

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

**Water Struggles as struggles for recognition: The lived geographies of  
farming communities in Sahl al-Battuf and the occupied Golan Heights**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography and Environment  
of the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

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## Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the political subjectivity of farming in settler colonial contexts. Guided by theoretical concepts of political ecology, settler colonialism and lived geographies, this thesis examines two farming communities which have been central to the realisation of Israeli settler colonial hydro-imaginaries and realities. It employs a historical approach to explain the realities facing these communities today, in their struggle over water to maintain their farming livelihood and hence how, through water, claims of recognition are shaped and developed. Employing mixed qualitative methods of ethnography, archival research, interviews and participant observation, this thesis posits that farming practices, including demands for water and infrastructure, acquire political subjectivity in both communities, transcending farming into an act of resistance, *sumud* (steadfastness) and rootedness. Under conditions of settler colonial rule, communities are faced with a dialectical presence-absence of the state in their lives. The settler colonial water and land policies materialised realities of unequal geographies and waterscapes, othering the communities concerned through policies of difference and enactment of misrecognition through uprooting land-based belonging and resource rights. Through analysis of their acts of protest through the lens of 'presence-absence', farmers demand for water and infrastructure have re-configured from being acts of resistance to a scaled-up articulation for their demands for recognition, inclusion and development. Examining the role of *sumud* as a form of resistance in livelihood practices highlights how access to, and control over, flows of water by indigenous Arab communities acquire material and symbolic weight as an articulation of rootedness and protest the Israeli hydraulic mission of centralised water control and exclusion. Hence, their realities are shaped by complex conditions of settler colonial rule, where farming acquires political subjectivity as it enacts *sumud* in their everyday practices.

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## Abbreviations

- (ASD) – Arab Society for Development
- (CNRS) – The Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research
- (DMZ) – Demilitarized Zone
- (ESCWA-BRG) – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia – Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources
- (GAP) – Southeastern Anatolia Project
- (GPO) – Government Press Office
- (ICRC) – International Committee of the Red Cross
- (IDF) – Israeli Defense Forces
- (ISA) – Israeli State Archives
- (JA) – Jewish Agency
- (JRB) – Jordan River Basin
- (KKL-JNF) – Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael-Jewish National Fund
- (Mapai) – Workers’ Party of the Land of Israel
- (MoA) – Ministry of Agriculture
- (NWC) – National Water Carrier
- (NGO) – Non-Governmental Organization
- (oGH) – occupied Golan Heights
- (oPT) – occupied Palestinian Territories
- (PA) – Present Absentees
- (PLO) – Palestinian Liberation Organisation
- (TAEQ) – Towns Association for Environment Quality
- (TWM) – Transboundary Water Management
- (TWINS) – Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus
- (UN) – United Nations
- (USBR) – United States Bureau of Reclamation
- (WZO) – World Zionist Organization

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

While writing this thesis, news of Israeli destruction of water pipelines, rainwater harvesting tanks and even whole communities in Area C<sup>1</sup> of the occupied West Bank was a common occurrence. In the South Hebron Hills, images were broadcast of Israeli bulldozers, escorted by the police and army, carrying out demolitions of homes, cattle sheds and water tankers. Palestinian community members watched helplessly as a bulldozer punctured a water storage tank and water gushed out seeping into the dry surroundings (B'Tselem Website, 2018). The tanks were financed through European Union development agencies operating in Area C, treating water as a humanitarian resource in an area which was constructed as a zone of full Israeli administration and military control. The conditions that Palestinians living in Area C have to endure put them in direct confrontation with one of the most heavily armed countries in the world. Water has become a tool of dispossession and resistance, where infrastructures to store and transport that resource to Palestinian communities, whether in rainwater harvesting tanks, or water tankers, are a charged part of the landscape of occupation. The metal tank here represents not only a physical container of water but a symbolic, cultural and political artefact of resistance under occupation.

Going north and reaching the occupied Golan Heights (oGH) (known in Arabic as *Hadabat Al Jawlan Al Muhtal*, shortened in this thesis as the oGH), similar rainwater harvesting tanks are seen dotting the landscape in their hundreds. These rusting tanks collect rainwater, which is used to irrigate apple orchards covering the hilly landscape. Not all of them are in use; some are covered, emptied or even dismantled and out of use. Those tanks also represent much more than their physical role of capturing rainwater. Their construction and use in the 1980s, in a highly securitised region of geostrategic importance due to its rich natural resources, was

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<sup>1</sup> Area C of the occupied West Bank is a geographical and administrative division set out under the Oslo Accords between the Palestinians and Israel. It falls under Israeli military and administrative rule and makes up more than 60% of the West Bank. All security, land-related and civil matters, including infrastructure and planning are controlled by Israel, which has rejected more than 90% of permits to construct vital water infrastructure. For more details, see (Passia, 2012)

part of a tactical collective resistance act to counter Israeli occupation's control of water resources in the area.

Our third stop takes us to the Galilee, the stronghold of Palestinian existence inside Israel, and specifically to the site of al-Battuf, a large expanse of 50,000 dunums of agricultural land mostly belonging to Palestinian landowners from nearby villages. On my first visit to Al-Battuf in the summer of 2013, mobile water tankers operated by Palestinian citizens of Israel were a common site, transporting water to an arid farming valley. I couldn't help but notice the similarities between the water realities of al-Battuf, the West Bank, and the oGH – all land-based communities who have for decades contested with the Israeli state their access to water (see Figure 1.1).

While my research does not focus on the occupied West Bank, my experience of working as a researcher on water politics in the Jordan River Basin (JRB) and specifically in Palestine invites the linkages I make above. My work throughout the JRB has taken me to different geographical locations within different countries, engaging with state actors and institutions, engineers, municipalities and water cooperatives. It has also allowed me to work closely with people – or to use a technical term 'water users' - and communities with varying experiences of water's presence and absence, abundance and scarcity, connection and disconnection in their daily lives. This made me appreciate the invaluable examination of lived geographies of farming communities and their relationships with and through water. By lived geographies, I refer to their place-based experiences and practices. It involved farming and dwelling with/without water's presence (as a physical source) and also the role that water plays in struggles over land and belonging in a complex and situated way.

During my multiple field visits to the oGH and the Galilee (see Chapter 3), water was not always visible. Contained in pipelines, reservoirs, or canals, water could not be touched or seen flowing freely. When water bodies were visible, whether in Birket Ram and the Israeli-Jewish settlements' artificial lakes and earthen dams in the oGH, or in al-Battuf's National Water Carrier (NWC) open canal, they were securitised and protected by barbed wire and warning signs, while areas

containing pumps and wells were gated and restricted. What was also visible in those two locations were the attempts of Arab farming communities to develop their own infrastructures, whether rainwater harvesting tanks and irrigation networks in the oGH, or traces of unrealized drainage projects in al-Battuf valley. This sparked my research interest: how do infrastructures of water control and management become a normalized part of our imaginary of the resource, and to what extent do they become a crucial artefact of struggle in the lived geography of farming communities?

While the two case studies share similar conditions of being marginalised populations living under Israeli state control, they have devised differentiated tactics for dealing with, contesting and altering their imposed water realities, giving rise to distinctive lived geographies. Their daily acts of resistance, especially around water access, use and control for farming, requires a historical and political contextualisation that transcends the water itself as a resource, and invites an examination of lived realities experienced through water. There is a need to explain these water realities: how Israeli power and hegemony over water and land resources is reflected in the daily lives of marginalised populations, and how these populations' engagements with and through water shapes their lived geographies. What can water infrastructure (as a realisation of policymaking), its presence and absence, tell us about larger struggles that communities face in their daily defence of their place-based identity, existence and persistence?

To make sense of the water realities presented above, I pose the following research questions (more details in section 1.2):

***How do settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices manifest themselves in the lives and livelihood practices of farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights?***

And,

***How, and with what political effects, are settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices resisted by farming communities in the occupied Golan Heights and Galilee?***

To answer these questions, I draw on multiple theoretical concepts in political ecology, lived geography and settler colonialism which are discussed in Chapter 2. This introduction aims to present the scope of the research and analyse water struggles in the selected case studies through the investigation of settler colonial policies, their manifestations on the lived geographies of the farming communities and examine how resistance to these policies took shape through re-configurations of their farming practices, most notably water access and development. This will provide a platform for examining local water struggles, and how water becomes political for communities living under settler-colonial conditions. Realising that the framework for thinking about water has typically operated at the 'transboundary' scale, especially in the JRB – i.e. scale of nation-state agreements, treaties, water arrangements and infrastructure – this introduction also aims to present a critique of the current fixation on transboundary water in the JRB, before providing justification for the research's conceptualisation and framing.

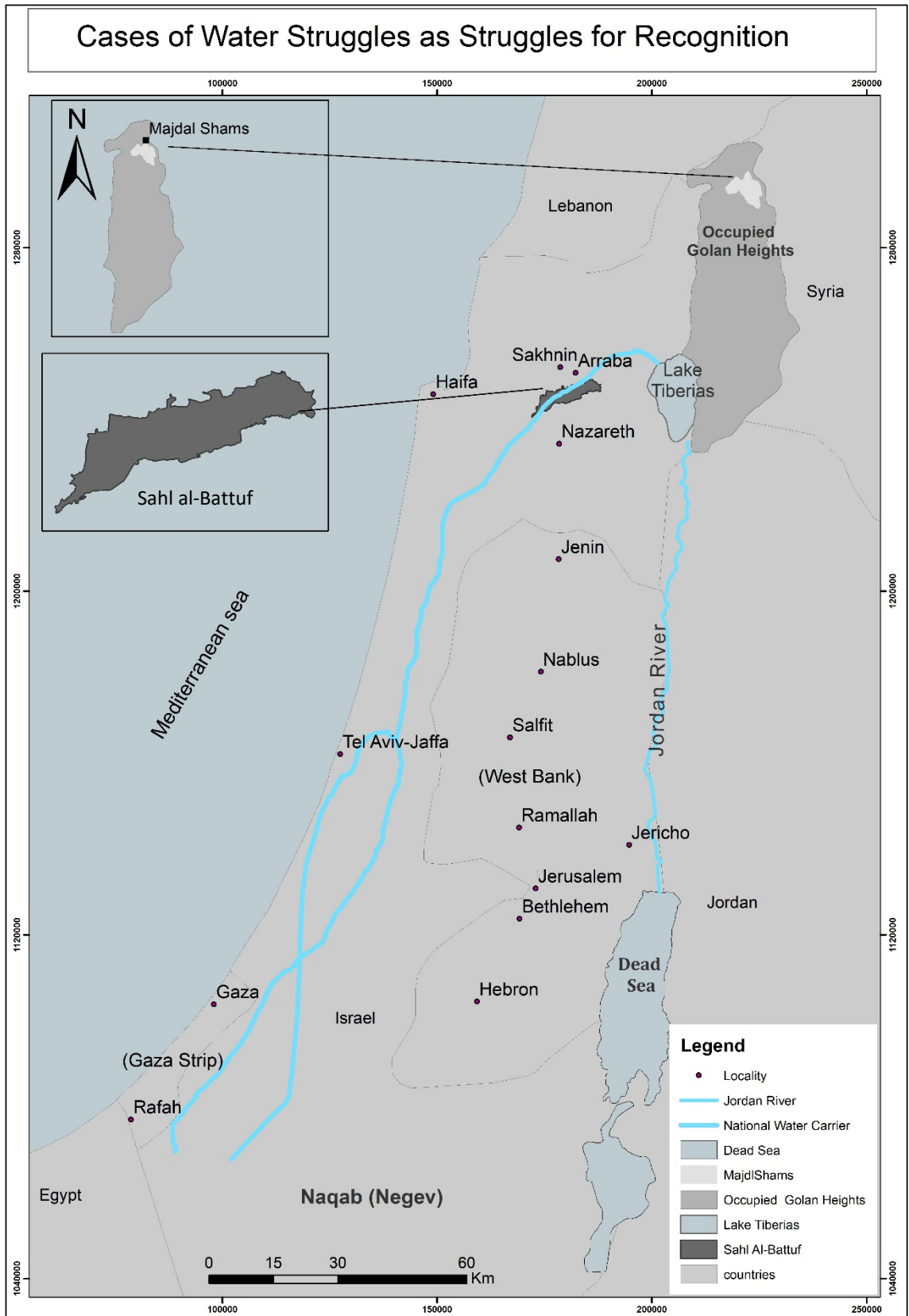


Figure 1.1 Case Studies location and relevance to the Jordan River Basin (Map developed by Yousra Othman for this thesis, 2018)

