systematic reconstruction and reparation performed by Palestinians when facing any form of destruction undertaken with the objective to uproot them. Jordan Valley inhabitants clearly frame this practice as a quotidian act of resistance:

The whole strategy and way to stay and resist is that each time they destroy a house, in the same night, we come back and build the house again. The last home demolition was for five families – [the Israeli soldiers] destroyed it many times in one month. And each time they destroyed, the family was coming back and bringing more tents and rebuilding it.¹¹⁹

This tactic of sumud is not limited to homes and structures, but to any material facing destruction perpetrated by the coloniser. In particular, farming in agricultural areas that are at risk of capture by Israeli settlers also requires the use of this practice, as highlighted by AH, a young farmer from Al Auja:

One of the youth was using the tractor to dig in the field. The soldiers came and shot at the machine, it broke the tractor, and the guy ran away. After two hours, when the soldiers left, we returned back, fixed the tractor and continued working again.¹²⁰

This account highlights that this form of sumud, far from being just a mechanism of survival, is undoubtedly a confrontational act of resistance against the coloniser. Indeed, in AH's account, Palestinian peasants are knowingly challenging the settler colonial domination. The fact that they are waiting for safer times to work – the departure of the soldiers – shows that they are deliberately pursuing an agricultural activity against the will of the coloniser in an area that is at risk of settler colonial confiscation.

¹¹⁹ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

¹²⁰ Interview with AH (Al Auja, 9 May 2022).

While, in a class struggle context, Scott highlighted that most everyday resistance would take a ‘disguised’ form,¹²¹ there is no such thing as ‘overt compliance’ behind the practice of systematic reconstruction and reparation undertaken by Palestinians. The soldier and the settler are witnessing materially and openly the undoing of their oppressive practices. While the settler colonial system tries to incrementally “unmake” Palestine as Palestinian¹²² through destruction, Palestinians overtly ‘remake’ Palestine through reconstruction. There is no anonymity: the author of the reconstruction is the family that owned the house, the peasant that cultivated the field. Through the open use of this everyday form of sumud, Palestinians are making it clear to the coloniser that they are not going anywhere.

02 —Documentation and the use of legal procedures for ‘chasing time’

As described in the previous chapter, Israeli settler colonialism doted its oppressive policies with a legal cover, imposing legal challenges to Palestinians that ‘transformed courtrooms into key sites of land defense’.¹²³ In fact, some academics recognised the practice of using the Israeli legal system to protect one’s land or house as a form of resistance, sometimes labelling it as ‘polemical resistance’.¹²⁴

Indeed, launching legal procedures in the coloniser’s courts cannot be overlooked when researching the practices that allow Palestinians to stay on their land. It is widely used by rural Palestinians living in ‘Area C’ to challenge the demolition orders that rhythm the process of destructing Palestinian buildings. There are three phases in this legal battle: usually, directly after receiving the first demolition order – the ‘stop work order’ – Palestinians would hire a lawyer to challenge the order in Israeli courts. In consequence, they would receive a second order, the ‘one week order’, ‘which gives one extra week for the owner to object or raise any argument against the stop work order’.¹²⁵ If he does not meet

¹²¹ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 241.

¹²² G Fields, ‘Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror’ (2010) 42(1) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 63.

¹²³ P Kohlbry, ‘Owning the Homeland: Property, Markets, and Land Defense in the West Bank’ (2018) 47(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30.

¹²⁴ M Darweish and A Rigby, *Popular Protest in Palestine, The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (Pluto Press 2015) 75-76.

¹²⁵ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

this deadline, the process enters the third phase with the issuance of the final demolition order, ‘the three days order’, ‘which is one of the most dangerous orders that can be issued against buildings in ‘Area C’ (as) it is not easy for a lawyer (...) to challenge it legally’.¹²⁶ The strategy pursued by Palestinian lawyers consists mainly in exceeding all remedies to freeze the legal process of demolition, as it is extremely rare that they can obtain a cancellation of the demolition order, as described by JLAC lawyer Wael Abdul Raheem: ‘this succeeds in general – somehow we have cases that lasted for years – two years, fifteen years – based on this strategy that we call “chasing time”’.¹²⁷ While mostly conducted in the settler colonial courts, this struggle of Palestinian lawyers to extend to the maximum the length of legal procedures to prevent the immediate demolition of the targeted structures is relying on actions conducted on the ground, as highlighted below.

While engaging in these legal procedures, Palestinians have to prove their ownership of the land on which the demolition order has been issued. There are two kinds of configurations of private property that result from the Ottoman, British and Jordanian processes of official land registration through tax surveys: the secure *tabu* land, in which borders and chain of ownership are officially recorded, and the insecure *malিয়া* land, which is not considered having enough information in tax documents to establish legal ownership.¹²⁸ In the Jordan Valley, and particularly in the North, there is an important amount of *tabu* land, as emphasised by RL: ‘Everything from Hamra to the North is *tabu* land, everyone has the documents from their grandfather from Jordanian and Ottoman times’.¹²⁹ Therefore, when they receive demolition orders, local inhabitants have the possibility to engage in this lengthy legal procedure as their *tabu* ownership gives them some chances for success.

Legal actions can be genuine tools for strengthening the steadfastness of rural communities. In some cases, Jordan Valley communities truly appropriated this technique:

¹²⁶ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ P Kohlbry, ‘Owning the Homeland: Property, Markets, and Land Defense in the West Bank’ (2018) 47(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30.

¹²⁹ Interview with RL (Bardala, 19 April 2022).

We asked the lawyer to bring the official documents of the family who owns the land to the Israeli office. Because we know that as we built a tent, they will come and give an order. And to go to the Israeli court, we should have the agreement with us ready, signed by the owner, a professional document that is mentioning who is owning the land (...) When the Israeli soldiers gave the demolition order, [the lawyer] went directly to the office, he already had all the documents with him.¹³⁰

In this account from RL, a Jordan Valley activist, legal actions cannot be considered as just a counter mechanism whose achievement is outsourced to lawyers from other areas. Indeed, establishing legal property when undertaking the construction of a structure can necessitate initiatives, anticipation and knowledge of the Israeli law from local inhabitants. Therefore, it can be considered a practice used by local inhabitants to challenge the settler colonial building restrictions.

However, a number of scholars advised not to be too prompt in labelling as resistance any legal land protection activity,¹³¹ especially given that in this case I am looking at practices of reclaiming a property title inherited from an individualised private ownership system established by British colonisation through the Israeli settler colonial judicial system. They ask the question of whether indigenous resistance should rely on the laws that drive settler expansion or if it should bluntly reject the coloniser's law and property system as a whole.¹³² First, it must be underlined that while Jordan Valley Palestinians vindicate their property titles in Israeli courts, it doesn't mean that they find any legitimacy within the coloniser's judicial system, as they clearly see the Israeli law as an instrument for the settler colonial domination and logic of elimination: 'This [military area] law is just for us. This is part of the challenges: Israelis create the area, give it a different name, just to impose more challenges for the families and lesser their chances to live here'.¹³³

¹³⁰ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹³¹ N Alkhalili, 'Protection from Below: On Waqf between Theft and Morality' (2017) 70 *Jerusalem Quarterly* 62, 71.

¹³² P Kohlbray, 'Owning the Homeland: Property, Markets, and Land Defense in the West Bank' (2018) 47(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30.

¹³³ Interview with AA (Humsa, 13 May 2022).

Therefore, while this question of using mechanisms created by the settler colonial power to support sumud could be seen as an illustration of Scott's account of the need for symbolic conformity underlying certain acts of everyday resistance,¹³⁴ I argue that the practice of resorting to legal means cannot be seen as a form of compliance in the Palestinian case. Indeed, these judicial activities must be understood in the context of a rural area struggling to maintain Palestinian presence in the face of a settler colonial logic of elimination. In such a situation, Palestinians must resort to any means that can help them to stay on the land, even if these means are the coloniser's own instruments. As Fanon demonstrated, while the coloniser's techniques are usually resisted and rejected by the colonised population, these same techniques can be used when serving the purpose of resistance.¹³⁵

03 —Overt boycott

While I had little empirical data about boycott practices throughout our interviews, there were nonetheless accounts of interest relating to concerted and organised refusal of charges imposed by the PA. These acts of everyday resistance are not directly directed against the settler colonial system; however, they do challenge a structure of power linked with the PA and its lack of support for rural communities' steadfastness. In consequence, and as they relate to securing critical resources for Palestinians to resist removal, this example of boycott is a contestation of both the PA and the settler colonial regime's coercive policies. Heneiti already noted that the villages of Al Jiftlik, Bardala and Fasayel 'refused to pay for electricity consumption, which is considered a fundamental issue of Palestinian survival and presence in the Jordan Valley'.¹³⁶ Our empirical findings allow for considering the level of openness as well as the meanings and intentions behind this form of resistance in the case of Bardala.

First, boycotting electricity charges in the Jordan Valley is rendered possible by the capacity of the inhabitants to bypass the card system, as explained by RL, an activist from Bardala: 'If they ask us to pay more, the whole village throws their card system

¹³⁴ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 33.

¹³⁵ F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 8-9.

¹³⁶ A Heneiti, 'Patterns of Popular Survival in the Jordan Valley' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 28 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650417> accessed 22 June 2022.

away and refuses (...) We can just throw away the card, we know how to fix [our electric system] from outside to connect it to the system directly'.¹³⁷ Compared with Scott's findings regarding boycott, I notice again striking differences regarding the level of openness of the act. While Scott's peasants 'let it be known through intermediaries',¹³⁸ Palestinian dissatisfaction regarding the price of electricity is blatantly exposed to the local authorities: 'We take the card system, and we throw it in the council. And we tell them that we are not going to pay. The community came to the council and threw their cards'.¹³⁹ The boycott by Palestinians does not borrow disguised forms to bring the contestation to the dominant structure; it could not be labelled as cautious resistance. On the contrary, the nature of the act, as described by Bardala inhabitants, is deliberately and overtly defiant in its contestation of the hierarchy of power.

Moreover, the recurrent use of boycott by Bardala inhabitants is not only motivated by the necessity to meet the electricity and financial needs of the community; it also entails a firm contestation of the structure of power that overlooks the local council, from the role of the PA to the grip of the settler colonial system over the energy production:

The whole electricity, even for 'Area A', is coming from Israel (...) The government and the council tried to bring a peace [for the electricity] and to arrest some people who organised this unity (...) And if you look at the whole community, what support do we receive to resist? It is nothing. Even our pipeline, it was built by the farmers and the activists.¹⁴⁰

This account shows a breach in the social contract between the community and the Palestinian authorities, understood as both the local council and the PA. Indeed, boycotting electricity is an expression of the strong discontent from Jordan Valley communities towards the incapacity of the PA to provide public services to 'Area C' communities and its lack of support for Palestinian sumud in these areas that are the most impacted by the coercive environment set by the settler colonial power.

¹³⁷ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹³⁸ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 250.

¹³⁹ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

04 —Discrete action

Discrete actions are needed in almost every aspect of life to survive under settler colonial rule and its restrictions on all means of livelihood for Palestinian communities in the Jordan Valley. What defines this category is the necessity for secrecy or discretion in order for the outcome of the action to persist in the long term. The discrete nature of the action is not only due to fear of repression, but rather it is a mandatory component for the objective of the action to be met.

Jordan Valley inhabitants highlighted the need to resort to discrete actions to conduct agricultural work in lands at risk of confiscation, especially areas that the Israeli settler colonial system aims to appropriate through the state land policy, using the pretext of lack of cultivation. In consequence, in these fields, Palestinian agricultural work is relentlessly constrained by soldiers' and settlers' harassment. In reaction, local farmers time the moment to work on their fields at times where the arrival of the military will be unlikely to protect their lands from settler colonial expansion. AH recounts the discretion he had to use to plant date trees in an area at risk near Jericho:

At the beginning, it was very hard for us to plant the date trees as soldiers and settlers tried to take us out many times from the land. It is very at risk because soldiers and settlers were planning to confiscate it. Some of the trees, we had to plant them [at a specific time], because we didn't want the soldiers and settlers to see us. We were just planting the trees (...), watering them and going back very quickly. Mostly workers and activists were following this project.¹⁴¹

Yet, anonymity does not seem to be a major concern in the practice of this form of sumud: the farmers know that they already have been identified by the settler colonial forces but keep on working on their fields as otherwise the land will be taken over.

Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley also resort to discrete actions to access much-needed water. While Scott mentions 'theft' in his analysis of peasant discrete actions, in a colonial context the appropriate term is reappropriation. The geographical location of the assets is key to analyse the possibilities of reappropriation

available to the peasants. Indeed, while the settler colonial enclosure of the landscape prevents Palestinians from accessing most of the settlers' assets,¹⁴² only Israeli water and electric infrastructures are accessible to Palestinians. For example, in Bardala, Mekorot wells are situated at the centre of the village, with water pipelines running below the community in the direction of the nearby settlements. To access water, Palestinian farmers discretely connect their pipelines to the coloniser's network:

Our farmers started to connect our main pipeline of water for agriculture to the Israeli pipeline which is going to the Israeli colonies that are stealing our water (...) [The Israeli soldiers] then come and close the water, and when they leave we will go and open it again.¹⁴³

As the settler colonial authorities are aware of the Palestinian hidden pipeline network in Bardala, it appears that there is no attempt from the peasants to disguise their struggle: there is no false compliance as Palestinians only resort to discretion and anonymity to be able to perform the action and to avoid arrests. While it uses discrete action, the Bardala water struggle can be considered an act of resistance that is openly defiant. In Bedouin communities such as Al Hadidiya, Palestinians did not hesitate to breach the Israeli interdiction to renovate the 1967 water infrastructure by 'rebuilding the old water wells that used to collect and save the rainwater'.¹⁴⁴ While using 'the silent way', these forms of sumud are a clear contestation of the coloniser's capture of water and 'an enactment of what was seen to be a natural right'.¹⁴⁵

Many other accounts of discrete actions aimed at challenging the settler colonial practices of removal were recounted by Jordan Valley Palestinians, which cannot be discussed in this dissertation for necessary confidentiality regarding techniques that must remain hidden from the Zionist apparatus. Because they use anonymity and secrecy, it can be hard to grasp the resistant and

¹⁴² G Fields, 'Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror' (2010) 42(1) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 63.

¹⁴³ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹⁴⁴ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹⁴⁵ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 265.

contesting character of these forms of sumud. However, their contestation character cannot be downsized, as they directly aim to counter the settler colonial policies of removal while triggering substantial danger for their actors.

05 – Collective direct confrontation

While under Scott's framework direct action is not considered an act of everyday resistance, it is part of the repertoire of sumud in the Jordan Valley. However, direct confrontation through the demonstration of force is rarely used, and generally does not fit with the common understanding of the expression of steadfastness, as underlined by AS: 'In Al Hadidiya, to resist people don't use any violence, we don't have the power to make any fight, even we are not looking for making any fight, our main resistance is to stay on the land'.¹⁴⁶ It is evident that the unequal character of the balance of forces – rural civilians facing heavily armed soldiers and settlers – severely restricts the options available in terms of direct confrontation. However, Palestinians still outnumber the settler colonial group in the Jordan Valley; an advantage that the inhabitants sometimes use when facing specific situations. In general, direct action will be reached when the other forms of sumud described above are not sufficient anymore to counter the settler colonial effort to incrementally choke the Palestinian peasantry, leaving no other choices than a mass response. As underlined by Scott, direct confrontations occur when the normal forms of everyday resistance 'are failing or have reached a crisis point'.¹⁴⁷

The water struggle in Bardala provides a relevant account of the interplay between the settler colonial repertoire and the repertoire of sumud that triggers transformations until reaching this 'crisis point' where Jordan Valley inhabitants resort to direct confrontation. In 1974, the Mekorot company closed the well of the village. Later in 1977, the company dug three wells in the middle of Bardala to provide the nearby settlements with water.¹⁴⁸ While Israeli authorities assured Bardala inhabitants that they would supply the village with the same amount of water that used to be provided by the Palestinian well (450 cubic metres per hour), 'they

¹⁴⁶ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹⁴⁷ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 37.

¹⁴⁸ A Heneiti, 'Patterns of Popular Survival in the Jordan Valley' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 28 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650417> accessed 22 June 2022.

were giving only 420 cubic metres in 1974, and step by step they started to give less and less'.¹⁴⁹ Bardala's population and its water needs were growing while the Israeli company was decreasing the amount of water dedicated to the village, especially after 1996. In consequence, Palestinians started to resort to discrete action to connect their pipelines to the Mekorot grid. Thus, the settler colonial system reacted through regular destruction and confiscation of the Palestinian pipelines, generating a response of systematic reconstruction from the farmers: 'And they come and they close it, and sometimes they destroy our pipeline and confiscate it. And we connect it or replace it again. This game started from 1996 until now'.¹⁵⁰ However, in 2017, the settler colonial power decided to make a radical change of strategy, with a massive campaign aiming to destroy all the pipelines of the village in a row. In the face of this colonial escalation and the devastating impact it would have on the life of the community, Bardala resorted to direct confrontation:

This day, [the Israeli soldiers] had already destroyed around 200 metres [of pipelines], and they were planning to continue. This is why the farmers and the youth were really upset, and they went outside and protested and stopped the soldiers and the Mekorot company. (...) We closed the main roads from where they can enter and exit, and there was youth around them, which means they couldn't even go outside. And we made the soldiers delete all of our pictures, because they were taking pictures of some of the youth (...) After that we succeeded in kicking out the soldiers, then [some farmers] went to the Israeli water wells and they broke them. As they break our pipeline, we break their pipeline. This is something normal for us, this is our resistance, this is our right.¹⁵¹

The attempt to suppress the entire Palestinian hidden pipeline network amounts to these varieties of 'massive and sudden change' that are the most likely to provoke open collective defiance as they 'decisively destroy nearly all the routines of daily life

¹⁴⁹ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹⁵⁰ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

and, at the same time, threaten the livelihood of much of the population'.¹⁵² In the face of the threat of losing the community's access to water, Bardala farmers generated an uprising. When everyday acts of resistance cannot respond appropriately, the Palestinian peasantry must resort to direct confrontation to ensure survival and permanence on the land.

Interestingly, this shift from daily forms of sumud to explosive confrontational events proved to be successful in several instances, as RL demonstrates about the Bardala water struggle:

And after all this action, later they stopped – the Israelis stopped to destroy our pipeline, they just come and close it. And the farmers they just go, and open it and open it and open it (...) Which shows it worked (...) They realised that if they destroy this waterpipe – it is very expensive – our people will react, and will go maybe destroying the water wells and doing other things. They learned now that they cannot destroy our pipeline.¹⁵³

This success might rely significantly on the destruction of the Mekorot wells, as in this act of retaliation Palestinians directed their resistance at the immediate source of appropriation, therefore creating important costs for the Mekorot company and disturbance in the nearby settlements' provision of water. Another recent example of direct confrontational action triggered by a collective danger threatening the means of livelihood of several communities also proved successful. Indeed, in 2019, settlers started to build a fence between the colonies of 'Rotem' and 'Maskiyot' in order to confiscate a huge amount of land that has been used by Palestinian shepherds as grazing land for generations. Once again, this 'massive and sudden change' triggered a collective and openly confrontational response from Palestinian local communities and West Bank activists, as about one hundred individuals gathered to destroy the fence before its completion.¹⁵⁴ As for the Bardala water struggle, the use of direct mass confrontation proved successful, and the settlement's fence project stopped.