## 1.1 Water struggles and lived geographies under settler colonial rule

My research into water struggles focuses on multiple theoretical concepts: political ecologies in transboundary water basins, the notion of lived geographies, and settler colonial infrastructures. They converge in my empirical interest in local conditions for non-Jewish Arab farming communities (Palestinians and Syrians) produced by Israel's consolidation of its hegemonic position over the water resources of the Jordan River Basin, and in how these farmers have responded through their livelihood practices and collective political mobilisations to protect their land and water. My aim is to use these theoretical underpinnings to achieve a more localised understanding of water and its meanings in the everyday lives of these communities. At this localised level, my interest is in examining how "water and power relations intersect to shape differential access and outcomes among diverse social groups, to configure particular discourses around water management and produce uneven waterscapes" (Budds and Sultana, 2013, p.275). This assertion takes us into the work of political ecology, which will be further discussed as a theoretical framing of this dissertation in Chapter 2. Political ecology claims that political struggles over natural resources are as much struggles over meaning, norms, knowledge, and identity as over authority and material control (Boelens et al., 2016, p.1; Forsyth, 2004; Peet and Watts, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2009). Through a political ecology focus, theoretical conceptualisations of water provide me with a foundation to explore the dynamics of contestations and struggles around water that are materially and symbolically constituted in space and place. The tendency to portray water only as a biophysical natural resource justifies technological fixes, state-level management and a de-politicisation of water. Such water impositions representing and enacting water as-a-resource (Yates et al., 2017, p.803) are of course not confined to settler colonial states (or any state for that matter) but their employment in hegemonic discourses can be used to displace and erase other (political) ways of perceiving and interacting with water, as my case studies will show.

Since both case studies presented in this thesis come under the sovereign authority of the Israeli state, questions of local conflict and contestation over water are not possible to analyse simply at national and sub-national scales without considerable attention to the settler colonial character of that state. Conflicts over water between Israel (as a settler colonial state) and the marginalised Arab communities (Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip or inside Israel, and the Syrians of the occupied Golan Heights) must recognise the exclusion of these groups from Israeli-Zionist nation-building policies and their expansionist, exclusionary logic. This justifies the use of settler colonial theories, especially in regard to resource control and exclusion, to further explain local struggles over water between Arab communities and the Israeli state.

As set out in Chapter 2, the settler colonialism literature (e.g. Coulthard and Alfred, 2014; Elkins and Pedersen, 2005; Gordon and Ram, 2016; Smith, 1998; Veracini, 2015; Wolfe, 2006), shows how settler colonial policies and practices advance the strategy of “indigenous de-territorialization” (Choi, 2016, p. 13) to uproot indigenous populations from their land, appropriating their natural resources and devaluing their affective connections to the land, which are present in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights. Conversely, settler colonial endeavours seek to re-territorialise and claim new ethno-geographic roots for their own populations. The main premise of the settler colonial state is its intention of erasing indigenous to create new conditions and an ethno-geographical presence for its settler population. Therefore, the settler state relies on the dismissal of local laws and regulations, disregard of indigenous knowledge and experience and the creation and imposition of new geographies of rule. In its quest to assert its control over resources, the settler colonial state designs its policies of difference and exclusion which are articulated in the physical infrastructure these policies produce. The hydraulic mission is accentuated in the settler colonial state which seeks legitimacy through territorial control and domination. Thus, the artefacts of the state, such as water projects reflect that quest for the control of resources and erasure of indigenous claims to them.



With such strong self-representations about the ‘permanence’ of settler colonial projects (Choi, 2016), it is not surprising that settler colonial infrastructures are cemented and ‘concretised’, imprinted onto the landscape as markers of a new ethno-geography. In Eric Zakim’s *To Build and Be Built: Landscape, literature and the construction of Zionist Identity*, titled after the lyrics of a Zionist folk song– “we came to the land to build and be built by/in it”– he refers to the “transformation of Palestine from an inimical environment into a quintessentially Jewish space” (2006, p.1). The production of Zionist and Jewish space was viewed as a modernist, future-looking and transformative endeavour in Palestine. In the creation of the Israeli state, Zionism was portrayed in large part as a *hydraulic mission*, constructing mega-structures for modernising water supply, bolstering state and nation-building efforts and realising dreams of irrigating the desert (Feitelson and Rosenthal, 2012), whilst at the same time rendering as illegal and/or marginal the local water infrastructure and practices of the indigenous Arab populations. Water infrastructure therefore becomes a core technology of re-territorialisation, establishing centralised control over water and land resources for the sole purpose of settler colonization and expansion. However, water infrastructure is not only an artefact and an aspiration of the state. As Boelens and Gelles (2005, 316) argue in their research on Andean irrigation development, large-scale water infrastructure can be both a top-down manifestation of state power, nationalism and economic modernisation, and the source of claims from farmers for economic parity, recognition and inclusion in state development projects. In this thesis, the water infrastructure story is a story of the manifestation of settler state power and a story of communities’ claim for recognition and protection of their land and farming as sources of identity. Still, the size and scale of infrastructure shouldn’t matter, as mundane and makeshift infrastructures are equally worthy of investigation. The scholarly interest in large water infrastructure has driven a plethora of scholarly literature on mega-infrastructures: dams (Menga, 2014; Molle, 2009; Sneddon, 2012; Swyngedouw, 1999), hydropower plants (Duarte-Abadía et al., 2015; Huber and Joshi 2015; Joshi 2015), conduits and pipelines of water and sewage networks in large cities (Amin, 2014; Anand, 2017; Björkman, 2015; Gandy, 2004; von Schnitzler, 2008).

Contrastingly, Katie Meehan's work (2014) on water infrastructure in Tijuana offers an alternative conceptualisation of everyday water infrastructure and its relationship to state infrastructure, theorising multiple objects including tub wells, buckets, barrels and small-scale infrastructure as part of the hydrosocial cycle (see also Barnes, 2012; Furlong, 2011; Linton and Budds, 2014; Sultana, 2011; Swyngedouw, 2009). Highlighting the imbrication of biophysical and social processes, all infrastructure (state/non-state, legal/illegal, large/small) form the hydrological cycle; understanding of the interconnection between water and society – and produce unequal waterscapes (Menga and Swyngedouw, 2018). Illegal and informal water infrastructure often co-exists with, and is co-produced by, large state water infrastructure, creating punctures, leaks and other unruly flows at local scales. The state's power lies in its use of infrastructure to separate "politics from nature, the technical from the political and the human from the non-human" (Anand et al., 2018, p.4), but each of these moves can be challenged by communities' contestation of the state infrastructure and *through* their demands for their counter-infrastructure, as the case studies show.

To examine infrastructures, I also employ a multi-temporal and spatial lens, based on the fact that the most important infrastructural projects in the Jordan River Basin were realised in the 1950s and 1960s. This requires a *historical* examination of the water struggles of local communities, as well as an examination of the *current* lived geographies of my two case study locations. Therefore, my analysis will oscillate between the present and the past (from the 1950s to the present day) to explain how water struggles are continually implicated in, and contest, state governance over water bodies, human bodies, non-human objects (like crops) and landscapes. Considering the highly altered state of the JRB water flows, following the infrastructures which transport it, pump it and block it, exposes the ontological realities and manifestations of Israeli state narratives and policies. This journey around infrastructure highlights the multi-scalar materialities of water, and how water re-configures the lives and geographies of those who use it most: farmers.

Water development and management in the JRB coincided with nation-state formation for some and the catastrophe of homeland loss for others, including denial

of citizenship and nationality. An important component of water struggles is the struggle over citizenship or what Jose Esteban Castro calls “struggles over the territory of citizenship” (Castro, 2006, p. 139). Here the state’s processes of water control and management can transform relationships of citizenship and belonging, as in the cases presented in this thesis, where citizenship is denied or at best limited. State water infrastructure projects can induce larger transformations in “values, meanings and social practices associated with water, and particularly in the social relations mediated by the control and access to the resource” (ibid). These transformations particularly affect the lived experiences of those whose citizenship status has been systemically contested, denied and negated and whose water rights are not recognized by the state. As the case studies presented highlight, in the context of settler colonial rule, Arab farmers’ experiences revolve around the absence of water and infrastructure and their continuous efforts to claim rights to resources, notably land and water. These claims are articulated by communities within wider efforts of recognition as a distinctive ethno-geographic community. ‘Hydropolitical identities’, following Lemire’s (2011) proposition, are thus part of a wider political consciousness (Palestinian in the Galilee and Syrian in the occupied Golan Heights) challenging settler colonial depictions and enactments of water and land use and meaning. These complex dynamics have reconfigured communities’ livelihood, social organisation, identity and ways of being on the land, which this thesis aims to highlight and expose. This thesis therefore aims to render visible local struggles in complex basins, like the JRB, which revolve around water, land, identity and belonging in a hegemonic state. It goes beyond narratives of riparian water politics to the everyday lived experiences and geographies of living with and without water, and the potential of contesting *local* and *national* environmental and hydro-imaginaries (Alatout, 2011; Davis and Burke, 2011; Nesbitt and Weiner, 2001).

## 1.2 Research Questions

In this thesis, I examine sites of water struggle and their links to larger processes of resistance and political protest enacted misrecognition in a settler colonial context. Hence, this research contributes to understanding the lived geographies of Arab communities under settler colonial policies of uprooting and exclusion, particularly how water and land are utilised by these communities as channels and conduits for empowering rootedness. I analyse struggles over water between Israel as a settler colonial state and the marginalised communities (both citizens and non-citizens) who struggle to remain on the land and assert their ethno-geographic identity.

The first main research question of the thesis is:

***How do settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices manifest themselves in the lives and livelihood practices of farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights?***

This raises several sub-questions which are addressed in the thesis:

- ❖ How do agricultural livelihoods function in the studied agricultural communities in the context of settler colonialism?
- ❖ What ideas, norms and beliefs shape farmers' daily practices of agriculture?

The second main research question is:

***How, and with what political effects, are settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices resisted by farming communities in the occupied Golan Heights and Galilee?***

- ❖ What forms of collective action do farmers use to resist and counter state-led policymaking, especially land expropriation and water allocations?
- ❖ What are the political effects of the distinctive forms of collective resistance employed by farming communities?

The main proposition is that, *in the settler colonial contexts studied, the farming of Arab communities acquires similar forms of political subjectivity*. Political subjectivity refers here to the constitution of farmers as subjects with a communal political identity and shared political goals, notably relating to land and water resources.

To carry out this investigation, I have selected two case studies in close geographical proximity in which Israel has sought to realise its land and water policies. To recap, the first case involves sahl al-Battuf, a farming valley in the Lower Galilee inside Israel and the site of the construction of the controversial NWC described in section 1.5. The first site has an interesting history of contestation between the Israeli state and its Palestinian Arab citizens and remains one of the last Arab farming valleys inside Israel. The second case focuses on the expanded realisation of the Israeli hydro-imaginary through the occupation of the Golan Heights in 1967, and the resistance of the remaining Syrian Druze<sup>2</sup> population (referred to throughout the thesis as Jawlani – those who are from the Golan) to the Israeli occupation’s water and land policies through their farming practices. The data analysed was gathered through extensive fieldwork in both sites over 8 months between the years of 2016 and 2017. It included archival research, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation, as described in Chapter 3.