¹⁵² J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 242.

¹⁵³ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

From the 2017 Israeli de-escalation in the Bardala water struggle to the dropout of the ‘Rotem-Maskiyot’ fence project, it appears that the settler colonial system is testing how far it can go in imposing a coercive environment in the Jordan Valley without triggering collective mass confrontation from the Palestinian local population.

In conclusion, Palestinians’ everyday forms of resistance in the Jordan Valley are informed by the changes in settler colonial policies and practices, as these acts of resistance are primarily aimed at contesting the Israeli domination and coercive environment. Falling within an opposition of native existence against settler colonial elimination, this action reaction pattern is informed by the life and death struggle of a colonised people against a colonial power.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, the repertoire of strategies of Israeli settler colonialism is itself largely constrained by the necessity to adapt to the resistance that is deployed against it. Therefore, Palestinian sumud, in its everyday forms and temporary explosions, is capable to ‘change and narrow the policy options available to the oppressive power’,¹⁵⁶ at least to the extent of slowing down the incremental ethnic cleansing undertaken in rural areas. However, Israeli settler colonialism has also powerful instruments to determine the range of available options for Palestinian resistance in the Jordan Valley.

2.2 Obstacles imposed on the forms of sumud: fear as a settler colonial instrument to manage the costs and effects of peasant resistance

In *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott proposed a framework to analyse the methods of oppression that determine the range of available options for resistance.¹⁵⁷ I recognise some of these patterns as relevant to this study. For example, the form of piecemeal shifts as a hindrance to collective action is adopted by Israeli settler colonialism to pursue its objective of forced displacement: in most cases, home demolitions are performed gradually and affect only a minority of villagers. Similarly, settlers are using the same method

¹⁵⁵ F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press 1963).

¹⁵⁶ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 36.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid* 242-48.

through the incremental spread of small outposts around an already established settlement. Through the piecemeal shifts technique, the settler colonial system lesser the probability of a massive Palestinian response. However, it appears that the most significant method used by the settler colonial power to curb resistance is fear of repression, an obstacle also highlighted in Scott's analysis but that deserves more attention in a colonial context. Indeed, I will focus on fear as the significant amount of mentions of this modality of control within our interviews appeared to confer it a central role (however other major obstacles to resistance, such as the geographic division and fragmentation of Palestine, would also deserve a significant place). In this account on obstacles drawing the boundaries of possible dissent in the Jordan Valley, I contend that the instigation of fear is more than an obstacle to resistance; it is a deliberate strategy used by the coloniser to keep the colonised population under its control, lesser the counter mechanisms Palestinians would trigger against its logic of elimination and reduce the cost of military occupation.

2.2.1 Fear under the frame of spectacular and slow violence

Several academics have adopted Nixon's concept of 'slow violence' – which manifests gradually and invisibly – to analyse the cumulative effects of settler colonial policies and practices against Palestinians.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, the deliberate instigation of fear in the minds of the native population by the coloniser can be analysed under the binary approach of spectacular and slow violence developed by Nixon.¹⁵⁹ After taking a look at how settler colonial acts of spectacular violence constrain the possibilities for resistance, I will analyse the effect of slow violence on the capacity of Jordan Valley Palestinians to perform the simplest forms of quotidian steadfastness.

Acts of the Israeli army and settlers falling within the normative definition of violence – comprised as 'violence performed with instant sensational visibility'¹⁶⁰ – are manifest in the Jordan Valley, from activist repression to daily settler violence. Speaking

¹⁵⁸ P Wakeham, 'The Slow Violence of Settler Colonialism: Genocide, Attrition, and the Long Emergency of Invasion' (2022) 24(3) *Journal of Genocide Research* 337; M Shqair, 'Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley' (2022) 2 *Transactions of the Jewish National Fund* 4.

¹⁵⁹ R Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard UP 2011).

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

about settler violence, Jamal Juma, the coordinator of the Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign and of the Land Defense Coalition, highlighted: ‘There is a constant fear that is living with these communities. In the short term, that is what will make the people leave – the fear’.¹⁶¹ Therefore, the psychological impact that this daily spectacular violence has on the local population is a crucial element of the logic of elimination of the coloniser.

Moreover, this routine demonstration of force has manifest consequences on an individual’s choice to restrain from performing acts of resistance. As explained by Gordon, this logic of restraint relies on the discernible gap between actual and potential violence. For example, when beginning the implementation of a new strategy in the Jordan Valley such as home demolition, the Israeli army deployed for the occasion ‘huge military jeeps and a lot of soldiers (...) – it was as if they were going to war’.¹⁶² Demonstrating from time to time the full potential of the coloniser’s force reminds the native population of ‘the level of lethal violence it can potentially deploy’.¹⁶³

However, fear is also instigated through more indirect means, ‘a variety of social afflictions’ that characterises the slow violence of settler colonialism.¹⁶⁴ In fact, most of the policies explained in Chapter 1 – building restrictions, access restrictions, deprivation of public services, etc – fall under the frame of slow violence, with many of them triggering fear in the rural masses by diverse means. For example, the selective use of high fees for inhabitants of villages who resort to the connection of their pipelines with the Mekorot grid aims to deter the rest of the local population to pursue this practice. On the other hand, many aspects of the enclosure of territorial spaces, such as what Fields calls ‘cultural markers’, aim to constantly remind the native population that their ancestral lands have been captured by a foreign power, and instigate in them the feeling that this environment is not welcoming anymore for the indigenous.¹⁶⁵ These symbolic messages (flags, Jewish emblems, military relics from the 1967 war, add signs in Hebrew),

¹⁶¹ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Al Bireh, 22 May 2022).

¹⁶² Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹⁶³ N Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation* (University of California Press 2008) 54.

¹⁶⁴ P Wakeham, ‘The Slow Violence of Settler Colonialism: Genocide, Attrition, and the Long Emergency of Invasion’ (2022) 24(3) *Journal of Genocide Research* 337.

¹⁶⁵ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 316.

spread all over the territory by the settlers, army and government, aim to entrench in Palestinian minds the settler colonial grip over the valley and its compulsory military superiority. In this regard, the signs that delineate closed military areas and natural reserves play a particularly significant role, as the fear they induce specifically targets the Palestinian shepherds' capacity to work, as highlighted by RL: '[Israeli authorities] were assuming that labelling the area as closed military area would be enough to deter people from coming from fear to military exercises. However, as there is no threat most of the time in these areas, people continued to bring their sheep'.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, the instigation of fear through settler colonial violence, and in particular the slow violence deployed indirectly, is an integral part of the Israeli strategies to constraint Palestinian means of livelihood and their determination to stay on their lands in the Jordan Valley.

2.2.2 Strategies and counterstrategies around fear as a modality of control

As underlined by several scholars, forms of resistance such as civil disobedience can increase the cost of maintaining the system of oppression for the settler colonial power.¹⁶⁷ I argue that the use of fear by the coloniser is not limited to a mere outcome of the repression waged against the native population, but a settler colonial strategy in itself, whose aim is to reduce the material and symbolic costs of the advancement of its project of elimination.

In certain cases, the settler colonial power realises that its cultural markers of enclosure and the constant reminder of power they carry can be more effective in curtailing Palestinian livelihood and resistance than the actual use of force. For instance, in the case of the settler's dropout from the 'Rotem-Maskiyot' fence project in 2019, the settler colonial system adapted to the practice of mass collective action by Palestinians by using mechanisms of slow violence: in 2020, the territory used by Palestinians as grazing land was declared a natural reserve area (part of it was already a closed military area). In April 2022, the Israeli army put a natural reserve sign on the path used by Palestinian shepherds to access the area, labelling this Palestinian ancestral grazing land with the

¹⁶⁶ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹⁶⁷ M Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine, A History of Hope and Empowerment* (Pluto Press 2011) 23; A Rijke and T van Teeffelen, 'To Exist Is To Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday' (2014) 59 *Jerusalem Quarterly* 86.

name of the nearby settlements. As underlined by local activists, the presence of this sign might act as an additional restrictive policy that would impact the shepherds' confidence in accessing the area.¹⁶⁸ The new Israeli strategy concerning the land coveted by 'Rotem' and 'Maskiyot' settlements appears less costly for the coloniser: a sign is less likely to trigger a popular movement attractive to media attention than the construction of a settler barrier. Similarly, erecting and surveilling a coercive structure has more financial costs than putting a sign that would already be sufficiently deterrent and discouraging for Palestinian shepherds. Indeed, while there are some accounts of Israeli surveillance in natural reserves, the effectiveness of access restriction is mostly achieved through the fear of repression instigated in Palestinian minds. In consequence, fear appears as an efficient 'modality of control' that can be exploited to facilitate the population's management¹⁶⁹ and that reduces the cost of the regime of oppression.

As fear appears as a crucial element for the settler colonial logic of elimination and a modality of control aiming to curtail the Palestinian existence and resistance, one of the objectives of the local activists is to kill this fear. This is what guides the vandalism or destruction of the signs of enclosure that occur sometimes in the valley, as erasing these settler colonial symbolic messages would strengthen the Palestinian shepherds' confidence in grazing their land in closed areas while reasserting the Palestinian character of the land. A Jordan Valley activist highlights what was for him the most significant outcome of the three-year presence of the local grassroots movement that built several public services in Fasayil:

What made me really happy in that village is not the school, not the electricity, not the water. What made me happy, was to see the children later fighting to protect the electricity and to see the rest of the community start building their own houses alone. Because before they were scared, even to renovate the one room or the one kitchen they have. To renovate it, not even to build a new structure. Now the people start building their own houses alone.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

¹⁶⁹ N Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (University of California Press 2008) 54.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with RL (Bardala, 23 April 2022).

In RL's account, it appears that fear is the element that prevents the Jordan Valley from deploying more everyday resistance. Therefore, one of the most important outcomes of the discernible manifestation of resistance undertaken by local activists is to strengthen the local communities' confidence in increasing their everyday acts of defiance as 'multiplied many thousand folds, such petty acts of resistance by peasants may in the end make an utter shambles of the policies dreamed up'¹⁷¹ by the settler colonial system. These practices undertaken by Palestinian local activists are guided by the idea that the success of resistance depends on killing the colonial fear, as 'the breaches made in colonialism are the result of a victory of the colonized over their old fear'.¹⁷² Therefore, building the communities' confidence in their capacities of resistance is an important preoccupation of the local activist network, as the success of this counter-strategy entails an increase in the cost of the military occupation for the settler colonial power and permits a larger collective agency towards strengthening Palestinian presence in the valley.

2.2.3 The action reaction pattern as a boundary of permissible dissent?

As underlined by Scott, this routine repression and the fear it triggers, instigated through spectacular or indirect means, creates boundaries of permissible dissent 'that no wary peasant would deliberately breach'.¹⁷³ EZ, a young farmer from Bardala, locates these boundary markers within the action reaction pattern:

I think that what we did four years ago [the 2017 uprising of Bardala], it was a really good thing. But if we would do more, I think they would hit more. But just wait, and if they destroy, we have to react, but if they won't we will not. This was really the best way to resist, but we should not do more. Let's be quiet.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) xvii.

¹⁷² F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 52-53.

¹⁷³ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 227.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with EZ (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

In EZ's words, it seems that the most defiant actions – the ones that directly challenge the structure of power – can only come within a reactive pattern, as a proactive strategy would trigger dangerous retaliation by the coloniser. However, while Salem expressed doubts about the long-term efficiency of temporary and dispersed actions of resistance, he also argues that a reactive pattern can also increase 'the ability of the colonizer to defeat and control through the development of new control mechanisms'.¹⁷⁵ As underlined by the example of the settlements' fence that transformed into a 'Rotem-Maskiyot' natural reserve area, the settler colonial system has a large panel of tactics to adapt its strategies of elimination. The predictability of the action-reaction pattern might increase this capacity for adaptation. Moreover, the sole use of a reactive strategy leaves the monopoly of initiatives to the coloniser, creating a situation where the native population would not dare to undertake resistance outside of the frame of action defined by the coloniser.

In conclusion, this confrontational engagement between the settler colonial power and the Palestinian communities of the Jordan Valley is substantially informing changes and transformations in both repertoires of action. Throughout this examination of the tactics of sumud, I highlighted significant differences with Scott's conclusions regarding the level of confrontation of everyday forms of resistance. It appears that in a colonial context, these forms of resistance overtly contest the formal definitions of hierarchy and power, with even anonymous and discrete forms of resistance entailing an openly defiant character. From practices of reappropriation to systematic reconstruction, these acts of sumud often blatantly show to the coloniser that Palestinians constitute the native population of this land and that this gives them the natural right to build on it and to enjoy its resources. If this natural right will not be guaranteed by the legal protection of Palestinian judicial actions in colonial courts, it might be taken back through boycott or direct confrontation. As several examples of collective insubordination proved, the success of this resistance is not, as opposed to Scott's conclusions, 'directly proportional to the symbolic conformity with which it is masked'.¹⁷⁶ Deference and conformity do

¹⁷⁵ F Salem, 'Palestinian Daily Sumud to Confront Israeli Settler Violence in Area C: Al-Qasra Village as a Case Study' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 20 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650378> accessed 22 June 2022.

¹⁷⁶ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 33.

not constitute the public posture of the farmers of fields that are planted after the departure of soldiers, of the families that reconstructed their homes after six or seven demolitions, or the owners who fight in Israeli courts. The reasons for these differences with our theoretical framework lie undoubtedly in the nature of the political context. First, in a colonial setting, there is no possible profit for the peasantry from the strategic assets controlled by the dominant group, whatever their degree of compliance would be. Therefore, there is no 'protection racket' nor a systematic logic of reward for the communities who would demonstrate compliance:¹⁷⁷ the relationship cannot be contractual. Secondly, a major difference with Scott's class struggle context is that the upper classes are not interested in the removal of the poor peasants but in their exploitation; Jordan Valley inhabitants, on the other hand, know very well that there is no possible compromise with a settler colonial system that aims to erase their presence and the ethnoreligious character of their lands.

¹⁷⁷ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 277-78.

3. Community support from within: The question of the level of internal coordination and its impact on the forms of sumud

Scott found that the oscillation between various forms of resistance ‘may in some cases be due to changes in the social organization of the peasantry, but it is as likely, if not more likely, to be due to changes in the level of repression’.¹⁷⁸ While I highlighted that the changing settler colonial policies and practices have indeed important implications on forms of sumud, I contend here that the social organisation of the peasantry, their culture and ways of life are essential factors that must be taken into account to understand the permanence and transformations of everyday resistance.

After analysing the meanings and values Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley give to their resistance against the settler colonial oppression, this chapter will look into the communities’ network of understanding and practices that support the continuity of certain forms of sumud. Apart from these innate forms of coordination deployed to stay on the land, the continuous deprivation of public services that characterises the coercive environment imposed by the settler colonial system in so-called ‘Area C’ triggered a need for a higher level of internal coordination that takes both institutional and grassroots movement’s forms. The transformations in the forms of sumud implied by the necessity for local communities to take charge of their own developmental and infrastructural needs employ a different repertoire of action that often takes a proactive form.

¹⁷⁸ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 299.

3.1 Innate everyday resistance at the community level: The factors informing continuities in the forms of sumud

At the core of the settler colonial project, there is land: as the settler's relation to the land is defined by a logic of elimination driven by the operations of capture and exclusive appropriation,¹⁷⁹ Wolfe deems that to resist 'all the native has to do is to stay at home'.¹⁸⁰ When speaking about staying at home or staying on the land, 'land' can refer to different geographical realities: the imperative of staying on the land may imply the mere necessity not to leave the homeland; on the other hand, it is also understood as staying on *one's* land, therefore entailing a restricted local scale. In the context of the Jordan Valley and 'Area C', 'staying on the land' may also refer to maintaining Palestinian presence in these areas that are highly coveted by the settler colonial power.

As the permanence of the native population on the land is precisely what the settler colonial logic of elimination aims to suppress, the act to stay on the land is neither simple nor passive. Rather, in the Jordan Valley and in particular for Bedouin communities, performing the most common acts of life – working, going to school, living in one's home – requires demanding positive action and psychological endurance. Therefore, for these forms of everyday resistance to be innate while being so demanding in terms of mental strength and active practice, they are grounded in meanings, values, ancestral networks of practices and cultural aspects of lifestyle that structure the most important factor for continuity in the forms of sumud.

3.1.1 Meanings and values informing the individual and family act of permanence on the land

It is necessary to highlight in which conditions the act of staying on the land is practiced in the most extreme cases to understand why permanence demands both positive action and psychological strength. In the Jordan Valley, the context of home

¹⁷⁹ M Svirsky, 'Resistance is a structure not an event' (2016) 7(1) *Settler Colonial Studies* 19.

¹⁸⁰ P Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology, The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (Cassel 1999) 388.

demolitions in small Bedouin communities reveals how much sumud can be demanding, therefore highlighting the need for significant meanings and values as these constitute ‘the indispensable background to [this] behavior’.¹⁸¹

As the settler colonial forces usually perform home demolitions in the winter, Bedouin families are rendered homeless under the rain; in these dire conditions, parents have to ensure the survival of their children in tremendously challenging conditions. AS highlighted how this situation leads to threats on the lives of the most vulnerable members of the family when his family survived for 16 days in the winter without a shelter: ‘One night it was really cold and it was raining a lot. I put on the ground a plastic, using it to cover my children. During the night the soldiers came and took it from my children. I was doing all these things just to protect my children from the rain’.¹⁸² Building small precarious tents and plastic protections is one of the demanding actions that Bedouin families have to carry out while staying on their lands without homes. Recounting the ethnic cleansing campaign that settler colonial forces performed in Humsa from November 2020 to July 2021 and that forcibly displaced almost all the inhabitants of this community, AA highlights the mental strength required to ensure permanence on the land while the family’s survival is at stake: ‘It was very hard for the families with their children, in the winter and the cold. Some families could not stand all this pressure, this psychological pressure and the risk. This is why they left’.¹⁸³ From these accounts, there is a tension between the long-term survival of the family (which depends on its capacity to stay in sumud) and the short-term, as the settler colonial practice of home demolitions has progressively been turned into a life and death issue for the most vulnerable community members.

Resistance and its ideological background are necessarily informed by this perception of life in a colonial situation, ‘not as a flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death’.¹⁸⁴ One of the meanings to resistance that is given by Palestinians in sumud in the Jordan Valley is grounded in this perception of an existence that is a struggle for life, therefore equating existence and

¹⁸¹ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 38.

¹⁸² Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹⁸³ Interview with AA (Humsa, 13 May 2022).