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<sup>2</sup> The Druze faith is a sect of Islamic origin, incorporating elements from Islam, Hinduism and other beliefs. While Druze is their faith and not their nationality or sense of identity, I refer to the communities of the oGH as Syrian, following my interaction with them and their own definition of being Syrian Jawlanis (Syrians from the Golan)

## 1.3 Making the link between transboundary and local water in the JRB

The interest of this thesis is in how local scales of water politics link to transboundary ones, especially impacting the lived geographies of farming communities and re-configuring their farming practices and their relational approach to water. My research links 'big W' (transboundary) water with 'little w' (local) water in our understanding of water politics or *hydropolitics*. Well-known scholars in the field of hydropolitics (such as Allan, 2002; Lowi, 1993; Waterbury, 1979) use the term hydropolitics to refer to "the systematic study of conflict and cooperation between states over water resources that transcend international borders" (Elhance, 1999, p.3). However, power asymmetry was not dealt with under the early hydropolitics literature and was only introduced later in work employing a more critical approach and highlighting the co-existence of conflict and cooperation, like Mirumachi's Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus (TWINS) (Mirumachi, 2015; Zeitoun and Mirumachi, 2008). The framework of *hydro-hegemony*, which Zeitoun and Warner present as "hegemony at the river basin level, achieved through water resource control strategies such as resource capture, integration and containment" (Zeitoun and Warner 2006, 435), is another critical lens through which the dynamics of water conflict have been studied, paying attention to strategies employed by state actors in international river basins. What is of interest for this thesis is how such work labelled a state with the ability to create or maintain hegemony over a transboundary water arrangement a *hydro-hegemon*, meaning a state able effectively to exercise domination over the control, use and management of transboundary water. In the JRB, Israel is considered a hydro-hegemon, and this thesis aims to expose how Israel practices hydro-hegemony at the local scale, impacting the non-Jewish populations and re-configuring their lived geographies and livelihood practices.

The hegemonic control over water in the JRB has been consolidated through a 'Hydraulic Mission', aspiring to modernisation by constructing mega-structures, bolstering state and nation-building efforts, and realising dreams of irrigating the desert (Molle et al., 2009, p.328; Swyngedouw, 1999). From the 20<sup>th</sup> century until

today, the quest to construct mega-scale water infrastructure, such as dams, canals and hydropower plants has dominated the thinking and aspirations of engineers and governments, both at the national and transboundary levels (Mehta, 2001; Menga, 2014; Mohamud and Verhoeven, 2016; Warner, Hoogesteger, and Hidalgo 2017). Water resource development has become a political tool for shaping and controlling relations between humans and the natural environment. Moreover, water use practices such as irrigation, which has been instrumental in the effective utilization of the JRB water sources, became an imperative of “being modern in a backward rural world” (Molle et al., 2009, p.330), transforming the backward practices of indigenous and native populations into economically sound and water-intensive crop production and marketing. Dismissal of traditional practices of water management has defined the approach of the colonial and postcolonial experts who appointed themselves as producers of knowledge and policy on water management. Ultimately, colonial discourses and their legacies have underpinned the merging of engineering science and the strong rule of the state with a technocratic vision of harnessing and controlling nature.

Water, while present and central to all of these transboundary and large-scale technological projects and arrangements, is confined to physical and nationally strategic framings: technical abstraction by engineers, a national strategic resource, a political tool of control and dominance, or a problem of diplomacy and international relations for nation-states. The water this research focuses on is not disconnected from the transboundary aspects mentioned above but is inherently influenced by them. The Jordan River and its water resources are at the base of this investigation, but can only be understood from a historical investigation of how they became a part of a “self-evident, *unified watershed*” (Alatout, 2011, p.219) and how the Jordan River itself was imbricated in colonial legacies of nation-state building in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. To understand the forces and conditions which have constructed water resources and the JRB as a unified basin, Alatout (2008, 2011, 2014) adopts a political geography lens to explain the construction of environmental imaginaries, which Diana Davis defines this as “the constellations of ideas that groups of humans develop about a given landscape, usually local or regional, that commonly includes assessment about the environment as well as how it came to be in its current

state” (2011, p.3). Orientalist environmental imaginaries of the Middle East as a desolate and degraded environment historically justified various colonial aspirations to ‘restore’ and ‘improve’ the land (and its people) to make it more productive, efficient and modern. These imaginaries have left a long-lasting imprint on more contemporary postcolonial nationalistic, settler colonial and even local-indigenous environmental imaginaries, and the JRB is no exception. Water imaginaries or *hydro-imaginaries* can be analysed from that lens, following Alatout (2011) examination of how international actors and nation-states come to view water resources as transboundary and regional, and thus in need of a unified management approach between states to harness water for economic modernisation projects.

While the transboundary scaling of water in the JRB is therefore important, my aim is to delve into how TWM approaches manifest themselves at the local scale, critically examining the *hydropolitical* realities and local hydro-hegemony experienced by local communities, exposing the dynamics of water ebbs and flows as experienced by water users. Being ‘scale-sensitive’ (Harris, 2002a, p.745), therefore, allows for analysis that shows how local water struggles express wider dynamics of conflict and power. Such struggles within river basins therefore have to be analysed through what Sneddon and Fox (2006, p.196) label *scalar transmogrification*: as projects with regional and transboundary components, but also as national projects of water development and as artefacts associated with local scales when communities affected by them contest and challenge state decision-making. The authors’ call for a “critical hydropolitics” fits the approach taken in this thesis by employing a multi-scalar approach to make visible the local stories of water politics neglected in basin-wide framings of water infrastructure development, understanding that ‘water connects scales’ (Rasmussen, 2016, p.21). Another example of this approach is Jessica Barnes’ seminal work *Cultivating the Nile: the Everyday Politics of Water in Egypt* (2014), which is an ethnographic investigation of how water flows in the Nile River Basin. Her approach places equal emphasis on all actors, state, non-state, multinational organisations and civil society as co-producers of water management and use. Her emphasis on examining the everyday practices of actors at multiple scales reveals that the most political and active contestation



occurs not at the international and transboundary scale but rather in the local, everyday arrangements carried out around and through water. Rasmussen discusses the idea that water connects scale (2016, p.21) and Barnes (2012, p.2) refers to water crossing scales. This thesis relies on such a conceptualisation to take scale into account but is not rigidly bound to discussing distinct scales. Furthermore, water has been made invisible on a national scale under conditions of settler colonialism where marginalised voices are unaccounted for entirely or just dismissed.

In the JRB, earlier work on local hydropolitics in the West Bank (Trottier, 1999) was further developed by original accounts of local water struggles and politics by Joshka Wessels (2015b, 2015a), examining challenges to Israeli hydro-hegemonic practice in the occupied Golan Heights and the occupied West Bank. Using cognitive theory (emphasizing identity, trust, and other cultural elements), Wessels explains how and why cooperation over shared transboundary resources fails, moving water politics research away from rational understandings of conflict and cooperation. Similarly, Van Aken's research (2006) examines the local hydropolitical implications of the large-scale water projects developed in the Jordan Valley since the 1950s and 1960s, specifically the large-scale irrigation programmes in Jordan that had a political role in settling Palestinian refugees following the creation of the state of Israel and the *Nakba* of the Palestinians in 1948<sup>3</sup>.

The fluidity, complexity and symbolism of water are usually ignored in mainstream transboundary management framings of water, emphasising its technical character and therefore contributing to a process of what Tania Li describes as the de-historicisation, de-socialisation and de-politicisation of water (Li, 2007).

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<sup>3</sup> As Van Aken *et al.* note in their comprehensive analysis of water use in Jordan, the hydraulic mission trajectory for basin management has disrupted tribal resource management, with *hydrocracies* – professional water managers and engineers – taking over the role of management<sup>3</sup> Establishment of the irrigation paradigm in the Jordan River basin as a national necessity has ultimately reshaped the agricultural practices and actors in the Jordan Valley, where a masculine approach to resource management, heavily dependent on irrigated agricultural practices dominates, disintegrating decades of traditional water management practices and norms. An interesting analysis is that of a community of farmers involved in irrigated agri-business in the Lower Jordan basin, dominating the agricultural activities, versus a disappearing peasant community, involved in more traditional agriculture practices which went beyond that to represent a “wider moral and political belonging”. The developments in the basin, mainly the East Ghor Canal, have supported the agribusiness model, benefiting urban elites and large landowners.

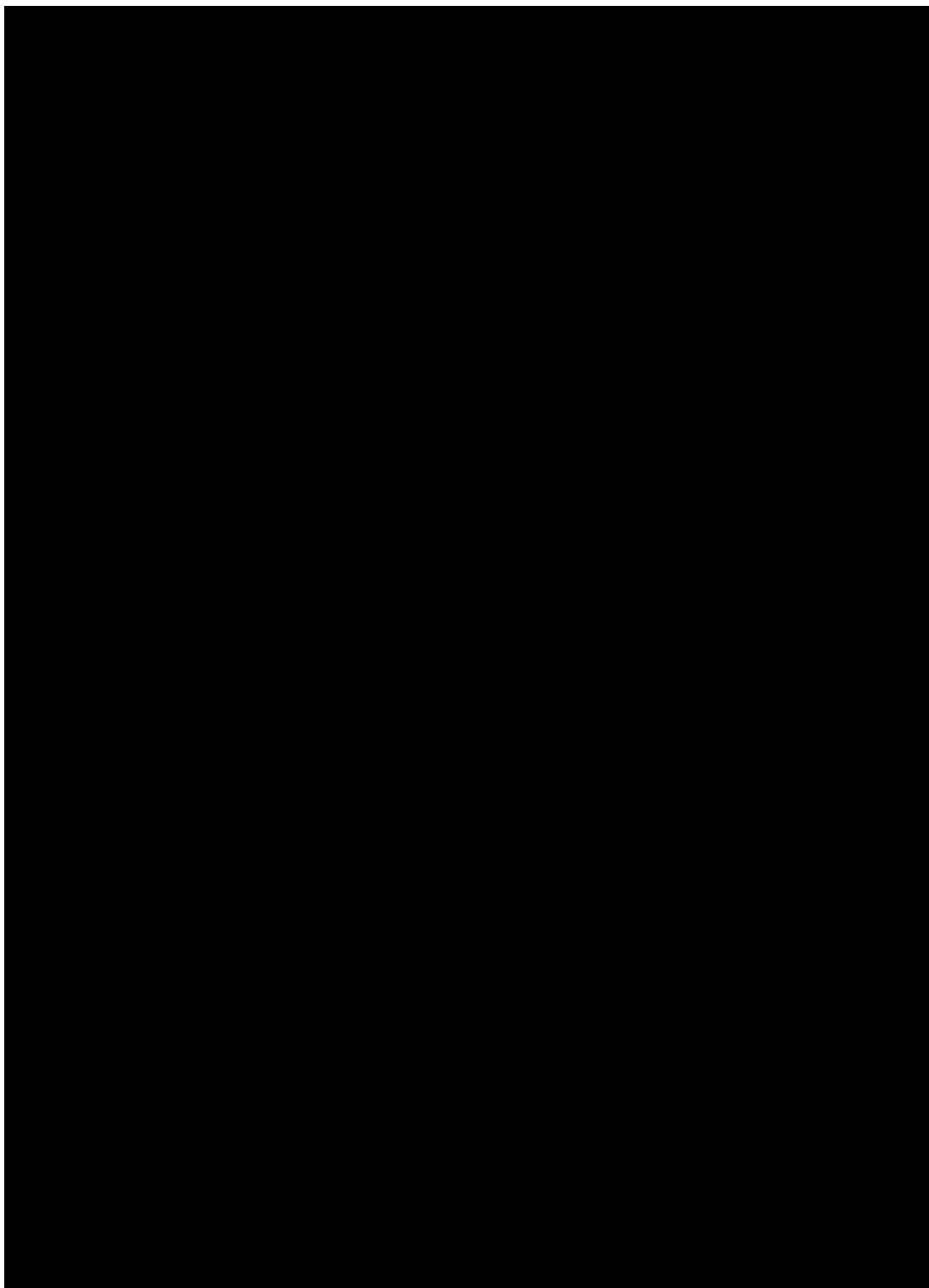
When a basin is over-politicized, like the Jordan River Basin, space for studying water struggles on a local scale is typically side-lined or ignored, fixating struggles on territorial scales (Norman, 2012). Following Sneddon and Fox (2006), amongst others (Furlong, 2006; Joshi, 2015; Mirumachi and Van Wyk, 2010; Selby, 2005), this thesis focuses on conflicts between the state and non-state actors as experienced locally. As Selby (2005, p.331) argues, the dynamics within states and social formations are those that require examination vis-à-vis actual water struggles, emphasising how “the most important scarcities and conflicts are located within, rather than between, states and social formations.” Similarly, Leila Harris’ work on the controversial Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) in Turkey demonstrates how “complex interrelations between water uses and social conflicts” exist and how examining histories and geographies of water struggles “points to the importance of intrastate and local scales as potential sites of conflict” (Harris 2002b, p.743; see also Mollinga, 2008). In this thesis, I draw on this and other literature in political ecology which situates water as an object of multiple ontologies, a tool for understanding alternative hydro-social and political worlds inhabited by marginalised Arab communities living under settler colonial conditions (Barnes and Alatout, 2012; Yates et al., 2017). Internal water struggles within countries and communities within the JRB reveal the story of water contestation between farmers’ lobbies, newly established state regulations and between different sectors (Alatout, 2008; de Châtel, 2007; Van Aken et al., 2009). Local farming communities’ struggles over water distribution ultimately have to reckon with, whether through disengagement or engagement, the “bureaucratic technical—administrative recipes and rules” drafted by politicians and policy makers” (Zwarteveen, 2008).

#### 1.4 Transboundary water: a brief history of the construction of the Jordan River Basin and its water resources

The Jordan River had the misfortune of becoming a border, initially in the politics of empire (1840s-1923) and subsequently in the politics of nation-states (1948 until the

present). By turning the river into a border, water became a territorial object[...]The consequence of turning the river into a border and water into a territorial object led the nation-states of the late-1940s and early-1950s to use the very sovereign claims over territory to redefine water as a matter of national security and as a resource that could and would be used in order to secure the nation-states (Alatout, 2014, pp. 307–308).

As Figure 1.2 shows, the Jordan River Basin refers to a watershed area with three headwaters: Al Hasbani in Lebanon, Baniyas in Syria and Leddan in Israel/Palestine, which come together to form what is known as the Upper Jordan River. This river continues its flow towards another important water body, Lake Tiberias. The lower tributary of the Jordan, known as the Yarmouk River, joins the Jordan after its flow out of Lake Tiberias eventually reaching the Dead Sea. The historical misfortune of the Jordan River becoming a border within a politically unstable region has also made it the site of multiple investigations by scholars from international relations, hydrology and hydrogeology, geography, and other disciplines. As Marwa Dadoudy (2008, p.217) states, “the Jordan River is one of the most frequently studied transboundary watercourses in the world, and the allocation of its flow has been the source of conflict for a considerable period of time”.



*Figure 1.2 The Jordan River Basin boundaries (source: ESCWA-BGR 2013)*

In this section I provide a brief historical contextualisation of how Israel became the hydro-hegemon of the basin, showing how the National Water Carrier (NWC) project and its assemblages became the dominant infrastructure of water control in the JRB and within Israeli-controlled territories (sovereign and occupied). The consolidation of Israel as a basin hydro-hegemon, and the hydro-imaginary, artefacts and infrastructural objects generated by this, are instrumental to my analysis in the case studies of 'lived geographies' and water struggles.

The colonial construction of 'the Jordan River Basin' as an ordered, unified watershed anticipated water resource cooperation, which is yet to be seen on a basin-wide level (Alatout, 2011). The construction of unified river basins can be claimed to have begun in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century worldwide. After the First World War, the British and French colonial powers drew the borders of the future nation-states in the Levant region<sup>4</sup> in a way that resulted in the configuration of the Jordan River as transboundary, what Alatout refers to as "the misfortune of becoming a border" (2004, p.307). Around that time and during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the statement of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO)<sup>5</sup> regarding Palestine was one of the first official claims made by the Zionists for a homeland in Palestine. Following the infamous Balfour Declaration of 1917, the statement was focused on putting forward the boundaries envisioned by this organisation for a Jewish homeland, with details regarding borders, water, land and administration clearly identified and presented. Lord Walter Rothschild<sup>6</sup> on behalf of the Zionist Organisation, presented the Zionist aspirations for control of land and water:

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<sup>4</sup> **Levant**, (from the French *lever*, "to rise," as in sunrise, meaning the east), historically, the countries along the eastern Mediterranean shores, namely: Syria, Lebanon, historical Palestine, Jordan

<sup>5</sup> The World Zionist Organisation (WZO) was founded in 1897, to enact Zionism, which is an ideology that seeks to establish Jewish people in Palestine (referred to as Eretz Yisrael) through promoting Jewish settlements to redeem the land and strengthen a national identity in Palestine (WZO website, 2018). For more see, (Abdo and Yuval-Davis 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Rothschild was a conservative member of the House of Commons, head of Britian's Jewish community and a Zionist.

*The boundaries of Palestine shall follow the general lines set out below:*

*Starting on the North at a point on the Mediterranean Sea in the vicinity South of Sidon and following the watersheds of the foothills of the Lebanon as far as JISR EL KARAON, thence to EL BIRE following the dividing line between the two basins of tile WAD: EL Kook and the Wadi ET TEIM thence in a southerly direction following the dividing line between the Eastern and Western slopes of the HERMON, to the vicinity West of BEIT JENN, thence Eastward following the northern watersheds of the NAHR MUGHANIYE close to and west of the Hedjaz Railway. (United Nations website)*

The centrality of water is evident in the concerns highlighted in this statement, where control of water resources is seen as paramount in the establishment of a viable Jewish state:

*The economic life of Palestine, like that of every other semi-arid country, depends on the available water supply. It is therefore, of vital importance not only to secure all water resources already feeding the country, but also to be able to conserve and control them at their sources (ibid).*

Zionist claims to water and border regions extended further in the decades following that statement: these efforts were effective in claiming concessions under the British colonial mandate over hydropower and electricity generation. Before Israel was established, the Zionists had secured rights to water from the Jordan River and the Yarmouk, which have had ramifications for water control and rights claims until this day. Theodor Herzl, the founding father of Zionism, regarded hydroelectric power as the economic basis of the new society in Palestine (Smith, 1993, p.118). Water infrastructure development, especially to increase water availability for further economic development, became a building block of Israeli efforts to create a modern, technologically advanced society (Feitelson and Rosenthal, 2012). This Zionist/Israeli water infrastructure drive began prior to the establishment of the state, with its framing as a nation-building endeavour in the 1930s, what Feitelson and Rosenthal (2012: p.273) call the “Zionist hydraulic mission” era. The Rutenberg concession, granted by the British Mandate to the Zionist pioneer Pinhas Rutenberg

in the 1920s, is case in point of the Zionist aspiration to tame nature and develop a new society. Rutenberg, with exclusive rights to exploit the waters of the Jordan, constructed a hydropower plant on the banks of the river, acquiring large amounts of land on both banks, and controlling the confluence of the Yarmouk and the Jordan. Until its destruction in the 1948 war, it exemplified the Zionist imaginary of hydrological domination and control (Meiton, 2015).

After the Second World War, the region began its transformation into independent nation-states – Lebanon (1943), Syria (1946) and Jordan (1946) – and, following the Palestinian *Nakba*<sup>7</sup>, which left 700,000 Palestinians expelled from Palestine and dispersed around the region, the creation of Israel as a state in 1948. The Jordan River's headwaters were located in different countries: the Hasbani River in Lebanon, the Liddan (Dan) River in Israel, and the Banias River in Syria, under Israeli occupation in the occupied Golan Heights (oGH) since 1967. Therefore, the river basin acquired intense political significance for the riparian countries, adding complexity to the mosaic of cultural, commercial, and religious meanings already experienced by diverse cultural and religious groups living within the region. The large-scale development of water resources by these new states was an important political strategy, whereby the states made claims of territorial sovereignty through the material and discursive control of water bodies (Lowi, 1993; Sosland, 2007; Zeitoun et al., 2012; Zeitoun et al., 2013).

Following 1948, Israel's position as a hydro-hegemon began to consolidate materially and cognitively through its access to the Liddan River and control of Lake Huleh. Following the general armistice agreement of 1949 and the establishment of Demilitarised Zones (DMZs), Israel began draining Lake Huleh and then, in 1952, it officially began diverting the Jordan River by constructing a canal at Jiser Banat Ya'qoub (Daughters of Jacob Bridge), within the DMZ. This caused Syrian retaliation, in the form of counter-attacks and official complaints to the UN Security Council. This was followed by a short yet historical decision by the US to halt its aid to Israel, if the diversion work wasn't halted (Lowi, 1993; Schmida, 1984; Sosland, 2007). This active

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<sup>7</sup> Nakba, literally meaning catastrophe, refers to the expulsion of 750,000 people in 1948 from Palestine by the Zionist forces, which later became the Israeli state.