¹⁸⁴ F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 128.

resistance. Farming the land is associated with protecting the land, as the Israeli policies and practices of land capture have been using the pretext of uncultivated lands to legally back the spatial advancement of the settler colonial project. Therefore, the protection of ancestral land is both an everyday work task and an act of resistance. Moreover, this struggle for life is not merely understood as a survival issue entailing the protection of productive resources, but also as the preservation of the Palestinian rural lifestyle and culture. The land is the necessary guarantee for the perpetuation of traditional lifestyle; therefore ‘holding fast to it is a political imperative’.¹⁸⁵ Attachment to the land entails social, emotional and spiritual values,¹⁸⁶ as it is associated with an agricultural way of life that is more than a source of income but has to do with one’s ancestral roots as a rural Palestinian. As highlighted by the activist Khaled Abu Qare, ‘the type of life [Palestinian shepherds] are living is resistance’.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, giving up on land and rural lifestyle would entail the loss of a critical component of the culture of these communities. Organising the removal of Palestinians from their ancestral lands not only allows Israeli spatial expansion but also destroys the indigenous culture and traditions. Indeed, forcing the separation between the native people and their land, moving from traditional rural lifestyle to wage labour in the cities, entails cultural transformations. While Wolfe recognised the native authenticity as a target of the settler colonial logic of elimination, he particularly associated the practice of cultural destruction to the settler colonial method of biocultural assimilation.¹⁸⁸ It seems that in the Palestinian context, the Israeli settler colonial method of spatial removal aims to pursue a similar logic. Therefore, the value underlying this *samidin* lifestyle is perpetuating a rural Palestinianness that is threatened by the settler colonial project. Thus, the maintenance of a traditional lifestyle on Palestinian ancestral land constitutes an essential form of *sumud* in the Jordan Valley.

¹⁸⁵ M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) 238.

¹⁸⁶ M Shqair, ‘Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley’ (2022) 2 Transactions of the Jewish National Fund 4.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

¹⁸⁸ P Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’ (2006) 8(4) Journal of Genocide Research 387.

Secondly, the meanings and values fuelling everyday resistance in the Jordan Valley are deeply grounded in the strong conviction that Palestinian struggle to stay on the land is backed by natural rights. AA underlined that this vision of justice forms a significant part of the ideological background of the practice of sumud: ‘This is our right, our land. This is why we have this power just to resist and to stay (...) I am a national, but [Israelis] aren’t, they are part of the Occupying power (...) Settlers don’t have the right, we have the right, this is our land and the settlers will have to leave’.¹⁸⁹ This account highlights that Palestinians’ ancestral connection with the land is at the core of the question of natural rights. Every capture achieved by the settler colonial power and the resistance that is waged against it falls within this rhetoric of indigenous rights: ‘This water is not Israeli water, this is our land this is our water’.¹⁹⁰ The negation of the Zionist settler colonial claim for sovereignty over the valley and its allegation of purported historical and religious rights is countered by Palestinian indigenesness and the natural rights to pursue the rural lifestyle on the land it entails.

Therefore, the meanings and values ‘in which patterns [of resistance] arise and to which they contribute’¹⁹¹ are grounded in Palestinian indigenesness and the strong rural connection with the land with which it is intertwined. Land seems to be the source from which the ideological background of resistance in the valley emanates, as it guarantees both the perpetuation of a traditional rural Palestinian lifestyle and natural rights that confirm the fairness of the struggle. Significantly, these meanings and values backing Palestinian everyday resistance are informing a strong continuity in the forms of sumud understood as the maintenance of traditional lifestyle.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with AA (Humsa, 13 May 2022).

¹⁹⁰ Interview with RL (Bardala, 23 April 2022).

¹⁹¹ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 38.

3.1.2 Support within the community and its ancestral network of understanding and practices

Brought to the community level, this endurance and perseverance that characterise the continuities in the local communities' ways of resistance are traduced in specific forms and practices of sumud. Indeed, this part will look into the community solidarity network: understood as the practices of support provided to each other by Palestinians within their communities, these forms of sumud are perpetuated throughout generations.

Scott identified the existence of a 'network of understanding and practices' used by peasant societies to coordinate and achieve complex activities. Within this pattern, 'no formal organizations are created because none are required; and yet a form of coordination is achieved'.¹⁹² I believe that this frame is helpful to understanding a set of coordinated actions undertaken by local communities in the Jordan Valley to support their members while facing settler colonial oppressive policies and practices. AS recognised the role of 'neighbors, friends, associations of people to help families to reply and build again the tent and structures',¹⁹³ when facing home demolitions. In Ibziq, the council member of the village described the social organisation undertaken by the community in the distribution of tasks to resist home demolitions, highlighting a network of understanding and practices where villagers would automatically 'host the families for a couple of hours, especially the children and women' while 'the men and youth [would] stay outside [to watch] the sheep' and try to 'build the [new] structure and the tent'.¹⁹⁴ Significantly, when the settler colonial forces closed all the roads that allowed access to Al Hadidiya, some farmers used their own lands to open a new road for the inhabitants to be able to enter and exit the community.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, one important characteristic of the system of water reappropriation established in Bardala is that the benefit is collectively shared among all the farmers.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 300.

¹⁹³ Interview with AS (Al-Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹⁹⁴ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

¹⁹⁵ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

¹⁹⁶ A Heneiti, 'Patterns of Popular Survival in the Jordan Valley' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 28 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650417> accessed 22 June 2022.

Thus, the network of understanding and practices in Jordan Valley peasant communities allows for a coordination of solidarity that strengthens the steadfastness of all inhabitants. Therefore, I can label these practices – support to neighbours, putting one’s assets at the disposal of the whole community – as forms of sumud that are perpetuated throughout generations. These innate solidarity networks are particularly efficient due to the social structure of peasant communities, which are constituted of a small number of extended family groups which naturally support the family members’ needs.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, MJ emphasises that ‘this is our own culture to help each other as families and neighbours in the communities’,¹⁹⁸ therefore highlighting that these practices are grounded in an ancestral way of communal life. These innate networks of support that characterise Jordan Valley communities’ forms of sumud are strongly embedded in the ancestral ‘communal impulses of agrarian life’.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the practices of solidarity and collective opposition to the coercive environment imposed by the settler colonial power are constituting significant continuities in the forms of sumud that are informed by a cooperative and collaborative culture grounded in ancestral traditions of rural communities’ social organisation.

3.1.3 Negotiating the colonial measures: Transforming traditional livelihood as a way to stay on the land

While I observed a significant continuity of the traditional livelihood as a central modality of sumud in a rural context, it appears that the demanding imperative of steadfastness within the coercive environment set by the coloniser sometimes requires transformations within this everyday mode of resistance. Facing the colonial measures impeding every aspect of traditional means of livelihood in the Jordan Valley, Palestinian farmers and shepherds sometimes make changes in their mode of production in reaction to the widespread settler colonial dispossession. For example, communities such as Frush Beit Dajan changed the type of cultivation to cope with the lack of water, moving from a water-demanding type of culture to plantations and methods that require less water. Unlike most of the localities in the Jordan Valley, this

¹⁹⁷ G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 187.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

community was able to keep its water wells after the 1967 capture of the West Bank. However, the Israeli wells used for the extensive farms of the nearby settlement of Hamra provoked an important decrease in the amount of water available for the community.²⁰⁰ In reaction, Frush Beit Dajan farmers moved from lemon and orange tree cultures to other species that require less water and that grow in greenhouses.²⁰¹ While modifying the ancestral ways Palestinians used to work on their lands, this method allowed many farmers to stay in a village where many inhabitants have been expelled through campaigns of home demolitions.

Another technique used by Palestinian farmers and shepherds to continue to live in the Jordan Valley while facing a decrease in their income due to Israeli settler colonial policies and practices is the resort to part-time wage labour. Khaled Abu Qare, a West Bank activist involved in strengthening sumud in the Jordan Valley, recognised this societal transformation as a valuable way to continue to protect the land and culture while meeting one's financial needs: 'Many people are doctors, (...) academics, teachers in the university in the afternoon, and in the evening, they are shepherds. They are proud because it is a lifestyle'.²⁰² Whereas Jordan Valley inhabitants confirmed the existence of this transformation within the local labour, EZ underlined that it is decreasing in some areas due to the reduction in the amount of land available for agriculture:

Some of the youth who used to have jobs in Tubas or Ramallah, they were not just working on their jobs – as a teacher for example –, they were also saving their project in Bardala, keep working in their project. But after all these problems, especially the water, these people stopped their projects in Bardala, and they started to work only on their projects in the town.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Amnesty International, 'The Occupation of Water' (*Amnesty International*, 29 November 2017) <www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/> accessed 14 April 2022.

²⁰¹ Interview with RL (Bardala, 19 April 2022).

²⁰² Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

²⁰³ Interview with EZ (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

While looking at Scott's everyday resistance framework, these transformations in traditional means of livelihood do not appear as mere coping mechanisms or acts of resilience. Indeed, Scott looked at 'acts of insubordination or evasion',²⁰⁴ therefore implying that the circumvention of challenges imposed by the dominant group do fall under the frame of resistance. The effectiveness of this form of evasion lies in its capacity to keep Palestinians on their lands while their means of livelihood have been severely limited by the colonial coercive environment. Moreover, as Fanon demonstrated, the struggle against the coloniser might require people 'to make all the sacrifices and all the efforts, among which the greatest was not giving one's life in combat, perhaps, but changing one's daily life, one's routines, prejudices, and immemorial customs'.²⁰⁵

Another valuable example of transformation in the means of livelihood to circumvent the oppressive Israeli policies and practices is the modification that AS undertook within his agricultural activity in Al Hadidiya after enduring repetitive home demolitions. As a 70-year old Palestinian who used to rely mostly on herding, AS lost most of his flock as a result of the disruptive effect of the destruction of herding structures by the occupation army and the impossibility to secure adequate medicine for his animals due to Israeli restrictions. Therefore, he chose to undertake a reconversion with different agricultural productions that would help him resist on his land in the case of a new home demolition campaign:

We planted olive trees, and we have chickens, because if they destroy our structure and tent, we can sit under the olive trees, and the chicken don't need any kind of structure to live. Which means we can have eggs, meat, and shelter. This is a kind of strategy to resist.²⁰⁶

This example provides an account of a strategy that is not merely a reaction to the Israeli policy of home demolition, but that entails an anticipative reflection aiming to strengthen the family's capacity to stay on their land in the case of new destructions.

²⁰⁴ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 32-36.

²⁰⁵ Adolfo Gilly in F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 2.

²⁰⁶ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

While it does not entail a revolutionary intention, AS's agricultural reconversion contains an echo of one of *Dying Colonialism's* important demonstrations: that traditional elements of lifestyle might be transformed for the purpose of resisting the coloniser.²⁰⁷

Some might label these transformations as adaptation; however, not all forms of adaptation entail a binary opposition between resistance and submission. Indeed, I rather see in these transformations of the means of livelihood a Palestinian method to ensure permanence in the Jordan Valley despite the challenges imposed by the settler colonial system. Rather than passive coping mechanisms, these are ways for Palestinians to negotiate the colonial measures in order to maintain permanence on their ancestral lands.

3.1.4 Transmission of the continuities in the forms of sumud to the next generations

As underlined above, the meanings and values that form the ideological background for sumud are prompting continuities in sumud, understood as the continuation of a traditional lifestyle on Palestinian ancestral lands. Similarly, the ancestral networks of understanding and practices of Jordan Valley communities are informing continuities in the repertoire of action of sumud through the perpetuation of active solidarity networks. As this paper is interested in transformations in the forms of sumud, I should ask whether these continuities will continue with the next generations; therefore, I will look into the generational transmission of the ideological background of sumud and its networks of understanding and practices.

01 —Maintenance of the meanings and values sustaining traditional lifestyle

Significantly, when asked about the meanings of sumud, the Jordan Valley youth highlights similar elements to what has been highlighted so far. EZ, a 21-year-old farmer, confirmed that the struggle to stay on the land is grounded in the necessity to live and perdure in a continuation of the ancestral lifestyle: 'Sumud means everything, it means the future, it means the life, the food, everything for my life (...) Here I have my father's house, my

family, my land'.²⁰⁸ On the other hand, SH, a 17-year-old woman from Bardala, explains that 'occupation means destroying, demolitions; and for me, sumud is to resist, it means to build, to make the beauty',²⁰⁹ therefore emphasising that everyday resistance is backed by a binary conception where the fairness of sumud is opposed to a power that is destructive and thus illegitimate.

Through the transmission of the meanings and values of sumud, older generations are ensuring continuities in the forms of everyday resistance used by Palestinians in the Jordan Valley. They emphasise that steadfastness is grounded in not giving up on one's ancestral lifestyle:

We explain to the youth and show them as an example the families that leave their lands (...) for 'Area A' and 'B'. We explain that most of them go to ask for the Palestinian food organisations because they cannot cover the price of food (...) Still, we have a good situation compared with the people who are working as teachers, or with the authority, or as farmers in 'Area A', because at least we have our own agribusiness. The whole family that sells their land or sheep and starts working as a teacher, or as police with the PA, now the Israelis control even their salaries. Because some years and some months Israelis don't give the taxes to the PA, which means that the PA cannot cover the salaries.²¹⁰

Through representing urban life and relocation to other lands as economic dependence on the Palestinian leadership and the colonial power, older generations also emphasise the importance of self-reliance as an essential value of a *samidin* way of life. This narrative maintains the imperative for the next generations to hold fast to their lands, as these are the essential component for ensuring self-sufficiency. Moreover, leaving one's land to adopt an urban lifestyle is portrayed as submissive to the colonial will, therefore strengthening transgenerational determination to continue to ensure Palestinian permanence in the Jordan Valley.

²⁰⁸ Interview with EZ (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

²⁰⁹ Interview with SH (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

²¹⁰ Interview with AS (Al-Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

02 —Continuation of the solidarity network of understanding and practices with the youth

Throughout our interviews with Jordan Valley youth, I found several accounts of the individual decision to stay on the land as an imperative to strengthen collective steadfastness. This is the meaning RA, a 28-year-old mother, gave to her decision to stay in the Jordan Valley:

First, when I finished high school, I was thinking maybe to go to live in 'Area A' (...) But later I decided to stay here, get married in the same community, and to support the rest of the people, children, neighbors, parents around. I took the decision to stay here, and to have my life as a [pastoral] project and to support the rest of the community who is living and resisting here.²¹¹

Through this account, it appears that a number of young people in the Jordan Valley are keeping up with the solidarity networks that are strengthening the communities' steadfastness. Significantly, EN, a woman in her early twenties who resides in Bardala, emphasised the importance of sumud 'for the future, for other generations'.²¹² Therefore, through the rural network of understanding and practices, the decision to stay is not only perceived as having a positive impact on present collective steadfastness but also allows for the Palestinian upcoming generations' permanence on the land, thus highlighting the transgenerational character of the solidarity network.

While a great deal of the transmission of the imperative for sumud to the next generations occurs through discursal means from older members of the community, the youth also happens to integrate the need for community support through their daily encounters with the colonial oppressive structure. Significantly, a Jordan Valley activist recounted instances where he found young children conducting spontaneous initiatives of sumud independently from any adult supervision or encouragement:

²¹¹ Interview with RA (Mak-hul, 24 April 2022).

²¹² Interview with EN (Bardala, 27 April 2022).

[The children] explained to me that their parents received a demolition order, and that they were worried that the soldiers would destroy the electricity while destroying the tent. And what they were doing was that they were bringing stones to cover the electric cables, to hide them from the soldiers. We found these four children, working alone – around six and seven years old, while no one asked them to do this.²¹³

This example reflects that the need for acts of sumud with positive consequences for the whole community is also integrated by the next generations through the early experience of collective dispossession as a result of the settler colonial policies and practices.

Throughout these examples, it appears clear through which patterns the forms of sumud described so far, from permanence on the land despite home demolitions to discrete actions, are integrated by new generations as innate forms of everyday life and resistance. The ideological background of sumud grounded in the connection to the land, combined with the collective experience of living under settler colonial rule, transmit the moral and existential imperative to stay on the land throughout generations, therefore ensuring continuities in the endurance and perseverance of local communities in their anti-colonial struggle.²¹⁴

03 – Transformations entailed by access to high education:

A new means of resistance or an impediment to the next generations' steadfastness?

Within the next generations, while continuities are informed by the transmission of ancestral meanings, values and through the networks of understanding and practices, changes in the perceptions of sumud are also induced by social transformations occurring within the Palestinian society. Indeed, compared to previous generations, nowadays Jordan Valley youth has more opportunities to leave to other areas in the West Bank to pursue their studies. Some young Palestinians are framing this phenomenon as a form of resistance against Israeli settler colonialism, as highlighted by SH, a 17-year-old woman from Bardala: 'I am resisting in the

²¹³ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

²¹⁴ J Hammad and R Tribe, 'Culturally informed resilience in conflict settings: a literature review of Sumud in the occupied Palestinian territories' (2020) 33(1-2) *International Review of Psychiatry* 132.

school because Israelis don't want us to study and to be really educated'.²¹⁵ Indeed, understanding sumud as a commitment to education constitutes a tendency within the youth's practice and discourse about everyday resistance,²¹⁶ as a result of the fact that the right to education is targeted by the settler colonial power. In this regard, Fanon noted the importance to enlighten 'the consciousness of the younger generation' to achieve national liberation.²¹⁷

However, in the context of the Jordan Valley, these societal transformations, combined with the tremendous challenges imposed by the settler colonial power, leads part of the youth to leave the rural areas to study in the cities where they will later establish their lives. Jamal Juma frames this phenomenon as an 'unnoticeable displacement' that has significant implications for the demography of rural areas.²¹⁸ Indeed, the settler colonial power has deployed 'multiple aggressive attempts and policies to practically eliminate Palestinian farmers' which have been furthered since the establishment of the PA.²¹⁹ The departure of the most educated fringe of the Jordan Valley youth and its shift from a rural to an urban lifestyle not only weakens the number of Palestinians but also deprives rural communities of the potential of a qualified segment of their population. The activist Khaled Abu Qare emphasised the impact of this phenomenon on the Palestinian culture: 'The lifestyle in connection to the land (...) is something important to be preserved, because younger generations might see grazing the land, shepherding and agriculture as something that the old generations did, [while] it is part of our culture, our identity'.²²⁰ As highlighted above, the preservation of Palestinian rural culture and lifestyle is critical as these aspects are threatened by the settler colonial logic of elimination.²²¹

²¹⁵ Interview with SH (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

²¹⁶ V Nguyen-Gillham and others, 'Normalising the abnormal: Palestinian youth and the contradictions of resilience in protracted conflict' (2008) 16(3) *Health and Social Care in the Community* 291.

²¹⁷ F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press 1963) 141.

²¹⁸ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

²¹⁹ V Sansour and A Tartir, 'Palestinian Farmers: A Last Stronghold of Resistance' (*Al Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network*, 1 July 2014) <<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-farmers-a-last-stronghold-of-resistance/>> accessed 22 June 2022.

²²⁰ Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

²²¹ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

However, rural Palestinians' access to high education cannot be bluntly opposed to sumud, as the aspirations for education of a youth living under colonial rule cannot be submitted to the moral imperative to stay on the land to counter the settler colonial power. Moreover, several examples of young Palestinians getting high education while maintaining a *samidin* rural lifestyle provide incentives for a way out of this dilemma. Indeed, a number of students in the Jordan Valley are following academic courses such as agricultural engineering that are grounded in the Palestinian connection to the land. Others are developing projects aiming at strengthening the local communities' education in connection to the land, such as EN, a young Palestinian woman who has a project to create a public education centre:

I will make a centre where we could teach a public education, a farmer education – because in the Jordan Valley, in the schools and in the universities, they don't really teach anything about agriculture. But if you are looking at all our villages and communities, it is 90% farmers (...) So the idea is to have this education centre, where we could have jobs, hire other teachers and teach different things.²²²

While offering the Palestinian next generations with wage labour opportunities as teachers within the Jordan Valley, this kind of project emphasises the need for curricula that would better correspond to the aspirations of the youth who aim to maintain traditional means of livelihood on their lands. In this case, the acquisition of education by rural youth strengthens the next generations' presence on their ancestral lands and 'improves self-reliance among the communities',²²³ as other farmers and shepherds can benefit from the knowledge acquired through the solidarity networks of understanding and practices.

²²² Interview with EN (Bardala, 27 April 2022).

²²³ Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

3.2 Transformations induced by the need for further coordination to secure public services

Scott highlights that within peasant societies, the level of coordination achieved through these networks of understanding and practices is enough to coordinate complex activities, and therefore ‘no formal organizations are created because none are required’.²²⁴ However, in the Palestinian case, the weaponisation of the deprivation of public services by the settler colonial power as a means for removal of the native population creates the need to go beyond the range of activities achievable through innate collaborative forms of social organisation, in particular within the historical period opened by the Oslo Accords.

3.2.1 The development of public services as a critical element to counter the settler colonial logic of elimination

Throughout the first two chapters, I encountered several examples of the Israeli attempts to weaponise public services as a way to pursue its logic of elimination: the deprivation of water and electricity, the building restrictions surrounding the creation of educational and health facilities, as well as the lack of renovation of public infrastructure act as critical incentives for forcible displacement.²²⁵ This strategy has been furthered by the political situation created by the Oslo process, which increased the public responsibility gap in ‘Area C’. First, the impossibility for the PA to assume its responsibilities for the provision of resources, education and health services to Palestinians in ‘Area C’ left the Jordan Valley inhabitants in a situation where the only authorities in the capacity to provide public services are actually the settler colonial power that aims to evict them. Second, this logic created a public responsibility gap where each authority – the Israeli Civil Administration and the PA – are in the position to shift the burden of responsibility onto each other, as highlighted by RL in his evocation of the Israeli answers to local Palestinians’ complaints over water:

²²⁴ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 300.

²²⁵ OCHA, ‘Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank’ (OCHA, 1 August 2011) <www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-200453/> accessed 1 March 2022.

[Israeli authorities] are saying that we have to take the water from the PA. But the PA doesn't have any authority in 'Area C' and 'Area B'! If we tell them, what could they do? And why even would we have to go to tell them? You, as an authority, you can contact the authority. We are farmers, we are civilians, we are under occupation, we need our right to water. You have a problem with our authority, why don't you deal with it with our authority?²²⁶

While highlighting how the Oslo Accords are used as a pretext by the settler colonial authorities to deny public services to Palestinians, this account reveals a dynamic where Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley are left alone with the responsibility to take care of their needs in terms of water – but also energy, education, health or road infrastructures.

Therefore, as the weaponisation of public services is a core element of the settler colonial strategy of incremental ethnic cleansing in the Jordan Valley, the development of these public services is a critical component for strengthening the sumud of local communities. Here, the concept of development is not understood within the mainstream economic developmental discourse used in the field of international humanitarian organisations and financial aid which leads 'to raising the standard of life of the population within the limits of the ability to continue living under occupation'.²²⁷ Rather, the development of basic services is perceived, in this paper and by local communities, as a way of strengthening resistance. In this context, this particular glance on the concept of development is not emptied of political significance, nor 'entangled within the settler colonial project'²²⁸ but is driven in opposition to it, as it is carried out by and for local communities in open defiance to the Israeli oppressive policies.

²²⁶ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

²²⁷ A Heneiti, 'Patterns of Popular Survival in the Jordan Valley' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 28 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/ar/node/1650417> accessed 22 June 2022.

²²⁸ L Meari, 'Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in "Area C": the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village' (2017) 52 *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* 506.

3.2.2 Institutional forms of support for sumud within local communities

Significantly, the practice of developing local infrastructures in complete insubordination to the settler colonial policies impeding Palestinian public services is seen as a form of resistance by a number of actors in the Jordan Valley. MJ, a member of Ibziq's local council, promoted this understanding of sumud:

In the last seven years, the road has been fixed, we ordered for each family a solar panel, we built a water pipeline from Salhab and Tubas to Ibziq, and we helped to have a school in Ibziq. This is the main strategy from my experience: developing the community and the village.²²⁹

MJ emphasised the critical importance of the development of public services to allow for the return of Palestinians who left the community: 'This is how somehow families started to be more interested to come back and to live in Ibziq because there is water, road and a school here'.²³⁰ Significantly, a critical element of these developmental initiatives is that they all directly challenge the settler colonial policies, which is confirmed by the threat of demolition orders on the public infrastructures created by the local council. Despite the risk of destruction, communities of the Jordan Valley reached a higher level of coordination than the traditional networks of understanding and practices to respond to their needs. Indeed, as I highlighted above, the natural organisation of communal life permits a network of solidarity helping community members to face the quotidian challenges encountered in living under colonial rule; whereas in this case, what is appearing is a proactive agency of public services development. This kind of initiative goes beyond the management of home demolitions and Israeli military training exercises: it creates infrastructures allowing for Ibziq inhabitants to stay in the community, therefore implying a higher level of organisation in terms of funding, construction and maintenance of public services.

²²⁹ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

²³⁰ *ibid.*

Building on the work of Carpenter who highlighted that participatory organisational forms have been overlooked within the study of Palestinian civil resistance,²³¹ I argue that the developmental work undertaken by local communities to access public services in open defiance against the restrictions created by the settler colonial power are forms of sumud in themselves. While Carpenter is looking only at organisational dynamics occurring during the First Intifada and the anti-Wall movement, I contend that participatory organisation as a form of resistance (1) is not only occurring in particular historical picks of resistance and temporary mobilisations and (2) that it is not the monopoly of activists and institutional structures such as the popular committees. Indeed, in the Jordan Valley, it can take the form of a permanent way of organising the communal life that is carried out by community members despite of and in opposition to colonial challenges.

3.2.3 Organised resistance throughout Jordan Valley communities: The role of the local grassroots movement

As a result of the prolonged deprivation of public services and the new challenges set by the Oslo process, several members of Jordan Valley communities came together in 2003 to build a community-based campaign with the aim to ‘defend the indigenous presence’ and ‘strengthen Palestinian steadfastness in the Valley’.²³² Relying on a network of engaged individuals throughout the valley that coordinates and acts collectively to conduct public-services related activities, the movement operates within the participatory organisation frame as its forms a ‘system [that] requires leadership in the form of individuals and groups taking initiative, leading by example, so that similarly motivated others might act in concert, bringing with them their diverse constituencies (families, peers, colleagues)’.²³³ The Jordan Valley Solidarity movement is also relying on outside support to conduct its activities, which will be tackled in the next chapter.

²³¹ M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017).

²³² Jordan Valley Solidarity, ‘The campaign’ (26 October 2009) <<http://jordanvalleysolidarity.org/about-us/the-campaign/>> accessed 1 March 2022.

²³³ M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) 63.

The diverse activities conducted by the movement since its creation have been centred around developing the public infrastructure of the Jordan Valley localities as a way to strengthen steadfastness: providing communities with access to water, supplying renewable energy programs, repairing roads, etc. Consequently, this local initiative might inscribe itself in the genealogy of the community-based and civil society organisations that proliferated in the years prior to the First Intifada and that were involved in delivering services to Palestinians. However, after Oslo, these popular grassroots movements ‘were transformed into professional deliverers of foreign development aid’ and adjusted to the agenda of their donors rather than to the needs of their beneficiaries.²³⁴ However, as MJ outlined above, the perspective that is adopted by these community work initiatives is to move away from the relief and emergency support that characterises the work of international organisations in the valley; local communities are rather aiming to proactively implement long term public services programmes that facilitate Palestinian permanence amid the coercive environment set by the settler colonial power.

Significantly, the Jordan Valley movement has focused predominantly on building educational facilities in several communities. Indeed, local activists experienced that guaranteeing the children’s right to education is a key instrument to strengthen Palestinian presence in areas at risk of forcible displacement.²³⁵ The relentless efforts of the Israeli army to counter these grassroots initiatives provide good incentives to understand how much the denial of Palestinian children’s right to education is critical for the settler colonial power’s logic of elimination. RL, the current coordinator of the Jordan Valley movement, recounts the challenging environment that surrounds the building of the schools:

²³⁴ M Darweish and A Rigby, *Popular Protest in Palestine, The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (Pluto Press 2015) 106.

²³⁵ N Gordon and M Rotem, ‘Bedouin Sumud and the Struggle for Education’ (2017) 46(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7.

This school [in Fasayil], when we started, we received at least... more than two [demolition] orders. The soldiers sometimes were coming with big military jeeps and trucks (...) sometimes when we were not there – when we were resting or sleeping in the mosque – to destroy [the building materials].²³⁶

While the educational facilities built by the movement are systematically under the threat of demolition orders as they are built in so-called ‘Area C’,²³⁷ the movement keeps persisting in protecting, building and rebuilding the schools and kindergartens that are so crucial for the Jordan Valley children and their families as a whole.

The faculty of the movement to directly and often successfully respond to the local people’s most critical needs leads the regular inhabitants to be more engaged in the activities conducted in their communities and more confident in pursuing their own initiatives of everyday resistance, as highlighted by the level of involvement of the Palestinians of Fasayil after the construction of the school in 2008: ‘At the beginning the community was not really involved, it was just members [of the movement]. It is normal that the community was scared, but later they stopped being scared, especially the youth, they started to build their own houses alone’.²³⁸ On the other hand, the leading example of the determination of the members of the movement and the success they achieved in securing public services for several communities conferred to this grassroots campaign some kind of public responsibilities in some instances. Indeed, especially regarding the construction of educational facilities, the movement *de facto* supplants the PA, as this should be the prerogative of the Palestinian government. Significantly, once the complicated task to complete the construction of a school under the threat of settler colonial repression is completed, the Jordan Valley activists have to reach out to the PA to pay the teachers.²³⁹ Moreover, even years after the construction, the school principals keep reaching out the local

²³⁶ Interview with RL (Bardala, 23 April 2022).

²³⁷ Jordan Valley Solidarity, ‘The right to education’ (27 May 2011) <<http://jordanvalleysolidarity.org/about-us/the-right-to-education-in-the-jordan-valley/>> accessed 4 March 2022.

²³⁸ Interview with RL (Bardala, 23 April 2022).

²³⁹ *ibid.*

movement to supply their needs in terms of building new classrooms or connecting the existing infrastructure with water and electricity, rather than filling official demands to the Palestinian leadership.

Interestingly, the Jordan Valley movement is also reintroducing traditional techniques of construction that proved more adapted to the local resistance. Indeed, the movement often uses the local long-established construction methods of mud bricks in its several construction projects. While this technique is more affordable for the Jordan Valley communities as it uses a local material, it is particularly useful for the context of systematic and relentless destruction of the building material and early structures by the Israeli army, as the mud brick can be easily reformed and re-used. This creativity of the Jordan Valley movement in its choices in terms of methods of construction highlights traditional practices' potential for resistance.

In conclusion, the capacity of this local, broadly based and inclusive movement to respond to public services needs of the communities acts as direct support for Palestinian permanence in the Jordan Valley. Throughout the actions successfully conducted by the Jordan Valley movement, a particularly significant form of resistance is highlighted. Indeed, the movement is using social community work to resist, which appears efficient to mobilise many local Palestinians in the long term as it is directly responding to their communities' needs. Most importantly, it presents an example of local communities that are left without almost any kind of public authority responding to their needs as a result of the colonial occupation, but who manage to coordinate to autonomously provide for themselves in overt defiance towards the settler colonial structure of oppression.

This chapter highlighted both continuities and transformations within the repertoire of action of sumud that are directly informed by the local communities of the Jordan Valley. Significantly, the practices of everyday resistance that are transmitted throughout generations are grounded in meanings and values connected with the ancestral Palestinian lifestyle on the land and the traditional solidarity networks of understanding and practices of rural communities. On the other hand, transformations are coming from the need for deeper coordination to counter the settler colonial strategy of deprivation of public services. These

grassroots forms of developmental sumud in the Jordan Valley are part of an emerging movement which is framing a ‘*development-resistance* model that is grounded in people’s socioeconomic struggles’.²⁴⁰

While Scott highlighted that the organisational forms of peasant resistance, even relying on collective informal networks, could hardly be labelled as social movements,²⁴¹ it is clear that in the Palestinian context, part of the everyday resistance that is conducted in the Jordan Valley has taken this social movement form. In contrast with Scott’s findings, the methods of resistance practiced by the institutional and grassroots forms of organisation are both open and collective,²⁴² as they mostly consist in community work undertaking relentless and overt construction of public infrastructure despite and in defiance of the settler colonial structure of oppression. Moreover, they do require a consistent amount of coordination and organisation as the grassroots movement created by local communities has constituted itself as an actor able to *de facto* supplant the responsible public authorities in certain cases. As underlined by Fanon, ‘in the colonized context, personal interests are now the collective interest’.²⁴³ In the colonised Jordan Valley, it is clear that the common need to survive on the land through traditional means of livelihood acts as a collective motor for resistance.

²⁴⁰ L Tabar, ‘Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism’ (2016) 45(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.

²⁴¹ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 35.

²⁴² *ibid* 242.

²⁴³ F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press 1963) 11-12.

4. The role of external actors as an additional factor of transformations of the forms of sumud

In addition to the significant role of local communities and the changing settler colonial policies and practices in shaping sumud, an additional factor should also be taken into account when analysing the transformations in the forms of resistance: the influence of the actions conducted by a various set of outside actors operating in the Jordan Valley. From grassroots movements to governmental authorities, a number of actors are involved in different ways with the local communities. I consider organisations based in other locations of Palestine as outside actors as they rely on individuals and structures that are rooted outside of the Jordan Valley. First, the local interactions with these external actors, as well as the emergence of new means of communication in the 21st-century area, are generating transformations from which new forms of sumud are arising or already existing methods of resistance are evolving. Second, the means of steadfastness that are employed by Jordan Valley actors in the last two decades to strengthen the ability of local communities to stay on the land are generating a higher need for coordination within local communities, but also towards outside actors. While Chapter 3 highlighted the structures and methods of resistance that are emerging from this higher need for coordination within local communities, Chapter 4 will elaborate on the support that these local forms of sumud are requiring from outside.

This chapter will be the occasion to reflect on the nature of the coordination required by the everyday forms of resistance that are occurring in the Jordan Valley. Indeed, it appears that peasant resistance in a colonial context demonstrates again differences from peasant forms of class struggle that Scott describes as ‘almost entirely indigenous to the village sphere’ and ‘not linked to

any larger outside (...) movements'.²⁴⁴ Indeed, in the Jordan Valley context, the coordination of resistance exceeds the boundaries of the valley. On the other hand, the coordination required for local forms of resistance is informed by Jordan Valley inhabitants' relationship with the Palestinian leadership, which is characteristic of the mistrust felt by the rural population towards a national elite that is ambiguous about peasant resistance, as described in the *Wretched of the Earth*. Indeed, applying Fanon's reasoning, it is clear that the PA does not aim for 'the radical overthrow of the system' as its own establishment relies on a submission to the colonial power under the frame of the Oslo accords. Therefore, its perspectives in terms of national liberation are way different from the ones of the Jordan Valley peasantry, as the latter is engaged in a life and death struggle against the colonial system. In consequence, the national elite's endeavour towards the peasants is reformist rather than revolutionary, whereas the destructive impact of the settler colonial project of elimination on every aspect of the lives of Jordan Valley Palestinians would require the Palestinian leadership to pursue a radical anti-colonial agency.²⁴⁵

4.1 New forms of sumud emerging from local interactions with outside actors

In this first part, I will look into how outside factors and interactions with external actors are informing the local forms of sumud. Apart from the influence of international and Palestinian organisations on the anti-colonial struggle of the Jordan Valley, it appears that worldwide transformations in the digital era led to the inclusion of new practices within the local repertoire of action of resistance.

²⁴⁴ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 273.

²⁴⁵ F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press 1963) 22-24.

4.1.1 The impact of the 21st-century technologies of communication and information as a factor of transformation

As underlined by Fanon, the technological evolutions of the means of communication are a key factor of transformation within the realm of colonial struggle.²⁴⁶ In the case of the Jordan Valley, the new possibilities for communication opened by the area of connected cellphones and social media are transforming the way the local communities are coordinating existing forms of resistance and, at the same time, are motivating the emergence of practices that local Palestinians, in particular the youth, label as forms of *sumud*. However, the hegemony of the settler colonial power in the sphere of the new technologies of communication must be underlined; on the other hand, the use of the same technological means by Palestinians can be framed as an attempt to counter this colonial hegemony.

As the Palestinian communication infrastructure is almost unavailable in 'Area C' in the Jordan Valley, local communities must rely on the expensive Israeli network. While internet access is an important issue for small communities, the Jordan Valley youth interviewed particularly underlined the importance of new technologies in coordinating and outreaching their resistance. AH, a young farmer from Al Auja, underlined that the area of digital communication allowed the next generation to develop 'other ways of resistance [than the previous generations] because now there is the technology and social media, that we use to publish about what is happening, to unite the youth together to make youth and farmer groups, to organise demonstrations and protests'.²⁴⁷ As Salem noted, cell phones are facilitating the coordination of resistance in Palestinian rural areas,²⁴⁸ including for monitoring nearby settler colonial activity and allowing for quick reactions.

Moreover, the new means of communication allow for a stronger connection with other areas of Palestine. First, the youth is now provided with a greater amount of news content produced by Palestinians through social media and have the possibility to communicate with individuals that restrictions on the freedom

²⁴⁶ F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 69-97.

²⁴⁷ Interview with AH (Al Auja, 9 May 2022).

²⁴⁸ F Salem, 'Palestinian Daily *Sumud* to Confront Israeli Settler Violence in Area C: Al-Qasra Village as a Case Study' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 20 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650378> accessed 22 June 2022.

of movement do not allow them to meet easily. Second, as noted at the scale of Palestine, the internet allows for countering the colonial narrative in the international mediatic scene. Cell phone cameras are systematically used by community members to produce documentation when a home demolition occurs. SH, a young woman from Bardala, underlined that documentation and outreach are one of the ways she resists the settler colonial occupation:

During the demonstrations, I help with media, technology, pictures, reports. It is very important how we share the stories and reports about army exercises and training, about when they destroy trees or pipelines of water – this kind of resistance (...) I share on Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, on my own page or my friends' pages.²⁴⁹

AH also underlines that social media provide an alternative source of information within the Palestinian mediatic scene: 'The main TV and Palestinian media don't really cover everything in the Jordan Valley. This is why social media are important, because anyone can take pictures, write a little bit about what is happening, publish it and share it'.²⁵⁰ While countering the monopoly of traditional media on the realm of information, social media also allow the rural masses, and especially the youth, to participate in the important issue of 'oppos[ing] the enemy news with [their] own news'.²⁵¹ As Palestinians living in 'Area C' are often portrayed as victims through foreign sources of information in a depoliticised humanitarian language,²⁵² Jordan Valley inhabitants are using these means of communication to raise their own voices and reappropriate the testimonies about the reality they live under settler colonial rule.

As Fanon underlined, communication is not a neutral object,²⁵³ and technological evolutions in the realm of communication and information necessarily have a consequent impact on the way resistance is practiced. While Algerians appropriated the

²⁴⁹ Interview with SH (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

²⁵⁰ Interview with AH (Al Auja, 9 May 2022).