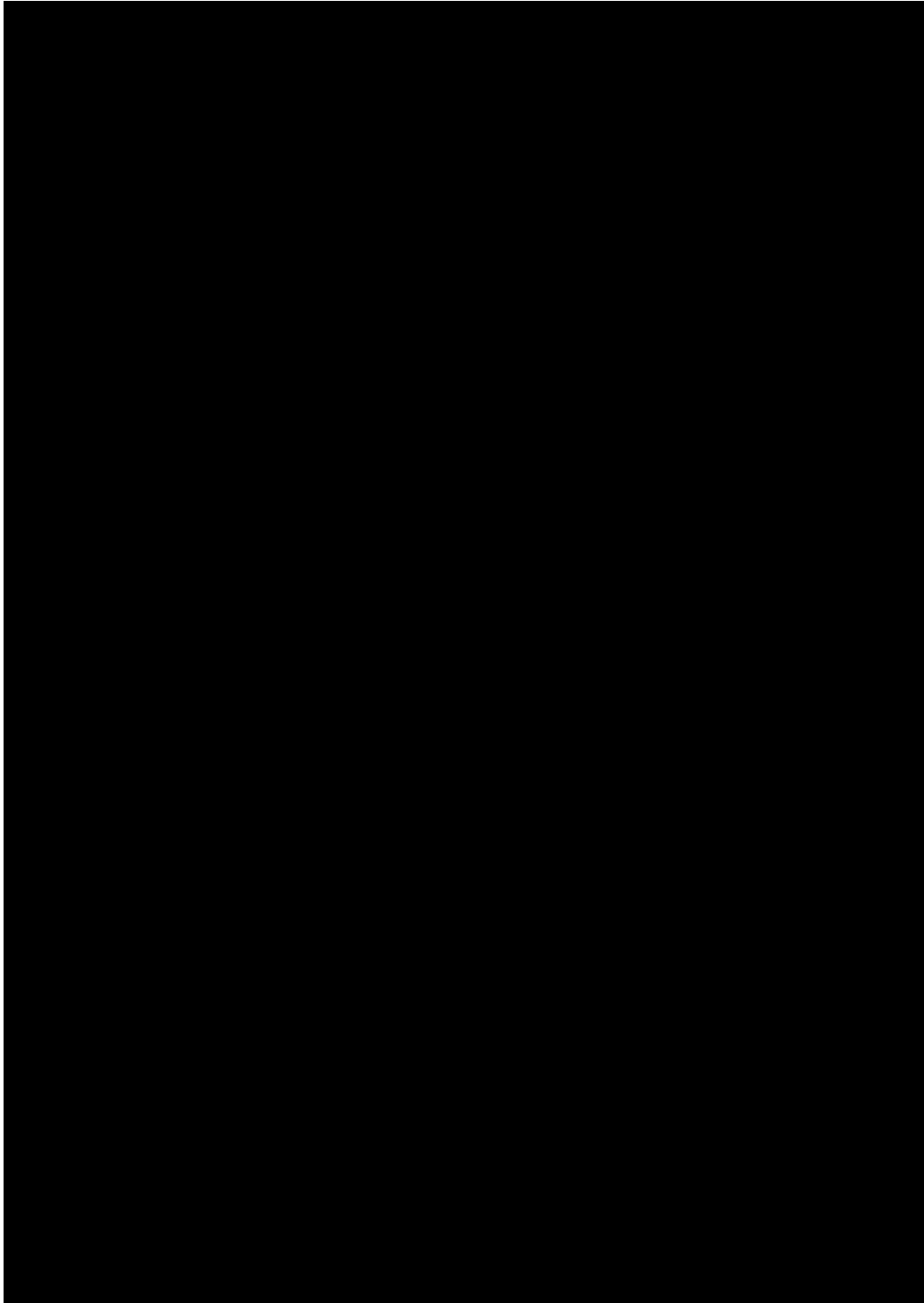
'construction' of a water and environmental imaginary by the Israelis was taking place amidst the shuttle visits of an American envoy and mediations between Israel and the Arabs regarding a unified regional plan for the development of the Jordan River Basin. While these talks were taking place, Israel continued its unilateral action in the DMZ, consolidating the material reality of the Israeli hydro-imaginary. The construction of the NWC began in 1953 and it was operative by 1964, carrying out the first and only out-of-basin diversion of the waters of the tributaries of the Upper Jordan River, through al-Battuf, toward the coastal cities and the Naqab (Negev).

The 1950s marked a period of US-led negotiations over the allocations of Jordan River Basin water between the newly established nation states in the wake of the 1948 war. Contesting imaginaries of the Jordan River Basin were developed by those nation states and the colonial powers, who now acted as mediators. For Eric Johnston, the personal envoy sent by then United States President Eisenhower to solve the Arab-Israeli water dispute, the water resources were constructed as "a self-evident, *unified watershed* using that conception to underwrite the political project of building a *cooperative region*" namely, depoliticization of watershed boundaries (Alatout in Davis and Burke, 2011:223). The Arab states acted as a unified bloc, constructing through their water plans a unified interstate Arab identity and focusing on in-basin water use that would benefit the populations living within its boundaries. This directly contradicted the Israeli imaginary of the basin, representing a nationalist vision in which the efficiency of water transfer and its uses served the geographical consolidation of the Jewish nation. Israeli planners, like Simcha Blass, were responsible for transforming thinking about water from being a regional or local concern to a national one, ensuring that Israeli national priorities trumped the Arab-state and Johnston-mission framing of water as a tool for cooperation and regional stability.

To reinforce its hegemonic hydraulic mission, between 1953 and 1964 Israel constructed the National Water Carrier, its biggest infrastructure project and the epitome of water infrastructure as a technology for nation-building (see Figure 1.3 below). Diverting 350 million cubic meters annually from the Jordan River Basin towards the coastal cities before reaching Al Naqab (Negev), and causing long-term



environmental deterioration to the lower Jordan River, this infrastructure project also provoked Jordan and Syria to intensify unilateral water withdrawals from the same river basin. The National Water Carrier has been labelled “a centralised technical apparatus through which all the water of the state was regulated” (Harris and Alatout, 2010, p.153). Following its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan Heights in 1967, Israel further secured control over the headwaters of the Jordan River, in addition to controlling the groundwater of the West Bank (Zeitoun, 2008; Zeitoun et al., 2012).



*Figure 1.3 The Israeli National Water Carrier and overall grid (source: Fanack website)*

Israel's realisation of its hydraulic mission attests to the claim that "a state with the ability to plan, construct and operate large infrastructure projects has the

physical ability to change the hydrogeology of the resource, thereby creating new hydro-strategic and hydro-political realities” (Zeitoun and Warner, 2006, p.445). Through an assemblage of dams, pipelines, pumping stations, reservoirs and diversions, the Israeli development of a centralised water infrastructure, supported by institutional arrangements and engineering expertise, facilitated the emergence of a hydraulic bureaucracy and effected a re-territorialisation envisioned by the settler colonial state. These and other infrastructures of re-territorialisation have been central to the symbolic and material geographies of Zionism (Salamanca, 2014). Water infrastructure has been a core technology for re-territorialisation in the occupied Arab territories, establishing centralised control over water and land resources for the purposes of settler colonisation, whilst at the same time rendering as illegal and/or marginal the local water infrastructure of the indigenous Arab populations (Weizman, 2007; Yiftachel, 2006). The imbrication of agriculture and water was paramount in these critical decades for the Israeli state, hence the interlinked analysis of both in this thesis. The water story is closely intertwined with the production of the agricultural imaginaries and practices of not only Jewish farmers, but also the Arab (Palestinian and Syrian) populations who were hugely affected by this hydraulic mission. The phase of analysis chosen is a phase where the Zionist ideologies “dictated” water development (Galnoor, 1978) and while being fraught with internal tensions, they ideologically converged to produce the contemporary Israeli water policy.

The Israeli imaginary of the basin was internally contested. As Alatout (2008) contends, discourses of abundance in the Zionist and Israeli water sector prevailed until the 1940s, but were abruptly replaced by a dominant narrative of scarcity, legitimising centralized water management, institutions and technologies. Backed by the Israeli water abundance proponents, the quest for making the desert bloom envisioned the construction of assemblages of diversion canals, pipes, collection pools and pumps, which would move transboundary waters of the north to al-Battuf, known in Israeli/Hebrew as Beit Netofa, serving as a natural reservoir for storage and flow regulation. This was to be connected to another assemblage of networks to

bring water to the coastal cities and continue its way towards the Naqab (Negev). While the pessimist scarcity group of the Israeli water sector (as described by Alatout, 2008) were vehemently against this narrative of 'abundance', they did not diverge radically from the necessity of this nationalist project, prioritising instead urban development of the North. This group considered Lake Tiberias as an ideal 'natural' reservoir and regulator of water from the tributaries of the Jordan and had strong reservations about the abundance group and their intensive irrigation focus, as well as the politically contentious approach of diverting water from the DMZ. Eventually, the scarcity framing prevailed and became the official Israeli discourse on water resource management. The environmental imaginary of the NWC was so dominant in the mindset of the Israeli state that it was considered a critical project for national survival, by proponents of abundance and scarcity narratives alike. However, for Sahl al-Battuf, one of my case studies, the abundance/scarcity framings and tensions were not able to curb the imposition of NWC infrastructures onto their landscapes, bypassing the agricultural plains of the valley and entrenching the misrecognition of Arab water and land ontologies. As shall be seen in Chapters 5 and 7, the state is clearly not a monolithic whole. Al-Battuf case exposes the dialectics of the state in the construction of state bodies (MoA and the Ministry of Environmental Protection) of al-Battuf as a site of agricultural production and flood control, while also being framed and constructed as a site of preservation and conservation. Chapter 7 also reveals the lucrative potential of the oGH as a site for the production of apples in the 1970s capitalised by the agricultural sector, while also showing the systematic exclusion of the Jawlani farmers from land, water and marketing mechanisms to maintain and strengthen that production. The state's systematic imposition of conditions of presence-absence thus explain that non-monolithic and divergent approach to agricultural activities in those two communities.

## 1.5 Why is this research important: Local environmental and hydro-imaginaries

Much has been written about Israel's settler-colonial hegemony over natural resources, spatial planning and zoning, and military surveillance and control. However, Palestinian and Syrian environmental imaginaries and realities have not received as much attention. Both sites investigated in this thesis had the misfortune, like the Jordan River itself more generally, of becoming geopolitically strategic sites for Israeli water control, withdrawal and development. Local narratives and experiences of settler-colonial geographical realities acquire importance in countering, or at least adapting to the material and symbolic effects of Israeli myths regarding water advancement and technological superiority. Moving beyond the developed/underdeveloped, colonizer/colonized dichotomy, these sites show how environmental narratives are contested, negotiated and shaped by multiple bodies, infrastructures, actions and affective ties. The methodologies from below employed in this dissertation problematise a top-down colonial narrative – and even a Palestinian nationalist one - to understand the local land and water ontologies (re)produced by Arab communities in the two study areas. Building on the work of Palestinian scholars who have relied on and bolstered the Palestinian oral history approach (Khalili, 2004; Masalha, 2012b; Sayigh, 2008), my work seeks to narrate the water struggles from below in an attempt to decolonise the dominant methodologies (Smith, 1998) used to narrate the history of water policy and development in the JRB.

Similarly, Alan Mikhail (2013) argues for subaltern environmental histories in the Middle East and North Africa, documenting how peasants (*fellahin*)<sup>8</sup> have shaped the management and political economy of natural resources, altering and continuously transforming their rural ecologies. Surveying the history of peasant

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<sup>8</sup> Fellahin is a term widely used in the Middle East to refer to villagers or peasants. However as many authors (Abufarha 2008; Ayyash 2018, 23) highlight, the fellahin of the Levant are distinct from European peasantry, as fellahin usually refers to rural farming communities with communal shared ownership of the land, which they cultivated according to communal traditions.

resistance in Palestine, Charles Anderson highlights how peasant histories of agrarian struggles in Palestine have been dismissed by scholarly work, and explores the acts of everyday resistance of the peasantry against British colonial rule in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, debunking what he terms the orientalist myth of idle, passive and apolitical subjects (2015, p.6). Michael Provence (2005) also claims that the conventional histories of the Great Syrian Revolt against the French in Syria have largely ignored the voices of the rural population, who were at the forefront of this popular rebellion. Episodes of collective mobilisation in both communities studied under this research will explore the role of the peasantry in the Great Revolt in Palestine (1936-39) against the British, and the Great Syrian Revolt (1925-1927) against the French, linking this to more recent events in the communities studied, namely the general strike of 1982 in the occupied Golan Heights and the Land Day demonstrations in 1976 in Al Battuf Valley in the Galilee.

Shahid Amin argues in *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, that “Peasants do not write, they are written about” and this is commonplace in academia, where research seems to draw extensive testimonies from the interviewees, rarely narrating their stories (Amin, 1995, p.1). That is why oral histories are able to convey rich accounts of the lived experiences of people better than any archival document, despite sometimes being dismissed due to a positivist fear of unreliability (Khalili, 2011; Riley and Harvey, 2007b). Riley and Harvey claim that oral histories have not been utilised enough when studying farming and agriculture. Oral histories offer ways of recording changes in farming practices and how these are linked to shifting social and political patterns and transformations in post-colonial regions. As the authors claim, oral histories can be useful tools to “uncover alternative, personalized, non-scientific and even subversive strands of knowledge” (Riley and Harvey, 2007, p.2) rather than the positivist techno-centric methodologies of studying agriculture and rural communities. This directs us, following Setten (2004, p.392), “to understand the production of a landscape from within, or how the landscape is the result of local customary practices”. For al-Battuf and the oGH, the challenge is therefore to “produce geographies that are lived, embodied, practised; landscapes which are never finished or complete, nor easily framed or read” (Creswell, 2002, p.208).