²⁵¹ F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 75.

²⁵² L Meari, 'Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in "Area C": the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village' (2017) 52(3) Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal 506.

²⁵³ F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 69-97.

radio to share much-needed information and counter the colonial narrative in times of waggled war, Palestinians from the Jordan Valley use cell phones and social media for the same purposes. On the other hand, these new technologies might permit a better representation of the rural narrative within the national mediatic scene, as the local community level is able to directly interact with other areas of Palestine. It is to be noted that in a colonial context, and especially in the 21st-century era of digital communication, Scott's conclusions about the 'unedited transcript' that would be 'concealed' to the dominant group have to be revisited. Within the online battle for decolonising the narrative about Palestine, part of the everyday resistance used by local farmers is precisely about revealing their part of the transcript. Moreover, while Scott deemed that 'the greater the disparity in power, the greater the proportion of the full transcript that is likely to be concealed',²⁵⁴ it appears that, at least within the realm of social media, a young farmer living in a marginalised rural area does not 'dissemble in the face of power'²⁵⁵ but documents, broadcasts and networks with outside actors against an oppressive military power, in a way that is labelled as a new form of *sumud*.

On the other hand, while Jordan Valley youth often referred to online activism as a new way of resistance, it is crucial to remain critical of the role of the internet within the Palestinian anti-colonial agency. Indeed, while the digital transformations in the realm of communication and information allow for breaching Palestinian territorial fragmentation and fighting the overrepresentation of the Zionist narrative in international media, it is important to locate this online struggle within the structural constraints posed by the infrastructure of the Palestinian internet. Tawil-Souri and Aouragh's 'cyber-colonialism' – understood as the reinforcement of a world of contact and influence between radically asymmetrical power by the internet – engenders a 'disempowering materiality of technology [that] shapes activism'.²⁵⁶ Indeed, the weight of the colonial power in the establishment of the material structure of internet in Palestine combined with the risk of exposition to colonial surveillance and a well-organised censorship system in the

²⁵⁴ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 286.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*

²⁵⁶ H Tawil-Souri and M Aouragh, 'Intifada 3.0? Cyber colonialism and Palestinian resistance' (2014) 22(1) *The Arab Studies Journal* 102.

social media arena deeply constrain Palestinian online activism. Therefore, one should be cautious when analysing the potential offered to the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle by the 21st century digital transformations.

4.1.2 The local interactions with external legal experts and their impact on legal means of everyday resistance

Particularly since the issuance of the state land policy, the action of lawyer organisations to challenge the Israeli oppressive legal system has comprised the practice of providing rural communities with the means to understand the law and defend their properties.²⁵⁷ In the Jordan Valley, these actions conducted by lawyer networks have developed the local legal means of everyday resistance, as many inhabitants labelled their understanding and use of the Israeli legal system to counter the coloniser's oppressive practices as a form of sumud. Notably, it is important to recognise that the outside actor examined here – Palestinian lawyer organisations and networks – does not necessarily has an exogen character, as the lawyers involved in local communities' legal struggles sometimes originated from the Jordan Valley.

In areas that are particularly threatened by a diversified set of settler colonial legal tools, Palestinian lawyer organisations have been active in 'conducting regular awareness sessions with the village councils, some *mukhtars* and chosen persons from Bedouin communities to provide these communities with the means to anticipate and challenge the Israeli military orders and other measures aiming to further the coercive environment imposed on rural areas.²⁵⁸ These actions conducted by Palestinian organisations based outside of the Jordan Valley have genuinely transformed and furthered the use of legal means as forms of everyday resistance. As AH emphasised, 'people now know the law, know who owns the land and that [Israeli authorities] cannot confiscate it because it is 'Area C' or any kind of name they would give to it'.²⁵⁹ In several instances, the increase of knowledge about the coloniser's law and the way to challenge it supports Palestinian sumud in the valley as many individuals have engaged in new practices aiming at deriving the settler colonial legal oppression.

²⁵⁷ P Kohlbry, 'Owning the Homeland: Property, Markets, and Land Defense in the West Bank' (2018) 47(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

²⁵⁹ Interview with AH (Al Auja, 9 May 2022).

From these interactions with external legal experts as well as the regular encounter with the colonial laws, rural communities have developed new practices that aim to support the legal battle for Palestinian lands and homes. These practices are often conducted in anticipation of the Israeli legal repression, from building new classrooms on abandoned structures that would higher the chances of successfully countering a future demolition order to taking pictures of old trees in order to be able to prove later that the coveted area is agricultural even if the trees are one day uprooted. Therefore, the knowledge that local communities have acquired from their interactions with lawyers residing outside of the Jordan Valley and from the growing experience of living under settler colonial rule is not only used through a reactive pattern, but is also employed by local actors in proactive ways that are strengthening steadfastness.

4.1.3 Strengthening Palestinian awareness about the Jordan Valley: The emergence of new practices through local coordination with movements at the national scale

Jordan Valley communities are involved with Palestinian movements and organisations operating at the national scale in raising awareness actions and network building. While this coordination is largely operated through the local grassroots organisation Jordan Valley Solidarity, individuals from various communities are assimilating and appropriating these new practices as relevant forms of *sumud*.

A number of Palestinian organisations and movements, such as Badil or Hemam, have engaged in strengthening the Palestinian awareness about marginalised rural areas such as the Jordan Valley in order to breach the gap between urban and rural populations – a gap that is in itself a settler colonial ‘divide and conquer’ strategy, as colonialism in its very structure is separatist and regionalist.²⁶⁰ Indeed, this public awareness strategy targets Palestinian youth from the West Bank and from the territories captured in 1948 and aims to convey to the urban next generations the importance of supporting the everyday resistance in rural areas. While strengthening national unity, this strategy also participates in the transmission of the connection with the land as a predominant element of the Palestinian culture, thus countering

the settler colonial project of cultural elimination.²⁶¹ This public awareness strategy is mostly conducted through the organisation of field trips for Palestinian youth residing outside of the Jordan Valley. Local communities, and especially the Jordan Valley youth, are deeply involved in the organisation and the animation of these activities, as emphasised by SH: ‘I am helping by organising working trails, bringing Palestinian youth from outside to explain to them about the situation, about what is happening – this kind of resistance to teach the experience and explain to other youth (...) about the situation in the Jordan Valley’.²⁶² Therefore, these local interactions with Palestinian movements such as Badil or Hemam that are operating at the national scale are generating these new practices that are labelled as forms of resistance by the Jordan Valley youth.

Other grassroots campaigns such as Stop the Wall are also pursuing a similar strategy aiming at strengthening local communities’ capacities in terms of bottom-up advocacy. Jamal Juma highlighted the importance of ‘tackling the problem of (...) people speaking on behalf of the Jordan Valley’²⁶³ to move from the humanitarian aid approach that has been the standard for external support to rural areas.²⁶⁴ As this humanitarian approach is weakening the capacity of rural communities to speak for themselves and decide how the challenges they encounter should be tackled, Stop the Wall is motivating the creation of grassroots committees within Jordan Valley inhabitants, and especially the youth, to act locally and independently.²⁶⁵ Some are engaged in spearheading Stop the Wall awareness campaigns, such as the 15 youth from the Jordan Valley that are leading the ‘Right to Water Campaign’.²⁶⁶ As Khaled Abu Qare, a member of the Hemam movement, highlighted, these new forms of support aim to ‘be a bridge between Palestinian organisations, including [non-governmental

²⁶¹ P Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’ (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

²⁶² Interview with SH (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

²⁶³ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

²⁶⁴ L Meari, ‘Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in “Area C”: the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village’ (2017) 52(3) *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* 506.

²⁶⁵ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

²⁶⁶ For further information: Stop the Wall, ‘The Right to Water’ <<https://stopthewall.org/right2water/>> accessed 4 March 2022.

organisations] NGOs, the private sector – for example health organisations –, the government, and these communities'.²⁶⁷ In contrast with international NGOs or governmental agencies that centre their action around material aid and depoliticised development initiatives, the action of Palestinian grassroots movements are operating horizontally through capacity building and the creation of opportunities aiming to be directly connected with local needs. Significantly, the direct involvement of local communities in these initiatives results in the creation of new practices that are appropriated by the youth in their efforts to raise awareness and strengthen networks of resistance and national unity despite the settler colonial separation policy.

4.1.4 The collective lease, a new form of land protection launched by the Palestinian Authority

While the PA participated in the dismantlement of the collective land property system inherited from the Ottoman Empire (*mushaa'*) by encouraging individual registration of private properties,²⁶⁸ the national elite also developed the principle of collective leases that it advertises as a national attempt to protect the land. As the PA possesses some spots of land in rural areas, it issued a call to provide Palestinian farmers, in particular the youth, with affordable leases on agricultural land in areas around cities like Jericho, Tubas, Nablus and Tulkarem.²⁶⁹ Labelled as '*ta'uniye*' (تعاونيات) – cooperative, collective –, this particular type of lease is granted to a group of several farmers who would work this land together and share the profits equitably.

These collective projects are seen by a number of young Palestinians from the Jordan Valley as a new form of land protection. For example, since winter 2021, AH, a young farmer, rents seven hundred dunums of land near Al Auja with 70 classmates from Al Quds university in Jericho. Emphasising that this strategy counters the local settler colonial project as it concerns land that 'used to be under the risk to be confiscated', AH precisely highlighted how the principle of the collective lease allows for land protection:

²⁶⁷ Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

²⁶⁸ N Alkhalil, 'Enclosure from Below: The *Mushaa'* in Contemporary Palestine' (2017) 49(3) *Antipode* 1103.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

When some of us started to go work in the field, the settlers [from ‘Yitav’ colony and ‘Omar’ outpost nearby] came and pushed us away. But when we went all together, the 71 students, the settlers didn’t come to push us away. We thought: ‘Ok, this is the kind of permission we need: to be altogether’.²⁷⁰

As settlers usually gather, sometimes among several colonies, to undertake harassment against farmers, the collective lease facilitates the coordination among Palestinians to achieve some kind of automatic demonstration of force as they arrive in number to work on their lands. The form of direct action that was evocated in Chapter 2 differs from the farmer’s activity under a collective lease: the latter is a temporary event with the direct aim to enter in confrontation with a form of settler colonial oppression, whereas the former is an everyday practice of work with a formal collective organisation. Nevertheless, the mechanisms that allowed AH’s project to be successful might be the same as in the case of the Bardala water struggle or the action against the ‘Rotem-Maskiyot’ fence: the key to the success of these collective actions aiming for reappropriation might be the demonstration of number, which strengthens Palestinians’ confidence and informs the colonisers of the natives’ potential of force.

However, from AH’s account, it appears that collective leases are somehow tied by their dependence on the Palestinian leadership. Indeed, critical infrastructure is awaited from the Ministry of Agriculture for the project to work, as the young farmers are still hoping to receive support from the PA in order to obtain a fence, floor levelling and seeds, as well as help to construct a rainwater dam.²⁷¹ This material support that is not guaranteed raises the question of the autonomy of farmers cultivating under collective lease; moreover, it opens the debate about to which extent outside actors’ activities in the Jordan Valley are participating in strengthening local sumud or, on the contrary, are weakening self-reliance and are failing to produce long term concrete elements challenging the coercive environment imposed by the settler colonial power.

²⁷⁰ Interview with AH (Al Auja, 9 May 2022).

²⁷¹ *ibid.*

4.2 The question of support of local initiatives of sumud from outside actors

As underlined above, the resistance in the Jordan Valley is not depriving itself of the techniques, capacity building and opportunities offered by outside actors, which in return are shaping the forms of sumud undertaken by local communities. While this type of external relations – that are predominantly horizontal and entertained with Palestinian grassroots movements and organisations – seem to be strengthening the overall local agency of resistance against settler colonial oppression and appropriation, other forms of relations exist between Jordan Valley communities and outside actors. Principally shared with governments, intergovernmental agencies and worldwide-scale foreign NGOs, the second type of relation is rather drawn under vertical lines with local communities constituted as mere receivers of material aid. However, the inefficiency of this depoliticised humanitarian model seems to orient Jordan Valley activists' reflections on strategies, in particular within the question of which type of outside actor should be associated with the local initiatives of sumud aiming at the development of the communities' critical public infrastructure.

4.2.1 Experiencing the limits of depoliticised humanitarian aid: A growing distrust in the institutions following the Oslo pattern

Since the Oslo process, several actors have been involved in promoting a depoliticised development-oriented and humanitarian aid approach in Palestine, which was established in 'Area C' as the provision of material aid along – and not in opposition to – the colonial structure. These actors include foreign governments and NGOs that are providing foreign humanitarian capital, which is then channelled by a Palestinian national bourgeoisie and leadership who became mere managers and intermediaries of this foreign investment.²⁷² Building on Meari's demonstration that this structure and discourse promoting a depoliticised humanitarian and developmental model in 'Area C' acts in collusion with

²⁷² N Rodrigo, 'Fanon in Palestine: The institutions of capitulation' (*MEMO Middle East Monitor*, 28 November 2015) <www.middleeastmonitor.com/20151128-fanon-in-palestine-part-3-the-institutions-of-capitulation/> accessed 22 June 2022.

the settler colonial project and constitutes Palestinians as ‘subjects of humanitarian aid’,²⁷³ I am interested here in the two-decades experience of this form of exogen agency for Jordan Valley communities.

As for the Palestinian leadership, the lack of support for the agricultural sector – the PA’s budget is dedicating merely 1% to this sector, with most of it devoted to the salary of the Ministry of Agriculture’s staff²⁷⁴ – has been experienced by local farmer communities as a submission to the settler colonial effort to capture the territories labelled as ‘Area C’. As underlined by AS, an activist from Al Hadidiya, ‘they call themselves the Ministry of Agriculture, while they cannot do anything, they cannot bring any support or anything we need without coordinating with the Israelis’.²⁷⁵ Therefore, Palestinians engaged in local community resistance are perceiving the action of the national elite as necessarily subordinated to the settler colonial authorities. Thus, the deprivation of public services and the lack or inefficiency of the Palestinian public authority’s response, in particular in the creation of schools, led a number of Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley to doubt the capacity of the PA to support their projects. According to RL, the PA’s ‘Wall and Settlement Committee supports the construction of schools only when they have fundraising’.²⁷⁶ RL also raised the issue of restoration and maintenance of ‘Area C’ schools, evocating the reluctance of the Ministry of Education to support new projects in these educational facilities as ‘they prefer that the funding [for these projects] would go to schools in “Area A”’. Fanon’s reflections about the relation of the nationalist political parties and the rural masses appear particularly relevant to shed light on these comments from Jordan Valley activists portraying the PA as a subordinate who does not stand in the way of the settler-colonial power, or even goes along with the colonial agency of capture of the rural areas. Indeed, while the national elite is ambiguous on the issue of the radical overthrow of the system as they can ‘manage to turn colonial exploitation to [their] account’, the nationalist parties generally do not include the rural masses in their political

²⁷³ L Meari, ‘Sumud: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons’ (2014) 113(3) *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 547.

²⁷⁴ S Abdelnour, A Tartir and R Zurayk, ‘Farming Palestine for Freedom’ (*Al Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network*, 2 July 2012) <<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/farming-palestine-freedom-policy-brief/>> accessed 22 June 2022.

²⁷⁵ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

²⁷⁶ Interview with RL (Ras Ein Al Auja, 9 May 2022).

agendas, partly because they have little control over them and are not tied by a form of accountability as their popular support is located in the cities.²⁷⁷ Moreover, this logic of disconnection between a political party emptied of its revolutionary potential and rural masses is strengthened in the context of Palestine, as the infrastructure of Oslo left few spaces for a Palestinian public authority on the land that is the most coveted by the settler colonial project of elimination.

Similarly, the action of international mainstream NGOs is questioned by the local activist network. The lack of a long-term strategic reflection that would consider the political challenges is put forward:

Give me just a name of one village, from the North of the Jordan Valley to the South, where [international organizations] solved the water problem. Nothing. They come and they give a water tank or a tractor. But this is not how we solve the problem. To solve the problem, they can dig water wells in all the villages and build water pipelines.²⁷⁸

From RL's account, it appears that a number of Jordan Valley activists are highly critical of the humanitarian approach as it is limited to material support in complete disconnection with local needs and total disregard for the 'material power structures that constitute the source of their oppression'.²⁷⁹ In essence, constituting Jordan Valley inhabitants as receivers of humanitarian aid is denying the political responsibility of the Israeli authorities in depriving Palestinians of housing, water, work, education, etc. Moreover, as material items distributed by these foreign organisations are often confiscated by the Israeli army, local communities are experiencing firsthand the limits of the humanitarian approach in terms of effectiveness and sustainability.

As for foreign governments and intergovernmental organisations, the repetitive confiscations of Western embassies' and UN agencies' humanitarian material by the Israeli army has convinced local communities of the powerlessness and lack of political will of these entities when it comes to challenging the settler colonial

²⁷⁷ F Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press 1963) 68-75.

²⁷⁸ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

²⁷⁹ L Tabar, 'Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism' (2016) 45(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.

authorities. Several local activists recounted the lack of political response to the violent assault against a member of the French embassy as she stood up against the confiscation of the material that was brought to Mak-hul community in 2014:

The craziest thing for us was (...) that the French authorities didn't do anything against those soldiers, and they asked this lady to go back to France. For us, this means that they agree with what the Israeli soldiers are doing (...) This is why we don't feel that international authorities can give us any kind of rights as they don't even protect their own citizens.²⁸⁰

From local accounts of this particular event, it seems that it might have been experienced by Jordan Valley Palestinians as a final step of the realisation of the total *carte blanche* given by Western governments to the settler colonial power to pursue its incremental ethnic cleansing. For a number of Jordan Valley activists, Western governments' humanitarian activity simply appears as a cover for their complicity with the settler colonial project of elimination. As noted by Jamal Juma, Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley are experiencing 'a huge anger against everybody, particularly against the Palestinian leadership'.²⁸¹ This growing distrust and dissatisfaction from Palestinians living in 'Area C' towards the depoliticised humanitarian approach undertaken by international and national authorities and foreign organisations appear in other rural areas of the West Bank²⁸² and leads to reflections about strategies regarding partnership within local communities.

4.2.2 Local outreach for partnership: Drawing conclusions from the limits of the depoliticised humanitarian model

As a result of the two-decade experience of local communities of the limits of the depoliticised humanitarian model, Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley are more and more rejecting the vertical approach of emergency support that emerged from the Oslo process. AS, a 70-year old activist from Al Hadidiya, underlined:

²⁸⁰ Interview with RI (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

²⁸¹ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

²⁸² F Salem, 'Palestinian Daily Sumud to Confront Israeli Settler Violence in Area C: Al-Qasra Village as a Case Study' (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 20 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650378> accessed 22 June 2022.

My generation believed sometimes in the neighbours [states], sometimes in the international community or authorities, that they would do something. But now the youth in the future will be stronger, because they discovered how the international community and our leaders lie about the occupation and our situation.²⁸³

While a widespread loss of confidence in the political system has been noted within the next generation of Palestinians,²⁸⁴ this account underlines that the rural youth realised the inefficiency of the humanitarian approach through witnessing it firsthand. AS' comment highlights that the next generation might tend to lessen their expectations in terms of governmental support and increase self-reliance in their modes of resistance.

As underlined in Chapter 3, this trend is already initiated through local communities' councils and grassroots attempts to deliver public services in relative independence from the networks of foreign governmental funding and Palestinian leadership's action. MJ, the head of Ibziq local council who undertook the construction of public infrastructure in defiance of the settler colonial policies, underlined that the council members and activists had to distance themselves from the humanitarian aid approach as they 'started to stop thinking in terms of emergency support, but focused on a project with a strategy – not just giving a simple basket of food for the families'.²⁸⁵ RL, the coordinator of the Jordan Valley grassroots movement, reached the same conclusion:

What we need is not just emergency (...) And we go for demonstrations, taking pictures, writing reports, we are trying to make pressure on international embassies or organisations like the Red Cross or UNDP, but it is not working. And this is why we were thinking that we have to have our own strategy to protect at least what we need to survive.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Interview with AS (Al Hadiya, 21 April 2022).

²⁸⁴ M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) p189; J Hoigilt, 'Nonviolent mobilization between a rock and a hard place: Popular resistance and double repression in the West Bank' (2015) 52(5) *Journal of Peace Research* 636.

²⁸⁵ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

²⁸⁶ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

Therefore, local communities and movements would aim to undertake their own projects to secure public services without expecting much from governments and mainstream NGOs, which are reluctant to invest funds and energy in 'Area C' and are likely to impose their own views on political grounds of the projects.

However, to be able to *de facto* supplant the responsible public authorities in terms of construction, reparation and management of public infrastructure, these local initiatives of sumud are demanding time, construction work and funds. In this regard, the Jordan Valley grassroots campaign is particularly active in connecting with Palestinian movements and international solidarity groups for funding, volunteer work, outreach, etc. Khaled Abu Qare argues that transformations in the forms of sumud are largely influenced by these interactions between local communities and a variety of civil society groups:

Concerning the Jordan Valley, I do believe that the methods in general are the same – agriculture – but the ways of support of these methods are changing. Now younger generations (...) are relying on reaching out to Palestinian and international groups (...) Nowadays they are working on more ways to raise their cause in the Jordan Valley.²⁸⁷

Indeed, these civil society movements, as they are not embedded in the humanitarian paradigm, can genuinely share the political principles of *resistance-development*²⁸⁸ against settler colonialism.

While local communities are still constituted as subjects of humanitarian aid in many cases, the Jordan Valley activist networks are aiming to distance themselves from the dependence on a depoliticised foreign support that is often disconnected from their realities as it lacks political standing. While these initiatives cannot pretend to deconstruct overarching colonial structures, at least they are challenging the roots of the settler colonial strategy of incremental ethnic cleansing through the weaponisation of public services.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

²⁸⁸ L Tabar, 'Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism' (2016) 45(4) Journal of Palestine Studies 16.

In conclusion, it appears that the forms of everyday resistance employed in the Jordan Valley are well connected with the outside world. Despite the separatist structure of colonialism, Palestinian civil society organisations manage to interact with the local communities of the valley in an attempt to strengthen national unity and support the areas of the West Bank that are the most targeted by the settler colonial project of elimination. In doing so, they are consolidating, influencing and creating methods of *sumud* used by Jordan Valley Palestinians. On the other hand, the growing distrust in more formal types of external actors – Palestinian and foreign governments and mainstream NGOs – is generating transformations in the local reflections over partnership strategies. While the most active members of local communities are distancing themselves from the depoliticised humanitarian discourse, they are focusing on producing their own projects, conceived as methods of development implemented in open defiance to the settler colonial power. In doing so, they are turning to other types of outside actors – civil society and grassroots movements and organisations – that are more likely to share their political views and work in a horizontal manner.

Therefore, while I already highlighted that the everyday forms of resistance undertaken within the colonial context of the Jordan Valley are more confrontational and more organised than in Scott's class struggle setting, a third major difference with our theoretical framework arouses: the existence of exogen elements in the peasant struggle. Indeed, while Scott only saw 'forms of struggle almost entirely indigenous to the village sphere',²⁸⁹ Jordan Valley inhabitants highlighted important horizontal coordination with grassroots, civil society and solidarity groups at the national and international scale. Not only these exogen elements are supporting local forms of *sumud*, but their involvement in Jordan Valley resistance has impacts on the nature and degree of the forms of everyday resistance practiced by local communities.

5. Prospects for the future: Transformations of sumud in the face of settler colonial acceleration

While Chapter 1 highlighted that since 1967, and in particular since the Oslo process in the 1990s, the settler colonial policies implemented in the Jordan Valley amount to an incremental ethnic cleansing that has been able to forcibly displace an important amount of the native population from their ancestral land, it appears that since few years the Zionist project of elimination has been taken to an upper level. Several interviewees recounted this recent acceleration undertaken by the settler colonial power in its long-standing attempt to evacuate Palestinians from ‘Area C’, and in particular the Jordan Valley. Jamal Juma highlighted what might be a historical turning point for Palestinians living in this rural area:

If you look at the situation, how it was twenty years ago and how it is now, it has totally deteriorated (...) How long can [Palestinians] be standing alone in front of the settlers and the so-called civil administration which is the main tool for the ethnic cleansing of the Jordan Valley? All these Israeli powers that come together in order to evacuate the Jordan Valley are more powerful than all the reactions on the other side.²⁹⁰

Despite all the forms of steadfastness that have been perpetrated or created among local communities to resist forcible displacement, it appears that everyday resistance in the Jordan Valley is increasingly lacking means to respond to this recent worsening in settler colonial policies and practices.

²⁹⁰ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

One should consider this unprecedented acceleration in the light of the observations made in the previous chapters. Within Chapter 2, I underlined the validity of Scott's point that 'massive and sudden changes that decisively destroy nearly all the routines of daily life and, at the same time, threaten the livelihood of much of the population' are more likely to provoke open and collective defiance.²⁹¹ As the settler colonial power usually implements changes in its policies and practices through a series of piecemeal shifts rather than suddenly and massively, it should be asked whether this particularly destructive acceleration would trigger a collective response in the form of open, collective direct action. On the other hand, Chapters 3 and 4 highlighted that in the colonial context of the Jordan Valley, the level of organisation and co-ordination of everyday resistance is not restricted to the network of understanding and practices of the village sphere, but amounts to a social movement form able to coordinate with outside partners. As it is clear that this level of coordination emerged from the need to strengthen *sumud* in the face of a prolonged settler colonial military occupation depriving communities of basic services, we can ask how these forms of organised everyday resistance acting as a network of local communities connected with outside civil society movements will respond to this attempt of the settler colonial power to accelerate its project of elimination. After introducing the forms this Zionist acceleration is taking in the Jordan Valley, I will analyse the available options for local communities and the forms of resistance that are emerging to counter these changes in settler colonial policies and practices.

5.1 An unprecedented deterioration of the situation of rural Palestinians: old and new tools for the settler colonial project

As noted by several of our interviewees, Palestinians living in "Area C" [are] witnessing (...) the most difficult period of time since the last decade'.²⁹² Undoubtedly, the changes in the repertoire of strategies that underlie this acceleration in the advancement of the project of elimination are linked with the inclusion within the Israeli government of the most extremist far-right

²⁹¹ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 242.

²⁹² Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

political parties since 2018, as for these parties the capture of ‘Area C’ through settlement expansion and Palestinian removal is the top public priority.²⁹³ Furthermore, the Israeli government has been emboldened by the unconditional support of the United States of America (US) under the mandate of Donald Trump, in particular with the 2020 so-called ‘peace plan’ of the US administration that projected to formally annex the Jordan Valley.

5.1.1 Pastoral colonialism: strategic changes in settler colonial modes of production

While some have noted the astonishing acceleration in the expropriation of Palestinian land recently,²⁹⁴ few researchers have studied the new phenomenon of pastoral colonialism.²⁹⁵ Described by Jamal Juma as ‘one of the most dangerous colonial steps that are threatening the communities [of the Jordan Valley]’,²⁹⁶ pastoral colonialism is a new strategy developed by the settler colonial system to accelerate its project of elimination in ‘Area C’. It consists of the establishment of small outposts where settlers are using shepherding as their main source of income. In doing so, they *de facto* control the surrounding mountains and are blocking Palestinian shepherds’ access to huge parts of land that were used by native inhabitants for ancestral times as grazing areas. It has been estimated that there are about 77 of these shepherding outposts, among which the great majority has been established during the Trump administration.²⁹⁷

While historically Israeli settlements have predominantly used farming as their main source of income, this shift in modes of production can be explained by the greater potential of pastoralism for confiscating land. Indeed, recent shepherd outposts are able to confiscate huge parts of land in a restricted amount of time, as underlined by AA: ‘[These settlers] are shepherds and

²⁹³ M Shqair, ‘Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley’ (2022) 2 Transactions of the Jewish National Fund 4.

²⁹⁴ Y Hawari, ‘Israel’s Relentless Land Grabs: How Palestinians Resist’ (*Al Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network*, 9 April 2018) <<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/israels-relentless-land-grabs-how-palestinians-resist/>> accessed 22 June 2022.

²⁹⁵ M Shqair, ‘Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley’ (2022) 2 Transactions of the Jewish National Fund 4.

²⁹⁶ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

²⁹⁷ B McKernan and Q Kierszenbaum, ‘The land beyond the road is forbidden’: Israeli settler shepherds displace Palestinians’ (*The Guardian*, 20 June 2022) <www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/20/land-beyond-road-forbidden-israeli-settler-shepherds-displacing-palestinians> accessed 3 July 2022.

don't let Palestinians enter the rest of the land. An outpost can be built on one dunum, but it will control one thousand dunums'.²⁹⁸ A farming settlement controls less land than a pastoral settlement, as agricultural fields are far smaller than the huge grazing areas required to feed the livestock. Moreover, as the Israeli authorities built a legal structure devoted to the legalisation of land confiscation, farming settlements rely on the legal process of land capture implemented by Israeli formal bodies. On the other hand, shepherd settlers are not bounded by this need of legal support from the colonial authorities to confiscate the land, as pastoral land control from settlers does not necessitate to modify the legal property status of the land as it relies essentially on the informal use of force to restrict Palestinian access. Significantly, pastoral settlements are usually outposts that are illegal even under Israeli law; this illegality under the colonial system does not prevent in any way the state from supporting these settlements. These recent changes in settler colonial strategies might complete Wolfe's account of the economic centrality of agriculture for settler colonial projects compared to other modes of production.²⁹⁹ Indeed, as Wolfe noted, agriculture entails a greater life-sustaining potential for supporting a large settler population; on the other hand, pastoralism might be a more efficient mode of production in terms of land confiscation than farming. The greater potential of pastoralism in terms of land control has been demonstrated by Palestinians since decades as, according to AS, '90% of the land here is protected by the [Palestinian] shepherds'.³⁰⁰

While this recent practice allows the settler colonial system to appropriate more land, it is also an accelerator for ethnic cleansing in the Jordan Valley. In countering the protection of land by Palestinian shepherds, pastoral colonialism is rendering their livelihood and activity extremely challenging. While this practice falls under a long genealogy of oppressive policies and practices targeting Palestinian shepherds, this strategy might consist of a more redoubtable tool for eviction. Many Palestinian shepherds have no options anymore to graze their livestock, which forces them to buy unaffordable fodder or to overgraze in limited pastureland

²⁹⁸ Interview with AA (Humsa, 13 May 2022).

²⁹⁹ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

³⁰⁰ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

– resulting in the devastation of their environment.³⁰¹ Combined with the experience of quotidian settler violence, the actions of pastoral colonialism against Palestinian shepherds ‘have quietly and gradually been successful in debilitating their lives, economies and attachment to the land’.³⁰² Recounting how shepherd settlers are hindering her family’s activity, EN highlights another challenge posed by shepherd settlers:

‘Suhail’ settlers, just in front of ‘Mechola’ colony, started to control the whole high trails (...) They are using drone cameras to watch the area. When they see someone who is entering the area with their sheep or goats, they go to the trail to scare them and take them out.³⁰³

Indeed, shepherd settlers are in a particularly favourable position to produce information on Palestinian activity, and therefore act as an additional actor monitoring both shepherding and building activities. Thus, along with settler organisations and the Israeli Civil Administration, these individuals are an integral part of the settler colonial monitoring system for home demolitions.

In terms of support, Wolfe’s ‘global chain of command linking remote colonial frontiers to the metropolis’ can be observed within this phenomenon of pastoral colonialism.³⁰⁴ Indeed, these ‘frontier individuals’ deeply involved in advancing the Zionist project do receive not only state protection – the Israeli army protects these outposts and any kind of activity they involve in, including harassment of Palestinians – but also a wide range of developmental support.³⁰⁵ AA underlines the striking disparity in infrastructure provision between the Palestinians still living in Humsa and the colonial outpost nearby:

³⁰¹ L Meari, ‘Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in “Area C”: the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village’ (2017) 52(3) Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal 506; M Shqair, ‘Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley’ (2022) 2 Transactions of the Jewish National Fund 4.

³⁰² M Shqair, ‘Israeli Shepherd Settlements – Ecological Colonialism in the Jordan Valley’ (2022) 2 Transactions of the Jewish National Fund 4.

³⁰³ Interview with EN (Bardala, 27 April 2022).

³⁰⁴ P Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’ (2006) 8(4) Journal of Genocide Research 387.

³⁰⁵ These foreign ‘charitable’ organisations, mainly based in the US, are listed on the website of the boycott campaign ‘Defund Racism’ (available at: <<https://defundracism.org/>> accessed 25 April 2022).

The settlers near Beit Dajan – they built a new outpost there last year – for the new settlers, [Israeli authorities] built for them a road, good houses and structures, they connected the water, electricity – while I spent 45 years here and I don't have any kind of services.³⁰⁶

In addition, shepherd settlers receive funds to develop their pastoral activity. The actors involved in this very structured chain of support go from Israeli ministries, settler local councils, settler organisations and foreign 'charitable' networks complicit with the Zionist project, which are able to secure developmental, judicial and economic assistance to these pastoral outposts.³⁰⁷

This developed structure of support for pastoral colonialism sheds light on the importance of this new strategy for the Zionist project. Significantly, this shift in modes of production has ideological implications, as the figure of 'settler-soldiers' has been historically grounded in the ideal of farming.³⁰⁸ While for most of the Zionist history the shepherd semi-nomadic native was the 'new Jew's formative Other',³⁰⁹ it appears that today the Palestinian practice of pastoralism falls under a large range of indigenous elements that are objects of the geographic, historical and cultural appropriation by Zionism. As highlighted by Khaled Abu Qare, to differentiate from their foreign roots, Zionists 'copied and pasted from Palestinians' while 'they never had shepherds because it is not part of their cultures'.³¹⁰ In consequence, Zionists finally adopted pastoralism, not only for its potential in terms of control of land and Palestinian removal, but also for appropriating the indigenous character of this practice to mimic the native connection with the land.

³⁰⁶ Interview with AA (Humza, 13 May 2022).

³⁰⁷ A Al-Qadi, "'Death to Arabs": About the Hilltop Settler Youth' (*Barricade*, May 2021) <[<http://co.metras.www/>] accessed 3 May 2022.

³⁰⁸ J Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question, Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (Routledge 2006); G Fields, *Enclosure, Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (University of California Press 2017) 201-02.

³⁰⁹ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

³¹⁰ Interview with Khaled Abu Qare (Hemam movement) (Ramallah, 17 May 2022).

5.1.2 Change in degree: A noticeable increase in settler violence and settlement expansion

While pastoral colonialism can be considered a change in nature within the Israeli repertoire of policies and practices, it also participates in a general change in degree within the current strategies of violence and spatial expansion. Indeed, this recent phenomenon mushroomed in the Jordan Valley with dire implications for the lives of Palestinians. Local activists estimate that five years ago, the settler colonial outposts of ‘Omar’ (near Al Auja) and ‘Selid’ (near ‘Mechola’ colony) were the only pastoral settlements in the area. Within the last three years, ten outposts were built in the Northern Jordan Valley, while the rest of the area also gradually witnesses this increase in the establishment of pastoral settlements, as ‘the strategy implemented in the North is going slowly to the South’.³¹¹

The increase of this type of settlers, which are particularly extremists in their understanding and practice of Zionism, is also triggering new forms of violence against Palestinian communities.³¹² For example, MJ recounted that:

Since the last three years, settlers started to come a lot to our community. Every two or three months, a lot of settlers come, sometimes as a group. Last two months came around 50 settlers – men, women and children – and they entered the school. Without asking, without any respect. And the Israeli soldiers came to protect them (...) They come to the school to show to our children their weapons.³¹³

Several members of Jordan Valley communities expressed concerns about this unprecedented increase in settler violence, from petty delinquency and sabotage to criminal acts. According to AS, the settler councils are particularly involved in triggering acts of violence against Palestinians, especially shepherds: ‘The Israelis are trying a new way by using a new kind of crime to displace us. What is new is that the whole area is now under the settler council, and these people are using the policy of mafia against

³¹¹ Interview with RL (Ras Ein Al Auja, 9 May 2022).

³¹² A Al-Qadi, ‘“Death to Arabs”: About the Hilltop Settler Youth’ (*Barricade*, May 2021) <[<https://co.metras.www/> accessed 3 May 2022].

³¹³ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

our civilians'.³¹⁴ Several interviewees also reported that this dire increase in colonial violence is not only supported but also perpetrated by the Israeli forces, from rises in the army activity at the checkpoints surrounding the valley³¹⁵ to accounts of 'settlers push[ing] the soldiers to use the military tank to shoot directly in the direction of the shepherds and the animals'.³¹⁶ According to Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley, this increase in settler colonial violence amounts to a 'new kind of strategy of attacks and harassment',³¹⁷ connected with pastoral colonialism and critical for the acceleration of the Zionist project of spatial expansion through indigenous removal.

5.1.3 Acceleration in legal colonial tools and rampant institutionalisation of annexation

Since the entry of extreme far-right political parties into the Israeli government, the settler colonial system added a new set of particularly harsh measures within its panoply of legal tools aiming at the eviction of Palestinians. In addition to the existing types of policies used to prevent Palestinians from building structures, the issuance of the military order 70-97 in 2018, called the '96 hours order', is 'one of the most dangerous military orders that [Palestinians] have been challenging' according to Wael Abdul Raheem.³¹⁸ Not only does it legalise the demolition of already established structures whose construction is not complete, but it considerably restricts the possibility for Palestinian lawyers to pursue the 'chasing time' strategy as the owners don't have enough time to submit the documents to file an objection.³¹⁹ Moreover, in recent years, the annual budget for inspection of Palestinian building activity increased, which resulted in 'an unprecedented number of demolition cases'.³²⁰ Furthermore, in addition to the military firing zone and natural reserve areas, the settler colonial system issued a new policy in the form of the archaeological area status. This new land status is yet another colonial tactic to restrict Palestinian access and activities in huge parts of the territory.

³¹⁴ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022). The reference to the recent appropriation of the area by the settler council will be explained in the following part.

³¹⁵ Interview with EN (Bardala, 27 April 2022).

³¹⁶ Interview with AA (Humsa, 13 May 2022).