As I argue in this dissertation, Arab farming communities marginalized by Israeli sovereign authority face particular challenges in claiming rights to resources and also to a distinctive ethno-geographic, place-based recognition. As Zeitoun observes “those who live the water conflict generally lack the means to project their voices into the concentrations of power, where national and international policy-makers can – and do – ignore them” (Zeitoun 2008, xiv). Across the JRB, many areas call for investigation of the breadth and depth of microhistories that relate water stories from below – how communities used and valued the resource, how they faced pressures to normalise and engage with technical valuations of water and its flows, treating it as a commodity to enhance production and increase productivity – a priority of national governments and multinational agencies which guided their water policymaking. The JRB, therefore, is an ample source of community stories: the Yarmouk Triangle (Israel), the Adassiyeh and Bha’i community agricultural development (Jordan), Dera’a (Syria) and the Jordan valley (Jordan and West Bank) are all sites and sources of micro-histories and lived geographies which will justify research (UEA, 2018). For this thesis, two locations were chosen as they hold both ideological and geopolitical significance to the control and development of water resources in the Jordan Basin. They are sites where the water imaginary and infrastructural assemblages of the Israeli state became a reality, altering and re-configuring water meanings, uses and interactions for local Arab communities under precarious conditions of marginalisation, dispossession and misrecognition.

#### 1.5.1 Sahl al-Battuf (Al-Battuf Valley, Galilee, Israel)

Going beyond its geopolitical and regional significance as an instigator of conflict and war, the NWC project, as a significant artefact of the Israeli water sector, also impacted the lives of Palestinian farmers inside Israel, especially in *Sahl al-Battuf* in the Galilee in the 1950s and 1960s where the NWC expropriated thousands of dunums and severely restricted the livelihoods of farmers there. Drawing on sources from British and Israeli archives and extensive fieldwork in al-Battuf, this thesis aims

to represent the Palestinian *fellahin*.<sup>9</sup> (farmers) as the protagonists of an untold story of water and land politics in the Galilee. Continuously framed as a state-level issue by the mainstream TWM lens, water politics are manifested here in the continuous efforts of the farmers of al-Battuf who, as active historical and geographical agents, protested against the NWC, demanded rights to water infrastructure in the valley, and re-configured agricultural practices to defy discriminatory Israeli water and land policies. Moreover, while oral history narratives have focused their attention on the catastrophic destruction and depopulation of the Palestinian villages, towns and cities (Davis, 2011; Khalidi, 2006; Masalha, 2012a; Sayigh, 2008), my focus is on the villages which remained as an important site of Palestinian lived experiences and geographies of resource dispossession, contestation and perseverance.

### 1.5.2 The oGH (Syria)

The Golan Heights presents a set of physical and geopolitical strategic characteristics, rich in water resources and consisting of a very fertile plateau, conditions which justified its capture and control by Israel (Ibrahim, 2017; Ram, 2015). More than 147,000 people distributed in 163 villages and towns in addition to 108 farms (Mara'i and Halabi, 1992) lived in the Golan Heights prior to 1967, creating a thriving community of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds under the Syrian state. Following Israel's 1967 occupation, almost all land and water resources came under the full control and administration of the Israeli state, leaving the remaining Syrian communities disconnected and confined to a small geographical area, with their livelihoods threatened by encroaching settler colonial practices. That Israeli hydro-hegemony was central in the occupation of this territory became clear when Israel instantly took control over the Upper Jordan tributary of Baniyas, began its full-frontal excavation of groundwater, capturing all springs and fresh water sources, in addition to increasing water availability by storing the runoff of floodwater. As a community shattered and separated from its Syrian homeland, the Jawlani water

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<sup>9</sup> I use the term *fellahin* interchangeably with farmers, especially in al-Battuf, as this is how the villagers I met there identify themselves.



story of struggle and resistance does not have a place in the TWM discourse on the Jordan River, further justifying my focus on the oGH as a site of important water contestations against hydro-hegemonic control.

In summary, I argue that the TWM perspective is lacking in its ability to explain hydropolitics at the local level, even though local water struggles are shaped and reconfigured by inter-state dynamics at the basin level. This scale of analysis and reflection therefore requires approaching water struggles from another vantage point. My argument in this thesis is that Israeli water management, which is physically dependent on transboundary sources, produces settler colonial exclusionary water policies and infrastructures that alter and reconfigure relationships between the indigenous people and their lands and waters. TWM with its international relations and nation-state focus, is devoid of tools to analyse the local politics of water and precisely so under settler state colonial conditions. Following Snedon and Fox (2006), I further argue that scholarship on water politics in the Jordan Basin is deficient insofar as it only focuses on inter-state interactions and dynamics, and that we need a multi-scalar examination of dynamics and actors who constantly engage and contest the state and its water policies.

## 1.6 Outline of chapters

The thesis is divided into 8 chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 represents the theoretical framework that will inform the main discussions of the thesis. The chapter focuses first on scholarly work in critical political ecology on water and power, arguing that it provides critical understandings of *water from below* in a region where water has only been framed as a strategic and national issue requiring strict top-down approaches. The chapter addresses two other theoretical fields that have also been influential in framing the argument of this research: settler colonialism and lived geographies literature. In terms of the former, I argue that our understanding of water and land in settler colonial contexts has to take into account the operating premises of the elimination and exclusion of the native. Engaging with

settler colonial literature allows us to critically examine the logic and hegemony of settler colonial rulemaking. However, my critical contribution to augment what has been addressed in settler colonial literature in the Israeli state context, highlights the lack of attention to the infrastructures and artefacts of the settler colonial rule that shape the lived geographies of indigenous populations (for an exception, see Salamanca, 2014). The lived geographies, experiences and practices of communities living under settler colonial water regime are further additions to my examination, as water is a dominant and powerful object of claim making and recognition. Israel's imposition and hegemonic ordering of waterscapes on indigenous populations not only (re)produced their own ontologies of water but also re-configured their livelihoods, identities and lived geographies resulting in a hybrid mix of local community efforts of contestation. This theoretical framing aims to bridge discussions of water in critical political ecology with scholarship on settler colonialism and place-based resistance and lived geographies.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used for data collection and analysis. In this chapter, I describe my personal motivation for carrying out this research and the reason for the selection of the case studies. This chapter justifies and comments on the methods used for data collection and analysis. The last section discusses experiences of being in the field, and my positionality as a Palestinian female researcher in relation to working in Palestine/Israel.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine al-Battuf in relation to the two research questions. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the settler colonial hydro-imaginary and how it cast al-Battuf as the imagined site of a reservoir, and a critical junction for the realisation of the NWC. The chapter's focus is on the events surrounding the construction of this project, and how Palestinians inside Israel, at that time living under military rule imposed by the Israeli state, engaged with the state to protest and negotiate their claims over space. The findings reveal a contestation apparent between the state imaginary and Palestinian place-based imaginaries, which required tactics employed by the villagers to defend their land and water ontologies. The chapter shows how 'settler' states "shape water management in their image" (Obertreis et al., 2016:169; Swyngedouw, 2015). The Israeli/Zionist hydraulic mission

involved the state becoming the master hydraulic engineer, producing and reproducing nature/water and changing its flow, availability, and value, which produced a new nature, or new waterscape (Swyngedouw, 2004). The contestations, framed as 'struggles for water and land' in Chapter 5, seek to reveal how such mobilisation were shaped by the state's relationship with its estranged Palestinian populations in the midst of citizenship claims, and therefore show how such resource struggles were being constituted *through* water as a vessel for making claims of recognition.

Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with the second case study of the occupied Golan Heights. Chapter 6 examines the lived geographies of the Syrian communities who remained in the Golan Heights after the 1967 war. The construction of the Golan Heights as a geostrategic water reservoir has dominated the Israeli narrative and hydro-imaginary, culminating in its territorial occupation, and consolidating Israel's hydro-hegemon status over the water resources of the JRB. However, the years following the 1967 occupation were experienced by the Jawlanis as an intensified re-configuration of their lived geographies, identities and livelihood practices. Chapter 6 is focused on the transformation of landscapes and waterscapes and the effects of this on the lived geographies of the remaining populations. Chapter 7 delves into the local contestation and protest against the imposition of the occupying state's hydro-hegemony and the imbrication of their agricultural livelihood struggles with their political mobilisation against Israeli citizenship enforcement. The chapter further illustrates how water struggles were shaped by Israeli policies of exclusion and denial of access to water, a key resource for the survival of their life-sustaining crop, apples. Their scaling up of what I refer to as 'counter-infrastructure' is analysed in light of the Israeli suppression of vernacular water infrastructures the farmers constructed and their uneasy co-existence with the state.

Chapter 8 represents the main comparative findings chapter of the thesis. It first analyses how the main elements of the water struggles have been re-configured in light of settler colonial land and water policies through a 'presence-absence' experience. It examines the presence-absence of the state, infrastructure and water in the lives and livelihoods of the Palestinian farmers in Al-Battuf and the Jawlanis of

the oGH. The last section focuses on the varied experience of both communities in resisting and contesting the Israeli hydro-hegemony, and the political implications of those tactics for the water and recognition struggles these communities are still facing today. Chapter 9 is the conclusion of this thesis. It summarises the main findings of the chapters. It also reflects on the contribution of this research to larger bodies of work on water struggles in settler colonial contexts, highlighting the potential contribution it can make to theorising small and big infrastructures and their role in constructing hydro-imaginaries of the settler state, as well as their potential to serve as tools of resistance and contestation.

## Chapter 2: Lived geographies, water struggles and resistance in settler colonial waterscapes

In this chapter, I present the theoretical conceptualisations that inform my investigation into Arab water struggles in the Galilee and occupied Golan Heights. It addresses in turn relevant scholarship on political ecology, lived geographies and settler colonialism to produce a conceptual framework for examining the key research questions:

1. How do settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices manifest themselves in the lives and livelihood practices of farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights?
2. How, and with what political effects, are settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices resisted by farming communities in the occupied Golan Heights and Galilee?

I first discuss how political ecology can provide a useful framework for thinking relationally through water (Krause and Strang, 2016; Loftus, 2011). While political ecology helps to think about water relationally, settler colonialism literature focuses on ethno-geographic communities' struggles, highlighting issues of material and discursive formulations of misrecognition: land, water and identities. Moreover, the lived geographies literature helps ground our analysis in ontological terms, explaining place-based attachments, identities and dependencies, further illuminating places as sites of struggle and re-configuration. The overarching analytical focus is infrastructure, which I use as "an ideal ethnographic site for theorizing" everyday practices and contestations with power (Rodgers and O'Neill, 2012, p.402). Settler colonial infrastructure needs to be examined not only as an object of intervention or disruption of pre-existing local ontologies of water and water management but also as a site for imposing exclusion and cementing policies of difference.

Water and water infrastructures become objects of disconnection and exclusion by design in settler colonial logic, where such exclusion is justified by constructs of modernity, national strategy and the subjectivity of actors who are perceived to be

under-developed because of their indigenous way of life (Kooy and Bakker 2008). Water infrastructure is a central tool of analysis in this literature, and following Katie Meehan's critical work on the hydrosocial cycle (Meehan, 2014; Meehan and Moore, 2014) and conceptualisation of hydrosocial territories (meaning spaces recreated through the constant dynamics between social, political, infrastructural and human elements, as seen in section 2.1) (Boelens et al., 2016), I theorise all types of infrastructure as objects of power. While the focus of water researchers has tended to be the mega-projects of state control – the dams, hydropower plants, grids and desalination plans (e.g. McCully, 1997; Menga, 2014; Swyngedouw, 2015; van Wijk and Fischhendler, 2017; Warner et al., 2017), this thesis is preoccupied with the small, local infrastructure that often escapes the state's watchful eyes, creating conduits for resistance, claim-making, and protest during water struggles. What I aim to do throughout the chapters is to examine water infrastructures as sites of violence, exclusion and misrecognition (explored in Chapter 4 and 6) as well as conduits of resistance and opposition to hegemonic state rule (Chapters 5 and 7). As Rodgers and O'Neill note "infrastructure is by no means only a site where forms of social control and oppression can be observed, but also a potential place for imagining more positive politics" (2012, p.402).