³¹⁷ *ibid.*

³¹⁸ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

³¹⁹ *ibid.*

³²⁰ *ibid.*

Wael Abdul Raheem also highlighted the political implications of the 2018 amendment adopted by the Knesset that transferred original jurisdiction over certain cases of the West Bank from the Supreme Court to a subdivision of the Jerusalem District Court, the latter being now in charge of ‘the highest number of cases in the West Bank about forcible transfer, land, eviction, freedom of movement, access to information’,³²¹ etc. Besides putting further obstacles for Palestinians living in the West Bank to access justice, the political meaning of this change is that ‘the whole area of the West Bank became as just an attached part to some district, and not in a special situation’ as the Supreme Court used to rule it.³²²

While these new policies concern the whole ‘Area C’, additional challenges are posed to Jordan Valley Palestinians as they are witnessing evidence of a rampant institutionalisation of the Zionist annexation project. One of the most striking indications of this dangerous advancement occurred on 8 March 2022, when Palestinian markets on road 90 between Kardala and Ein El Beida were destroyed by the Israeli police under an order that was not issued by the military administration, but directly by the settler local council. Our legal expert recognised that ‘it was a unique case, to conduct such direct intervention; this is the only example we have’.³²³ One could consider this event as a merely symbolic move as the political bodies who are controlling the army are already indirectly controlled by settlers. However, Jordan Valley activists are particularly worried by this colonial move as they see it as a step of institutionalisation of the *de facto* annexation of the valley.³²⁴ Referring to this settler demolition order, AS underlined that ‘what is more dangerous now is that the Israeli occupation gave the responsibility to the settler council to arrange and control the area’.³²⁵ Indeed, this demolition directly ordered by the settler local council, and performed by the Israeli police (while it is normally conducted by the military), might be a sign of some form of abdication from the colonial political bodies to the settlers’ will to

³²¹ Interview with Wael Abdul Raheem (JLAC) (Ramallah, 18 May 2022).

³²² *ibid.*

³²³ *ibid.*

³²⁴ Interview with RL (Bardala, 19 April 2022).

³²⁵ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

gradually legalise the annexation of the valley. According to Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley, this direct power in the hands of the settler local council would increase the promptness, automaticity and scale of the settler colonial oppressive policies.

In conclusion, it appears that Palestinians living in 'Area C' have been facing for the last few years an unprecedented deterioration of their situation due to an acceleration of Israeli settler colonialism in the advancement of its project of elimination. It appears that this acceleration is undertaken by the whole settler colonial system: from scattered individuals and groups establishing pastoral colonialism on the ground with support coming from official bodies to foreign Zionist partners, to the increased cooperation from the Israeli army and Parliamentary body with the settler councils and organisations to further Palestinian removal. These new settler colonial tools combined with the already existing set of oppressive policies and practices are accelerating Zionist spatial expansion and Palestinian forced displacement. This dangerous repertoire of action of Israeli settler colonialism is posing new challenges to Palestinian resistance, which has engaged in a process of strategic reflections to find solutions to this Zionist acceleration.

5.2 Palestinian initiatives to face settler colonial acceleration: The quest for pro-active strategies of decolonisation

Indeed, despite the confrontational nature of the forms of *sumud* and the capacity of Jordan Valley Palestinians to coordinate and organise at diverse scales to strengthen their steadfastness, the unequal balance of power and the permanent adaptation of Israeli settler colonialism in finding new tools to further constrain Palestinian presence reduces the natives' ability to resist on their land to a movement that is only able to slow down the advancement of the settler colonial project, rather than countering or reversing it. As underlined by Jamal Juma, 'we are managing the crisis much more than we are finding solutions'.³²⁶

³²⁶ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

5.2.1 The lack of available options to resist settler violence and expansion

At the scale of the West Bank, a practice that has been employed to counter pastoral colonialism and the related increase in settler violence and denial of Palestinian shepherd's access to grazing lands consists in the outreach to international groups dedicated to protective presence. While the mobilisation of foreign volunteers within Palestinian resistance dates back to the First Intifada, their involvement in protection activities developed particularly in the early 2000s, particularly with the emergence of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM).³²⁷ This protective presence strategy can be defined as 'the practice of activists accompanying Palestinians as they go about their daily lives so that, by their presence and witness, they can deter assaults by settlers and the Israeli occupation forces'.³²⁸ Therefore, the Jordan Valley grassroots movement 'is encouraging protective presence solidarity groups to expand their activity in the valley, because the shepherds are on their own'.³²⁹ Indeed, according to RL, the Jordan Valley has been overlooked so far by protective presence groups while other West Bank activists managed to engage them in the long run. This might be due to the tendency to prioritise the use of international volunteers for protests and demonstrations over participation in community work.³³⁰ On the other hand, foreign protective groups are not a sustainable option (as proven by the COVID-19 pandemic) as they create dependence on international presence; moreover, they often delimit the 'legitimate' ways of resistance by using the language of non-violence that 'decontextualizes settler colonialism as a fundamental premise in understanding the struggle of Palestinians'.³³¹ In conclusion, international protective presence groups cannot be a solution on their own to the acceleration of settler violence and expansion.

³²⁷ M Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine, A History of Hope and Empowerment* (Pluto Press 2011) 171.

³²⁸ M Darweish and A Rigby, *Popular Protest in Palestine, The Uncertain Future of Unarmed Resistance* (Pluto Press 2015) 84.

³²⁹ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

³³⁰ M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) 247.

³³¹ L Meari, 'Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in "Area C": the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village' (2017) 52(3) Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal 506.

On the other hand, efforts are made by Palestinian led-movements to decrease the resources available for pastoral settlements by defunding the organisations that support them.³³² However, Jamal Juma noted the limits of this kind of initiative as it ‘will not make the settlers leave; (...) this needs political pressure’; moreover, it relies on a long-term strategy that does not show results immediately ‘while people’s lives are affected [on the ground]’.³³³

In addition, in the most threatened areas, community-based reflections are emerging to counter this increase in settlement activity, as noted by MJ:

We are trying to find a way to prevent settlers from entering the area or the village (...) We are communicating together among families who live there, the council and other groups of activists to organise between us. If we see anything we will let each other know, to try somehow to kick the settlers out.³³⁴

This account underlines the need for coordination to strengthen the Palestinian response to this increase in settler violence and expansion. While this level of organisation does not match the one of the Palestinian night watch committees that developed in some villages outside of the Jordan Valley,³³⁵ this solution against settlement activity is also limited as Palestinian communities have restricted capabilities compared to the armed and state-supported settlers.³³⁶

Overall, it appears that communities of the Jordan Valley are lacking any sustainable, thorough and timely response to the unprecedented acceleration of the settler colonial project so far. When asked about solutions to face this increase in settler violence, Jordan Valley shepherds provided a similar answer as AA’s:

³³² The campaign that is the most mentioned when talking about pastoral colonialism and settler expansion in general is the Defund Racism Campaign <<https://defundracism.org/>> accessed 25 April 2022.

³³³ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

³³⁴ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

³³⁵ L Meari, ‘Colonial dispossession, developmental discourses, and humanitarian solidarity in “Area C”: the case of the Palestinian Yanun Village’ (2017) 52(3) Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal 506.

³³⁶ F Salem, ‘Palestinian Daily Sumud to Confront Israeli Settler Violence in Area C: Al-Qasra Village as a Case Study’ (*Institute for Palestine Studies*, 20 July 2020) <www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650378> accessed 22 June 2022.

‘We have this power just to resist and to stay. If [settlers] shoot to kill my sheep I can try to protect them, take them away and keep going. If they destroy my water tank, I will just fix it and keep going’.³³⁷

From this account, it appears that Palestinian shepherds are lacking new strategies to counter this recent trend and therefore are relying on the repertoire of action of the limited action reaction pattern. As underlined by Manal Shqair, an activist and researcher for Stop the Wall who worked on the impact of pastoral colonialism on Palestinians in the Jordan Valley: ‘what can they do in order to react to this situation? [Palestinians there] are very desperate. One of them told me, ‘When there is an Israeli shepherd trying to attack me and kill me, what can I do? I just need to escape’.³³⁸ In consequence, the lack of solutions to counter this unprecedented acceleration in the settler colonial project of elimination deeply threatens the local capacities to maintain Palestinian pastoral presence in the valley in the long run, with the substantial implications this would have in terms of land confiscation and ethnic cleansing.

5.2.2 The reach of a crisis point and its potential in terms of direct confrontation

The next generations of Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley have faced since their childhood a more challenging coercive environment than their parents and grandparents, as noted by MJ: ‘For the youth it is more difficult. Every year, every day, Israelis are using more difficult policies. For my generation, it was not like this. [What changed is that] the youth cannot see anything for the future’.³³⁹

Indeed, these higher difficulties come from the combination of more and more settler colonial policies and practices that render permanence on the land increasingly complicated. The youth is experiencing challenges in a different way than their elders: for instance, the generation that is now in their twenties suffered from home demolitions as children and are now facing the same threats as parents. Moreover, with this deterioration of the situation of Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley, the next

³³⁷ Interview with AA (Humsa, 13 May 2022).

³³⁸ Interview with Manal Shqair (Stop the Wall) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

³³⁹ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

generations are confronted with a severe lack of opportunities in terms of work and preservation of the family's agribusiness. As the settler colonial policies related to schools in the valley do not allow most of the youth to access quality high education, many underlined their fear of not being able to find a position in the current West Bank job market. For young farmers and shepherds, they see the amount of land available to them decrease in the future due to water issues and settlers' expansion and violence, as foreseen by EZ: 'I feel that the future will be harder and more difficult. As an example, my father is planting now twenty dunums of vegetables, but in the future, I think I won't be able to plant more than ten or eight'.³⁴⁰ If they find themselves in this situation, they must turn to wage labour, either in Israeli settlements or in the West Bank where the job market is severely constrained – therefore abandoning the rural traditional lifestyle and their ancestral lands.

Despite this lack of hope for the future, the great majority of our interviewees maintained that Jordan Valley youth will not leave the area. Some underlined the attachment to the land as a motor for *sumud*, while others highlighted that there is no opportunity for them in 'Area A' or 'B' anyway: 'Until now I cannot see my future, but can you imagine if I would leave to other areas? (...) Here is my father's house, my family, my land'.³⁴¹ While these accounts might be reevaluated in light of the constant increase of challenges impeding the practice of *sumud*, they testify to a strong will to stay and resist while young people are facing what Fanon called an 'ever-menacing death (...) experienced as endemic famine, unemployment (...) and the absence of any hope for the future'.³⁴²

As Scott underlined, and as I witnessed with the examples of the Bardala water struggle and the fight against the 'Rotem-Mas-kiyot' fence, 'the explosions themselves are frequently a sign that the normal and largely covert forms of class struggle are failing or have reached a crisis point'.³⁴³ As the acceleration in settler colonial oppression detailed above threatens all aspects of Palestinian rural life and current forms of *sumud* are failing to provide efficient answers, the next generations might face this crisis point.

³⁴⁰ Interview with EZ (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

³⁴¹ *ibid.*

³⁴² F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 128.

³⁴³ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 37.

This is what SH, a young woman from Bardala, underlined when asked about the future: ‘If [Israelis] control the whole water and we cannot access any water resource and grow our farm and land, the people will start just fighting and resisting’.³⁴⁴ Moreover, some interviewees from older generations elaborated on their perception of the ways of resistance that will be used in the future, underlying that the next generations might be likely to engage in more confrontational forms of anticolonial struggle, as MJ highlighted: ‘The whole situation (...) puts more pressure on the youth. The youth now are like mines, any time they can just decide to do anything’.³⁴⁵ AS described this potentiality as a natural reaction against the increase in settler violence and expansion: ‘If the Israelis keep using this kind of violence (...) there will be a strong intifada or a strong fight’.³⁴⁶ In these cases, these older Palestinians expressed concern and disapproval towards the idea that the youth would engage more in a direct fight against the coloniser, thus echoing Fanon’s account of the role of generational transformations, where older generations would first be recalcitrant to their children’s participation in the national liberation struggle.³⁴⁷

5.2.3 Emergence of new strategies of sumud:

The case of Al-Hama

Beyond the general lack of immediate solutions to counter the recent trend of acceleration of the settler colonial project of elimination, in some instances new strategies are emerging in the field. In this part, I will present the case study of an initiative from the Jordan Valley grassroots activist movement in the community of Al-Hama, in the Northern part of the valley. The strategy underlying this project combines the diverse practices of the repertoire of action of sumud as well as the proactive development of community infrastructure and the coordination among civil society movements that have been discussed throughout this paper.

³⁴⁴ Interview with SH (Bardala, 21 April 2022).

³⁴⁵ Interview with MJ (Ibziq, 10 May 2022).

³⁴⁶ Interview with AS (Al Hadidiya, 21 April 2022).

³⁴⁷ F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 100-04.

The findings underlined in this part have been gathered through interviews with activists from the Jordan Valley Solidarity and Stop the Wall movements, combined with recurrent field visits to Al-Hama.³⁴⁸

01 —A proactive initiative to counter settler colonial appropriation and the incremental ethnic cleansing of the Jordan Valley

The goal of this project of the Jordan Valley activist network is twofold: first, it aims to bring back Palestinian families who are from the valley but who were displaced to ‘Area A’ or ‘Area B’ as a result of the coercive environment imposed by the settler colonial system. Second, the presence of these families aims to strengthen the protection of Palestinian means of livelihood as they would relocate to strategic areas in terms of land and water resources potential.

Al Hama has been chosen to welcome this project as it hosts one of the last natural water springs in the Northern part of the valley that have not been confiscated by settlers yet. Indeed, as a result of the recent settler colonial acceleration evocated above, the four Israeli outposts that were established recently in the North, along with ‘Mehola’ and ‘Rotem’ settlements, confiscated three natural water springs in the past years: Al Sakot, Ain El Hilweh and Al Khader. Settlers inhabiting the nearby ‘Mehola’ settlement and ‘Suhail’ outpost which settled on the top of one of the mountains surrounding Al Hama regularly conduct incursions into the Palestinian locality to swim in the springs and express their will to capture these water resources (which are located in the middle of the community) as recounted by HS, the head of the family who recently relocated there.³⁴⁹ In consequence, the JVS project in Al Hama aims to strengthen Palestinian presence around these needed assets to prevent their confiscation by Israeli settler colonialism, which would mark another consistent step of the Palestinian dispossession in the valley.

³⁴⁸ For additional information about the Jordan Valley grassroots project in Al Hama, see the article that we co-wrote with the coordinator of the Jordan Valley campaign on the official website of the movement: Jordan Valley Solidarity, ‘Land unites us in Al Hama’ (9 May 2022) <<http://jordanvalleysolidarity.org/news/land-unites-us-in-al-hama/>>.

³⁴⁹ Interview with HS (Al Hama, 10 May 2022).

On the other hand, Al Hama has the potential to welcome many Palestinian families and provide them with land and water to sustain themselves. Indeed, like most of the communities in the Jordan Valley, the locality used to host way more inhabitants than it currently does due to the ethnic cleansing campaign implemented by Israeli settler colonialism since 1967. Many agricultural lands are vacant due to the forcible displacement of their owners, while the water springs are yet underexploited. As the current Al Hama inhabitants can grow their fields only in the winter due to the lack of water, the renovation of the springs would meliorate the conditions of life in the community but also have the potential to allow for more Palestinians to live and work there. Apart from bringing back families who were displaced as a result of the coercive environment set by the settler colonial power, the land and water resources in Al Hama have the potential ‘for the youth to create cooperatives and work together’.³⁵⁰ Indeed, while many young farmers in the area are likely to be further deprived of their means of livelihood in the years to come, some could have the possibility to pursue their agricultural activity nearby instead of working in Israeli settlements or leaving the Jordan Valley.

02 —Palestinian presence at the centre of the strategy

The project started in May 2021, with the goal to bring back about ten families to the Jordan Valley until 2023-24. So far, one family has been brought back to Al Hama, on land that is rented from a family who was forcibly displaced outside of the Jordan Valley in 2016. To establish the tent of the family, local activists had to combine several practices of the repertoire of action of sumud. First, as most of the community is considered ‘Area C’, they anticipated demolition orders by hiring a lawyer, preparing all the documents to file an objection beforehand and taking pictures of the old trees on the land to prove its agricultural area status. Second, they undertook the construction of the residential tent through discrete action conducted at night.

Local activists also intend to use the development of public infrastructure for the community to strengthen Palestinian presence. Most importantly, the renovation of the springs is key to preventing their confiscation by the settlers, reinforcing the current inhabitants’ sumud and allowing for more Palestinians to relocate

³⁵⁰ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

to Al Hama. In addition, the grassroots movement aims to build pipelines to connect the water springs to the homes of the inhabitants. Other projects have been launched in Al Hama, from planting additional trees to building a common shelter that would be used as a recreational space and a playground for children. More in the future, local activists plan to build a cultural centre for the community, which would be used for tourism purposes as well as hosting solidarity groups.

In addition to strengthening the *sumud* of the community and its capacity to welcome further Palestinian families, all these steps aim to promote the Al Hama project and strategy towards Palestinian individuals, youth organisations and activists' movements. According to RL, one of the primary goals of the project is 'to create a new way to teach the youth about resistance'.³⁵¹ Indeed, many path trails and awareness sessions are held with movements and groups bringing youth from the whole Palestine to be taught about the strategy used in Al Hama and to participate in volunteering community work. Involving the next generations is critical for the project, as the protection of the land and water resources of Al Hama not only depends on the families that will relocate there, but also on the network of support that is being built around the community. As underlined by Jamal Juma, the strategy in Al Hama 'is all about presence, it is all about people being there. Al Hama is a model that we are trying to make to encourage the people to go there, to pick nick there, to go there for visiting, investing, planting'.³⁵² Indeed, a community that is known, visited and supported by groups throughout Palestine will be less vulnerable to settler colonial appropriation.

Moreover, the project relies heavily on the network of Palestinian and international solidarity movements that the local Jordan Valley campaign managed to build. These outside partners are particularly helpful in securing funds for the development of public infrastructure in the community. Jamal Juma highlights that this support is critical to strengthen local people's *sumud*, to 'make the people feel that they are not alone, that somebody is thinking about their situation and trying to provide, to contribute to their steadfastness'.³⁵³ Therefore, the strategy of outreaching

³⁵¹ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

³⁵² Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

³⁵³ *ibid.*

the promotion of the project to many solidarity groups in Palestine is twofold, as it also provides the local inhabitants and activists with more confidence and determination to pursue this long-term initiative.

On the other hand, while Chapter 4 highlighted that national and international civil society movements are more involved by local communities as a result of the government's failure to genuinely support the Jordan Valley, activists engaged in the Al Hama project still entertain hopes towards the PA involvement. As a member of the Ministry of Agriculture came to visit the project, RL underlined that 'he agreed to support our project there, which is for us really important because the PA they have – they should! – be part of this kind of project to support 'Area C', especially as we are talking about a very strategic area'.³⁵⁴ While the grassroots movement only asked for material support from the Palestinian leadership, there is still the perception of an ideal role that the PA could endorse and that is not fulfilled. Indeed, as academics proposed a reimagining of the PA to strengthen the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle,³⁵⁵ activists engaged in reinforcing vulnerable communities' sumud cannot afford the economy of a reflection engaging with the potential that the Palestinian governmental bodies could have for resistance if they would free from their submission to the coloniser's power. Indeed, as Jamal Juma underlined, the strategy focusing on Palestinian presence described in this part 'needs much more intensive presence from the Palestinian communities, bodies, municipalities, ministries, political parties, everybody, to be there in the confrontational line with Israeli policies in general'.³⁵⁶ Therefore, to effectively counter the advancement of the settler colonial project of elimination in 'Area C', the involvement of the masses also relies on a national engagement of every sector of the Palestinian society. In such a national liberation effort, the PA could theoretically play a crucial role in mobilising bodies, people and resources. However, so far

³⁵⁴ Interview with RL (Bardala, 18 April 2022).