## 2.1 Political ecologies of water

As Karen Bakker states, water is intensely political. While it is often assigned to the realm of national security and inter-state contestation, it is "largely framed as a backdrop to politics" in conventional international relations and geopolitics framings (2015, p.617). Bakker's interest in understanding the "human mobilization of, and interrelationship with, water" (2015, p.617) is shared in this thesis. The materiality and fluidity of water also requires us to look at infrastructures mediating its flows and ebbs, or as Bakker puts it, examining 'socio-technical objects'. My inspiration in examining local water politics comes from the literature on the politics of the everyday and the centrality of water in local struggles, especially in the global south (Boelens, 2014; Gelles, 2000; Paerregaard, 2013; Rasmussen, 2015; Delgado and

Zwarteveen, 2008). There are similarities between how local water struggles in such regions relate to wider structures of power, hegemony and dispossession and local water struggles in the Jordan River Basin, and this existing scholarship recognises the analytical value of a multi-scalar approach (Budds and Sultana, 2013; Linton and Budds, 2014; Perreault 2003, 2015). While the everyday political acts carried out by predominantly agrarian communities around water access and control may not be directly connected to larger scales of national and international water governance, they are conditioned by them through the flow and ebb of water carried through state-centric infrastructures.

Political ecology research explores how people's relationship with environmental processes has material and discursive effects which are inherently political, including the shaping of identities (Bryant and Bailey, 1997; Wolf, 1972; Forsyth, 2004). As an inter-disciplinary field, political ecology goes beyond the biophysical ecology into different trajectories, especially cases of struggle over resource access and control, and pays attention to historical approaches to environmental issues (O'Connor, 1998; Walker, 2005). It therefore addresses key issues of resource distribution, access and political rights (Moore, 1993), focusing on land users and social relations, and how these relations intersect within particular historical-geographical settings (Neumann, 1992; Peet et al., 2010). As Carroll argues, historicising water allows us to understand how water becomes an object of governance, (Carroll, 2012) and how we can investigate its imbrication in state policies of governance and in the lived geographies of water-dependent communities.

The relevance of political ecology for this thesis is in its critical manifestations (Forsyth, 2004; Forsyth, 2008; Robbins, 2011), which allow for an examination of the interaction of environment-related decisions with livelihood, governance and power relations, with a view to shaping a socially just environmental policy making.<sup>10</sup> Of importance to this research is how place-specific environmental imaginaries have

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<sup>10</sup> Blaikie's proclamation of the politics of soil erosion is a case in point of the need for application of politics in the ecological realm of research and knowledge production (Blaikie 1985), which changed the utilization of political ecology concepts and ideas. Since then, the political process analysis in political ecology has developed and become more profound, contextualised and participatory, according to Forsyth (2008).

political-economic origins and effects. Richard Peet and Michael Watts present such environmental imaginaries as a central concept for political ecology (1996, 263):

*Liberation ecology proposes studying the processes by which environmental imaginaries are formed, contested, and practiced in the course of specific trajectories of political-economic change. It borrows from poststructuralism a fascination with discourse and institutional power, yet remains within that tradition of political ecology which sees imaginaries, discourses, and environmental practices as grounded in the social relations of production and their attendant struggles. The environmental imaginary emerges, therefore, as a primary site of contestation; critical social movements have at their core environmental imaginaries at odds with hegemonic conceptions.*

Environmental imaginaries' contestation have been embedded within historical narratives of colonialism, feudalism and other political-economic regimes in the context of this study, where access to resources has been highly contested and often violent, as exemplified by Donald Moore's work on Zimbabwe's subaltern struggles (Moore, 1993). In their book, *Violent Environments*, Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts (2001, p.26) define violence as "practices (brutal acts) that cause direct harm to humans" expanding the concept of resource-related violence beyond the physical to nonphysical harm. Thus, they argue, while resource dispossession may be conducted in a physically non-harmful way (e.g. legal appropriation), this does not negate the harmful (socio-economic and affective) impacts on those whose resources are taken away from them. In the case of Israeli acts against Arab communities in the Jordan River Basin, resource dispossession is institutionalised and carried out by physical violence (e.g. the destruction by state actors and settlers of Arab water infrastructure and crops) as well as the less visible, non-physical violence of discriminatory rule-making and cultural and political misrecognition. For Mehta (2016) invisible power refers to power which shapes people's consciousness and beliefs and leads them to accept the status quo, arguing that invisible power operates in a context of structural violence, where according to Farmer et al. (2006, p.1686) "social arrangements... put individuals and populations in harm's way". Mehta argues that these structural arrangements are embedded in the political and economic aspects of daily life; they



are violent because they cause systemic harm. In this respect the invisible power of Israeli water hegemony is achieved by its technical-managerial normalisation, justifying water inequality and dispossession.

The lens of political ecology thus offers a fertile ground to understand the multiplicity of water meanings and processes as (re)produced by political-economic contexts and social relations. The waterscapes and hydrosocial cycle are analytical concepts which help us explore the imbrication of local-level water politics and struggles in power relations. Eric Swyngedouw defines *waterscapes* as water landscapes of hybrid character with ever-changing societal and ecological factors (Swyngedouw, 1999). They are an "expression of the interaction between humans and their environment and encompasses all of the social, economic and political processes through which water in nature is conceived of and manipulated by societies" (Molle et al. 2009, p.2). Acknowledging that the context of that interaction is replete with asymmetries, Budds and Hinojosa (2012, p.124) argue that the notion of waterscapes is useful to "explore the ways in which flows of water, power and capital converge to produce uneven socio-ecological arrangements over space and time, the particular characteristics of which reflect the power relations that shaped their production". These come in direct challenges to engineered and managerial conceptions such as watersheds or river basins, obscuring their social construction while focusing on their biophysical characteristics. As Molle et al. assert, river basins are human-made waterscapes reflecting specific political, social, and natural relationships at certain points in time – they are contested within different scales producing overlapping hydro-social territories, realities and imaginaries (Molle and Wester, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2009).

Another relevant concept is hydrosocial territories, which are defined as "socially, naturally and politically constituted spaces that are (re)created through the interactions amongst human practices, water flows, hydraulic technologies, biophysical elements, socio-economic structures and cultural-political institutions" (Boelens et al., 2016, p.1). Hydrosocial territories exist in plural forms, articulating contrasting notions of what such territories mean and to whom, and often featuring negotiations and struggle over the governance of water resources (Hoogesteger et

al., 2016). The relevance of territorial struggles, in the context of settler colonialism, is that they “entwine battles over natural resources with struggles over meaning, norms, knowledge decision-making authority, and discourses” (Boelens et al., 2016, p.8). Hydrosocial territories become (re)configured through infrastructure, entailing major impacts for different water users’ identification with the physical environments while simultaneously altering political order and establishing a hydro-political network hierarchy (Duarte-Abadia et al., 2015). Within these frameworks, water becomes influential in the production of society, including how the production of material artefacts, such as large-scale water infrastructures, configures and influences nation-state building.

My research interest is partly to show the central role that water has played in the Zionist/Israeli settler colonial project by following its infrastructures and their impacts on the lived geographies of colonised communities. To investigate the role of such infrastructures in shaping what Alatout refers to as *hydro-imaginaries* – the assemblages of ideas, meanings, values and discourses which shape how we think and imagine water (2011), we need to examine how they materialise geographically and produce hydropolitical territories. While the focus has been on the state and colonial imaginaries (Davis, 2010) (whether British, French, American, Israeli, or Arab), this research appreciates and employs local water-imaginaries as they relate to, and counter, hegemonic state imaginaries about water and environment. Political ecology, and its examination of power, discourse and hegemony in nature-society interactions, allows us to explore the emergence of conflicting environmental imaginaries (Nesbitt and Weiner, 2001) and the tension between them.

### 2.1.1 Water as a resource and ‘scarcity for the few’

Engineering, management and scientific knowledge-based approaches to water governance dominate how water is perceived and governed, creating a hegemonic ontology of ‘water-as-resource’ (Yates et al., 2017, p.803), especially in settler colonial context. As Tania Murray Li (2007) observes, these prevailing

technical and managerial constructions of water typically result in water issues being de-historicised and de-politicised, which suggests the need for a historicisation of water to reveal how it becomes *an issue, a problem* requiring management and governance (Bijker, 2012; Carroll, 2012; Linton, 2010; Rasmussen, 2015; Schmidt, 2014). In other words, the current water infrastructure of the Israeli state as it impacts on, and is resisted by Arab farming communities, needs to be understood by examining its historical emergence and construction as a scarce resource. Alatout shows how a pre-state Zionist water abundance narrative (promoting Jewish migration to Palestine and its settlement by Jews) was challenged by a water scarcity narrative. The 1940s and 1950s were rife with contestations between those two polarised narratives until, eventually, narratives of scarcity won out, successfully shaping Israeli water policy and also limiting other ways of imagining water resources (Alatout, 2008; 2009). The colonial idea of ordering nature in the Levant was further consolidated by those scarcity narratives, which justified the planned, large-scale transformation of landscapes (Gibbs, 2009). While ‘natural’ or biophysical scarcity exists in Palestine, scarcity narratives reflect a powerful discursive construct – what Lyla Mehta refers to as a ‘manufactured scarcity’ serving the political interests of those in power (Mehta, 2005). Water scarcity, therefore, is produced by political, technological and economic barriers which limit people’s access to water, rather than by physical water scarcity (Molle and Wester, 2009, p.3). Jessica Barnes (2009), in her work on Syrian water management has highlighted how scarcity is constructed as a consequence of the government’s promotion of water-intensive agriculture. This scarcity, Barnes argues, is further consolidated by spatial representations that render geographical locations as zones of scarcity and abundance on the map. Such constructions of scarcity as natural are seen in many cases around the Middle East, and the JRB in particular. Whether in Israel, Palestine, or Jordan, such narratives of scarcity prevail as a “apolitical and ahistorical” reality (Barnes, 2009, p.519), assuming scarcity as a fixed condition requiring state policy interventions to combat it, mainly through technological solutions and rational-choice market-based mechanisms of water management.

The politicisation of water, whether under abundance or scarcity narratives, serves political purposes and positions water at the heart of the conflict in Palestine/Israel. What Alatout illuminates in his work on Israeli narratives of abundance and scarcity is that both co-constituted water politics. However, it was the earlier abundance narrative which placed water as an important driver of the Israeli settler colonial nation state. What can be concluded from that articulation of those narratives is a reality of '*scarcity for the few*' – i.e. non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine/Israel. While Israeli narratives of scarcity consolidated its control over water resources and extensively harnessed them for the benefit of Jewish agricultural settlements and in order to make the desert bloom (which of course contradicts scarce water narratives), abundance was rearticulated as scarcity to justify Israel's use of water for its national and ideological purposes. Consequently, those who suffered 'real' (physical and socio-economic) scarcity were the populations deemed external to the nation-state building project, whose water needs and demands were neglected or denied under the justification of 'there's not enough water'. This is how water conflicts and struggles "are as much a symptom of relations with the state as a question of water scarcity in itself" (Rasmussen, 2015, p.59; Selby, 2005). Whether biophysical/natural scarcity or human-induced scarcity, variations of water flow "create, transform or destroy social linkages" (Boelens et al., 2016, p.3) and transform lived spaces and boundaries as they produce new landscapes and waterscapes . As Alatout further elaborates, "water becomes part of a specific technopolitical network with specific effects on known communities, places and orders. For water to become political, it has to be *made* political" (2009, p.371).