³⁵⁵ R El Zein, 'Developing a Palestinian Resistance Economy through Agricultural Labor' (2017) 46(3) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

the PA's endeavour toward such grassroots activism initiatives has been limited to depoliticised material support or has constrained the struggle by its effort to recuperate the Popular Struggle Committees to its own advantage.³⁵⁷

03 —A new form of sumud towards a process of decolonisation

Most importantly, the Al Hama project aims to constitute a model to be developed throughout Palestinian communities living in so-called 'Area C'. According to Jamal Juma, 'if other areas can be claimed like this, I think this is a good strategy that can keep on the confrontation with the occupation and show [Israelis] that what they are doing is not going to be easy. [Al Hama] is the first site experience'.³⁵⁸ Indeed, while the project so far has a limited impact, if successful, it could prevent the settler colonial appropriation of a critical asset in terms of resources for the North of the valley, besides helping tens of Jordan Valley Palestinians to stay on their lands or to relocate in the area. If taken to another level and furthered to other strategic places, this new form of sumud might have the potential to genuinely counter – and not only slow down – the settler colonial project of elimination in the areas where implemented.

Interestingly, to explain the strategy pursued in Al Hama, some activists have used the expression 'establishing facts on the ground', which usually labels the settler colonial strategy of appropriation through *fait accompli*,³⁵⁹ and in particular the proliferation of unlawful outposts throughout 'Area C'. As Manal Shqair clarifies, 'since Israel is very good at imposing facts on the ground, part of our resistance strategy is to impose counter facts on the ground in order to resist this settler colonial expansion'.³⁶⁰ Of course, the comparison limits to the strategic similarity of the two practices, as in essence the establishment of outposts constitutes an act of land looting while developing indigenous presence and infrastructure on Palestinian land is only an attempt to

³⁵⁷ J Højgilt, 'Nonviolent mobilization between a rock and a hard place: Popular resistance and double repression in the West Bank' (2015) 52(5) *Journal of Peace Research* 636; M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) 173-80.

³⁵⁸ Interview with Jamal Juma (Stop the Wall, Land Defense Coalition) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

³⁵⁹ P Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native' (2006) 8(4) *Journal of Genocide Research* 387.

³⁶⁰ Interview with Manal Shqair (Stop the Wall) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

preserve natural – and internationally-recognised – rights. Other Palestinian grassroots activist initiatives have already been associated with a counter fact on the ground strategy, such as the temporary establishment of the village of Bab Al Shams on land coveted by ‘Ma’ale Adummim’ settlers in 2013.³⁶¹ On this occasion, the necessity for Palestinian resistance to ‘change the rules of the game’ and ‘establish facts on the ground on [Palestinian] land’ was even mentioned in a press release issued by the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee (PSCC), the activist group at the centre of this initiative.³⁶² Therefore, the PSCC and other West Bank grassroots activist groups might constitute outside actors that motivated transformations in the peasant resistance undertaken in the Jordan Valley, as the movement launched by the Bab Al Shams initiative inspired numerous follow-up events across the West Bank, including in the Jordan Valley with the reclamation and restoration of the ethnically cleansed village of Ein Hijleh in 2014.³⁶³ Therefore, the local interactions with the anti-occupation movement of the early 2010s that theorised the pro-active counter fact on the ground tactic inspired the strategy underlying the Al Hama project.

Therefore, this initiative recently developed in the North of the Jordan Valley falls within a genealogy of creative Palestinian grassroots activism that some writers have termed spatial resistance, a concept that has been broadly defined as ‘practices that affirm Palestinian presence and continuity on the land and challenge Israeli colonization’ and that ‘incorporate land re-appropriation and steadfastness’.³⁶⁴ However, the Al Hama project differs in many ways from the spatial resistance actions conducted in Bab Al Shams or Ein Hiljeh. Hoigilt underlined three outcomes of this type of action from the anti-occupation movement: symbolic demonstration of offensiveness in the face of the settler colonial power, rise of international media attention about colonisation

³⁶¹ J Hoigilt, ‘Nonviolent mobilization between a rock and a hard place: Popular resistance and double repression in the West Bank’ (2015) 52(5) *Journal of Peace Research* 636.

³⁶² M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) 204-05.

³⁶³ *ibid* 206-11.

³⁶⁴ Y Hawari, ‘Israel’s Relentless Land Grabs: How Palestinians Resist’ (*Al Shabaka – The Palestinian Policy Network*, 9 April 2018) <<https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/israels-relentless-land-grabs-how-palestinians-resist/>> accessed 22 June 2022.

and energisation of the Palestinian public.³⁶⁵ These objectives are very different from the Al-Hama project's endeavour toward land and water resources protection, reversal of the forced demographic movement of Palestinians out of 'Area C' and construction of a culture of resistance among the new generations. Indeed, as it was a matter of days for the settler colonial forces to destroy the villages that were built, the point of Bab Al Shams and similar enterprises was not that they should last.³⁶⁶ On the other hand, the Al Hama project's demonstration of offensiveness entails a long-term agency; it is not an event but a permanent form of everyday resistance. Therefore, it does not look for media attention, whereas one important measure of the success of the anti-occupation movement was its ability to generate a buzz in international media.³⁶⁷ Jordan Valley activists are rather looking to create visibility around this project within the Palestinian scene, as the Palestinian presence, encouragement and awareness about Al Hama are more valued than a temporary interest from foreign actors.

Somehow, this grassroots project in Al Hama is a result of a combination of transformations. First, the pro-active and anticipative character of its strategy comes from the acknowledgement that the action reaction pattern is limited as it cannot really counter the long-term dispossession and forcible displacement conducted by the settler colonial power. Second, the birth of this project relies on the capacity of the local grassroots movement to constitute a viable substitute for the lack of public capacity and reflections on how to allow Palestinian communities to maintain their presence in the Jordan Valley throughout the coming generations. Third, such a project depends on the ability of local communities to put forward their own projects and secure funding from outside civil society partners, rather than relying on foreign initiatives from important organisations or governments that are disconnected from their local needs as they lack political standing. Furthermore, the strategic reflection behind the Al Hama project was influenced by interactions with outside Palestinian groups

³⁶⁵ J Hoigilt, 'Nonviolent mobilization between a rock and a hard place: Popular resistance and double repression in the West Bank' (2015) 52(5) *Journal of Peace Research* 636.

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*

³⁶⁷ M Carpenter, *Unarmed and Participatory: Palestinian Popular Struggle and Civil Resistance Theory* (University of Victoria 2017) 205.

who theorised the counter fact on the ground approach; on the other hand, local activists appropriated and transformed this tactic into a long-term strategy with the potential of challenging the status quo in colonised Palestine.

As noted by Al-Botmeh, this ‘Palestinian developmental facts on the ground’ strategy aims to launch a process of decolonisation of Palestine.³⁶⁸ Elaborating on the strategy pursued in Al-Hama, Manal Shqair stated:

We tend to be reactive (...) but we want to go one step further. That is not enough to do this. We want to advance our rights by having more and more Palestinians living in this area, not just to preserve the status quo as it is. We want to change the status quo in favour of our existence and resistance.³⁶⁹

Thus, contrary to the reactive forms of sumud and way more than the proactive development of Palestinian public infrastructure, this new form of resistance entails a revolutionary intention. Indeed, this strategy tackles the roots of the settler colonial strategy pursued in ‘Area C’ as it aims to reverse the direction of the native removal by permitting Palestinian return to their ancestral land. While Scott underlined that ‘the great bulk of peasant resistance is not directly to overthrow or transform the system of domination but rather to survive’,³⁷⁰ it seems that in the Jordan Valley, the settler colonial project of elimination has advanced so far that native quest for survival has come to entail forms of resistance that directly challenge the basis of the colonial system – land capture and native removal. Against a colonial power that aims to eliminate the native, Palestinian permanence on the land seems to be equated here with the revolutionary intent to overthrow the colonial structure through the confrontation of its capacity to spatially expand and demographically replace.

³⁶⁸ S Al-Botmeh, ‘Implications of the Kerry Framework: the Jordan Valley’ (2014) 43(3) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 49.

³⁶⁹ Interview with Manal Shqair (Stop the Wall) (Ramallah, 22 May 2022).

³⁷⁰ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 301.

Conclusion

Throughout this analysis of the transformations of the practices of sumud across generations of Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley, I encountered various tactics and strategies to resist the combinations of settler colonial mechanisms of elimination and subordination. The repertoire of action of local Palestinian peasants, from systematic reconstructions to discrete reappropriations, seems to derive substantially from the mere passive coping mechanisms of survival that are sometimes associated with sumud.³⁷¹ As demonstrated, they entail a confrontational character that does not cover with false compliance with the system of domination, contrary to Scott's class struggle forms of everyday resistance. Indeed, these tactics of sumud are often used within a reactional pattern determined by the settler colonial objective to eliminate and the Palestinian imperative to persist on the land. Therefore, the actions and reactions that are undertaken within this confrontational engagement are taking place within a life and death struggle over land. On the other hand, while these confrontational reactions help maintain Palestinian presence, they leave the monopoly of the initiative to the coloniser. In consequence, whereas the reactional pattern constitutes a crucial mode of sumud as it allows for piecemeal reappropriations and announces to the settler colonial power that its acts of oppression will not be unanswered, it has only the potential to slow down the advancement of the Zionist project of elimination in the Jordan Valley.

³⁷¹ A Rijke and T van Teeffelen, 'To Exist Is To Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday' (2014) 59 *Jerusalem Quarterly* 86.

While many highlighted the role of the modalities of control of the dominant structures in shaping the modes of resistance,³⁷² I found that the cultural and social organisation of the local actors of sumud is playing a major part in the definition of the resistance throughout generations. Indeed, traditional forms of livelihood and ancestral ways of communal life are at the basis of the modalities of everyday resistance undertaken in the Jordan Valley. In this realm, rural lifestyle and community networks of solidarity are not only elements to be preserved against forced displacement and colonial appropriation but are instruments for sumud in themselves. Maintaining one's farm on ancestral land not only protects the land and its resources but also safeguards the perpetuation of rural Palestinian traditional lifestyle and culture, in addition to support the collective steadfastness of the community. While the discursal practice of older generations and the early experience of living under settler colonial rule appear to effectively transmit the moral imperative of sumud to the youth, societal transformations within the Palestinian society are informing transformations within the next generations.

On the other hand, transformations in everyday resistance are emerging from local communities. These transformations are also linked with the changes in the colonial modality of control that emerged after the Oslo process. Indeed, the national elite's surrender to the colonial power especially in 'Area C' resulted in the creation of a local grassroots movement substituting for the Palestinian leadership's responsibilities in terms of public infrastructure construction. This form of sumud, which can relate to Tabar's *development-resistance* concept,³⁷³ could fall within the genealogy of the national movement's mass grassroots organisations that emerged in the mid-1970s in Palestine that also represented 'forms of radical development and community organizing'.³⁷⁴ Indeed, this form of sumud entails a political standing that overlooks its socio-economic appearance: securing public services

³⁷² J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985); A Alazzeh, 'Seeking popular participation: nostalgia for the first intifada in the West Bank' (2015) 5(3) *Settler Colonial Studies* 251.

³⁷³ L Tabar, 'Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism' (2016) 45(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.

³⁷⁴ L Meari, '*Sumud*: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons' (2014) 113(3) *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 547.

for local communities challenges the Israeli interdiction to build in 'Area C' and derails the weaponisation of the rights to education, to housing, to water and freedom of movement as critical pieces of the settler colonial mechanisms for indigenous removal.

While the depoliticised developmental paradigm that prevailed after Oslo tended to constitute Palestinians in subjects of humanitarian aid,³⁷⁵ local communities' activism is progressively getting away from the ties of this logic. Indeed, Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley highlighted that the next generations' potential for anti-colonial struggle will be enhanced by the growing distrust towards the PA and other formal institutions of humanitarian governance (mainstream NGOs, government and UN agencies, etc.). While the local activist movement enlarges its cooperation capacities to national and international civil society solidarity groups, Jordan Valley Palestinians and in particular youth are appropriating the new forms of *sumud* that emerge from these local interactions with outside partners, thus strengthening national unity against the coloniser's separatist policies. In consequence, the solidarity provided by the horizontal cooperation with movements that share Palestinian political imperatives allows the grassroots movement to increase the potential of its anti-colonial agency.

In this post-Oslo context, we've so far seen a number of continuities and transformations of the forms of *sumud* alongside and in confrontation with the incremental and relentless advancement of the Israeli settler colonial project on Palestinian lands. However, within the last few years, the acceleration of Israeli settler colonialism in its agency of indigenous dispossession and removal is changing the equation. Against pastoral colonialism and its potential in terms of expansion and violence, combined with the intensification of the political and legal support provided by Israeli official bodies to the settlers, Palestinian initiatives of resistance are falling short of what is required to efficiently permit the maintenance of indigenous presence on the long run. In other words, Israeli settler colonialism is advancing way faster than what Palestinian actors of resistance can counter. While older generations foresee this settler colonial acceleration as the trigger for the next generations of Palestinians to move from *sumud* to more

³⁷⁵ L. Meari, 'Sumud: A Palestinian Philosophy of Confrontation in Colonial Prisons' (2014) 113(3) *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 547.

confrontational modes of anti-colonial struggle, this deterioration is also motivating strategic reflections towards new forms of sumud with potential for decolonisation. These recent initiatives imply revolutionary intentions as they aim to confront the basic elements of Zionist ethnic cleansing, understood as indigenous dispossession and forced displacement, through Palestinian re-appropriation and return.

In the light of these findings, this dissertation must take a glance at this multiform resistance undertaken by Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley through the account of Fanon's *Dying Colonialism*. Significantly, I encountered a similar endeavour towards transformations of the forms of resistance to strengthen the anti-colonial struggle. However, while in the Algerian case these transformations entailed 'changing one's daily life, one's routine, prejudices, and immemorial customs insofar as these were a hindrance to the revolutionary struggle',³⁷⁶ it appears that in the case of rural Palestine these traditions, ancestral ways of life and communal practices transmitted through generations are the most powerful tools of sumud. Transformations in the forms of everyday resistance therefore strengthen and come along with the maintenance of a traditional lifestyle connected to the land as it is the most effective modality of resistance in terms of land protection, Palestinian culture preservation and community solidarity. Moreover, as the continuation of this lifestyle is in itself a target of the settler colonial logic of elimination, the perpetuation of ancestral agricultural routines is to be preserved within the agency of resistance. While there are sometimes exceptions through modifications in ancestral means of livelihood as there is no other option to stay on the land under colonial rule, transformations in sumud do not entail changing Jordan Valley peasants and farmers' daily lives: their routines and customs are not a hindrance but a major element of the Palestinian 'combat breathing'.³⁷⁷

In the pursuit of this multiform resistance, Jordan Valley grassroots movements and communities are not only challenging the colonial structure of power, but also the humanitarian ideal of 'pre-political charity' that 'keeps power structures intact and is thus anti-political in effects'.³⁷⁸ Indeed, through the appropriation

³⁷⁶ Gilly in F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965).

³⁷⁷ F Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (Grove Press 1965) 65.

³⁷⁸ L Tabar, 'Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism' (2016) 45(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.

of public responsibilities and the creation of new reflections towards a sumud that would not only be anti-colonial, but decolonial, this confrontational *development-resistance* model³⁷⁹ motivates an important level of organisation and coordination and tends to be increasingly revolutionary throughout the advancement of the settler-colonial project of elimination on Palestinian lands. Therefore, this emerging movement relies on far more complex dynamics than in the framework developed in Scott's *Weapons of the Weak*. Through the practice of overt, confrontational, locally and nationally collectively organised resistance, it appears that Jordan Valley forms of sumud are sometimes more similar to what Scott labelled 'real resistance' than to the everyday acts of insubordination of the peasantry that he investigated. Moreover, the most essential form of sumud that is at the basis of Palestinian peasants' resistance – that is, the maintenance of traditional livelihood on ancestral land – does not match the framework that has been developed by Scott, as he did not consider 'normal' practices of work and existence as equated with resistance. Therefore, everyday forms of peasant resistance in a colonial context cannot be paralleled with the ones undertaken by peasants engaged in class struggle.

However, this everyday resistance framework remains valid in the Palestinian context, in particular when looking at transformations of sumud. Indeed, Scott delivers a relevant analysis for the dynamics underlying the choices of the methods of resistance against a given settler colonial strategy. In particular, the imperative to move to collective direct confrontations when normal forms of everyday resistance 'are failing or have reached a crisis point'³⁸⁰ unravelled the articulation of the use of the repertoire of action of sumud to face sudden changes in settler colonial strategies affecting a significant number of Palestinian families in a row. In addition, Scott's accounts of the potential for collective action of the networks of understanding and practices of the peasantry provided a relevant frame to analyse the communal solidarity of Jordan Valley communities and its strong relation with sumud.

³⁷⁹ L Tabar, 'Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism' (2016) 45(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.

³⁸⁰ J Scott, *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale UP 1985) 37.

Most importantly, Scott's consideration of quotidian acts of insubordination practiced by rural masses as a resistance that has the potential to curb historic tendencies is particularly valid for a settler colonial context. Indeed, in contrast with the dehumanising image conveyed by the humanitarian paradigm,³⁸¹ the everyday resistance framework allows for apprehending local communities as active survivors³⁸² and historical actors. Indeed, as recognised for the whole enterprise of spatial removal occurring at the scale of Palestine since the beginning of the Zionist project,³⁸³ in the Jordan Valley the capture of land by Israeli settler colonialism would have been faster and larger if it was not for the local sumud of the native population. By its continuities in terms of maintenance of traditional lifestyle and community solidarity, and through its capacity of transformations to efficiently counter settler colonial changing policies and practices, sumud has managed to keep Palestinian presence in the Jordan Valley, prevent a demographic inversion and therefore impede *de jure* Zionist annexation. Rural communities, through their presence in connection with the land and both the reactionary and proactive patterns of resistance they undertake, are 'the forces that cause the settler structure to fail and remain incomplete'³⁸⁴ in the Jordan Valley.

³⁸¹ L Tabar, 'Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism' (2016) 45(4) *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.

³⁸² J Simaan, 'Olive growing in Palestine: A decolonial ethnographic study of collective daily-forms-of-resistance' (2017) 24(4) *Journal of Occupational Science* 510.

³⁸³ M Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine, A History of Hope and Empowerment* (Pluto Press 2011) 228.

³⁸⁴ M Svirsky, 'Resistance is a structure not an event' (2016) 7(1) *Settler Colonial Studies* 19.

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The present thesis - ***Forms of Sumud in the Jordan Valley*** written by **Leila Marcier** and supervised by Amira Silmi, Birzeit University (Palestine) - was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the European Regional Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA), coordinated by University of Sarajevo and University of Bologna.

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