Making water political, therefore, allows us to challenge the water engineering and management paradigms which have largely neglected wider social and political processes involved in water systems, as shown by David Mosse in his work on South India's 'tanked' landscape and rainwater harvesting (Mosse, 2003; 2008). Similarly, Carse's work on the construction of the Panama Canal reveals how large-scale infrastructures become part of a managed watershed, in which infrastructure is not only the articulation of socio-technical systems but also "grounded in everyday life... revealing sites for ethnographic research on negotiation,

struggle and meaning” (Carse, 2012, p.543) which are typically ignored. As we shall see in the case studies presented in this thesis, Israeli socio-technological systems of water governance have indeed shaped the everyday life of marginalised communities and altered landscapes to secure hegemonic control over water imaginaries, meanings and governance but have been ignored by most literature on water politics in the JRB.

Moreover, the specificities of settler colonial waterscapes and struggles continue to be missing from political ecology’s engagement with water. In a recent paper Simpson and Bagelman (2018) call for the ‘decolonising’ of urban political ecologies, putting settler colonialism and indigenous scholarship in conversation with political ecology. The disregard and erasure of indigenous people’s (in their case the Lekwungen in British Columbia) cultural and ecological interventions in the landscape reflects on realities of environmental governance today. The everyday practices of the indigenous within a settler colonial state oscillate between the reproduction and the decolonisation of political ecologies of the city, therefore requiring examinations of those practices and how they shape local landscapes and communities’ identification with them. This thesis is an attempt to do so for the political ecology of water in a specific settler colonial context, and resembling Simpson and Bagelman’s work, it focuses on the ‘quotidian’ farming practices as acquiring political subjectivity under such conditions.

## 2.2 Lived geographies, sumud, and everyday resistance

In this thesis, I argue that the fixation of scholars and practitioners of transboundary water management with the regional and international scales, and the technical-managerial framing of water-as-resource, has confined it to the governance calculations of state-actors, international agencies and institutions. Accordingly, this apolitical framing has often ignored struggles over water resources and water imaginaries, including their links to wider political mobilisations. Therefore, this thesis acknowledges how scale is socially constructed to make visible the politics of

water but is critical of how the transboundary scale confines meanings and values of water to the national, ignoring (or making invisible) the local, everyday dynamics of water. As water flows physically through the JRB, it also crosses scales. The intention of this thesis is not to confine water to a certain scale (local or national) but to emphasise the fluid dynamics around water.” I aim to examine how the lived geographies of marginalised Arab communities affected by this hegemonic discourse and show how settler colonial discourses (and material practices) are resisted by these farming communities in the occupied Golan Heights and Galilee. Geographically-themed literature is used here to situate my research interest in lived geographies, by which I mean place-based experiences and practices. These lived geographies are, I argue, reconfigured by the water infrastructures of state rule, but in such a way that the agency of the affected farmers has significant social and political autonomy.

### 2.2.1 Political ontology of land

According to Greider and Garkovich (1994), and drawing on the work of Edward Soja (1989), the social construction of nature challenges deterministic views of nature as a given, showing instead that cultural groups co-create nature and the physical environment through material and symbolic practices. Landscape is the embodied site of a society’s experience of being, the tangible source of value and practices that mutually shape both land and people (Ingold, 2000). In many societies, land and identity are inextricably linked: “through extensive interaction with a place, people may begin to define themselves in terms of . . . that place, to the extent that they cannot really express who they are without inevitably taking into account the setting which surrounds them as well” (Ryden, 1993, p.76). People’s everyday tasks and activities become constitutive acts of dwelling. Without land, a community may lose its distinctive identity, which is why coercive efforts at displacement and dispossession, such as through colonialism, authoritarian regimes or military occupation, typically include the violence of cultural misrecognition. The lived geographies perspective adapted here focuses on the dwelling practices of indigenous groups subject to settler colonial misrecognition, for it is through such

dwelling that these people (and non-human agents, such as crops) form landscapes constitutive of their distinctive ethno-geographic communities.

Under settler colonial rule, which operates with a logic of elimination, the lived experiences of indigenous communities are systematically disrupted, with the intent to erase them (Wolfe, 2006). In these circumstances the landscapes become a vehicle for the communication of place-based identity, whether for the imagined communities of settlers or those of the indigenous populations. Such place-making “contains overt and covert social practices that embed in place-making behaviours notions of ideology, power, control, conflict, dominance and distribution of social and physical resources” (Stokowski, 2002, p.368). Relph’s work is seminal in the geographical literature on people’s identity *of* place, which refers to a persistence and unity of it, and *with* the place, where the intensity of attachment to a place for a people resides (Relph, 1976). Of particular relevance to this research are the concepts of inclusion and exclusion as they shape the meaning, experiences and values humans attribute to place. Existence or rootedness in a landscape implies “being at home in an unself-conscious way” where much of the landscape is taken for granted (Tuan, 1980, p.4), and such rootedness is deeply politicised in settler colonial contexts. As Ingold (2000) asserts, the ways of being are inscribed into the landscape through stories and histories.

While Ingold and Tuan’s phenomenological work on place established a solid understanding of place and attachment to place as central to lived geographies, it does not engage with power relations, including the legacies of (post)colonial place-making and its exclusionary policies of dispossession and misrecognition. To explain issues of power, violence and coercion, especially when examining settler colonial states, we need to acknowledge the association of territory with fear and violence (Elden, 2007). The violence of state formation is marked out by the formation of bounded territorial space, which in itself is an act of exclusion and inclusion (Elden, 2010). The basic premise is shared by Lefebvre, when he observes that “every state is born of violence, and state power endures only by virtue of violence directed towards a space” (1991, p.280). Therefore, it is not surprising that in cases of settler

colonialism, the colonised are being de-territorialised, and hegemony takes the form of territorial and resource control, as has been the case with the Zionist policy in Palestine (Newman, 1985). As Swyngedouw and Boelens highlight, 'territorial struggles go beyond battles over natural resources per se, as they also involve conflicts over meaning, norms, knowledge, decision-making authority, representations and discourses' (2018, p.115).

In the case studies presented in this thesis, place-based attachments and connections are imbricated in the hydropolitical history of the Jordan River Basin, and influenced by a number of regional and national conditions which shape the current dynamics of dispossession and misrecognition. In order to understand contestation over place and resources, in the context of communities facing settler colonial policies and practices, it is useful to examine "the defense of constructions of place" (Dukpa et al., 2018; Escobar, 2001, p.139) insofar as they produce a *political ontology* of land. Political ontology, as Arturo Escobar (2016, p.21) explains:

*...refers to the power-laden practices involved in bringing into being a particular world or ontology; on the other hand, it refers to a field of study that focuses on the inter-relations among worlds, including the conflicts that ensue as different ontologies strive to sustain their own existence in their interaction with other worlds.*

Scholarly literature on sense of place revolves around characterisations and dimensions related to place-attachment, place-identity and place-dependence, each highlighting an important dimension of place-belonging. In relation to Escobar's 'political ontology', struggles can be explained as subaltern practices of difference that intend to create alternative socio-natural worlds (Escobar, 2008, p.67) where the subaltern develops and defends an alternative (minority) political ontology of land shaped, in large part, by the 'othering' of indigenous peoples by the settler state. As Escobar (ibid) explains:

*The goal of many of today's struggles is the defense of place-based conceptions of the world and practices of world making – more precisely, a defense of particular constructions of place, including*



*the reorganizations of place that might be deemed necessary according to the power struggles within place.*

Defences of place are at the heart of the case studies in this thesis. The Israeli transformation of landscapes in the Galilee and occupied Golan Heights and their transformation to hydrostrategic waterscapes represented the attempted imposition of a Zionist political ontology against indigenous Arab communities. Facing threats to their livelihoods, identities, and places of belonging, the affected communities engaged in 'place-based' collective actions to (re)produce and protect distinctive communal identities, ones with autonomous ontologies of land (and water). Place-based characteristics in both areas led to differentiated experiences by communities against the rupture of settler colonial uprooting, resulting in differentiated strategies and actions. In this way, borrowing from the work of Donald Moore, the case studies represent situated struggles which produced 'entangled landscapes' where entanglement is seen as "knots, gnarls, and adhesions rather than smooth surfaces; an inextricable interweave that ensnares; a compromising relationship that challenges while making withdrawal difficult if not impossible" (Moore, 2005, p.4).

The entangled landscapes of the Galilee and occupied Golan Heights have as a central feature the dual *presence and absence* of the settler state in the lived geographies of the indigenous Arab communities. In light of this contestation between attempts at state erasure and communities' persistence in remaining visible and rooted, the concept of 'presence-absence' emerges as a useful analytical tool to describe and analyse competing imaginaries of how misrecognition is materialised, countered and contested. The presence-absence of the state is a dynamic condition which has transformed communities' identity and their interaction around land and water issues. It relates above all to the simultaneous experience both of exclusion by the state (e.g. from political representation) while at the same time being subject to state power (e.g. state restrictions on land and water use). The Israeli state is present in its material transformation of the landscape through use of infrastructure and policymaking. However, at the same time the 'othering' of the Arab communities,

their experience of discriminatory resource distribution and cultural misrecognition, creates an absence of the state, in which they can create and defend their own land and water realities (ontologies). In its attempts at erasure, the settler colonial state is also dialectically engaged in acts of consolidating its settler presence on top of and in replacement of the indigenous landscape. In order to erase, the state has to construct infrastructure to consolidate its control over land and resources. Water infrastructures therefore are important artefacts of misrecognition as they facilitate policies of exclusion and dispossession. In parallel, and as this thesis argues, infrastructures also serve as artefacts of recognition used by ethno-geographic communities to assert their presence on the land, protect their livelihood and resist erasure. Therefore, the presence-absence of the state produces conditions shaping the lived geography of these communities, manifested through resource (water, land), infrastructure (state, community) and identity (second class citizens, non-citizens) ebbs and flows. Similar to the work of Rasmussen (2015) on water in the Andean highlands highlights, communities' struggles with present-absent state leaves them to battle with conditions of abandonment [absence] while also aspiring to be independent from state control [presence] over their water.

### 2.2.2 Sumud, resistance and water struggles

*Sumud* (صمود) is literally articulated in concepts such as steadfastness or perseverance in relation to the Palestinian existence under conditions of dispossession. The fellah's perseverance and presence on the land, for example, was incorporated by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the sixties and seventies into the national liberation discourse, constructing a much-needed unification of a distinct Palestinian national identity. However, that significance of the peasant was only symbolic and relevant to a construction of sumud as staying on the land, but in a non-violent, passive and non-confrontational form – according to the PLO (Swedenburg, 1990). Arab politicians since 1978 have confined sumud to a geographical location (the occupied Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza), as Raja Shehadeh writes in his book, *The Third Way: A journal of life in the West Bank* (Shehadeh, 1984). However, Shehadeh (viii) asserts that sumud “had been

practiced by every man, women and child here struggling on his or her own to learn to cope with, and resist, the pressures of living as a member of a conquered people” and he further highlights how sumud for the *samidon* (those who practice sumud) “is developing from an all-encompassing form of life into a form of resistance”. Swedenburg (1990) further reflects on a rupture in the Arab narrow viewpoint due to the grassroots uprising of Palestinians during the first Intifada in 1987, one that put the Palestinian individual and the peasant as the central actor and agent of social change, liberation and what Meari refers to as community resistance which was being initiated and led by workers and peasants (Meari, 2017).

Attesting to its multiplicity, sumud can be found in varying acts and pockets of everyday life and culture, including in poetry (Sazzad, 2016), confronting interrogators (Meari, 2011), claiming residual spaces of Palestinian existence in the refugee camps (Alkhalili, 2017), enacting resistance to planning inside Israel (Plonski, 2016), staying on the land and cultivating it (Darweish and Sellick, 2017; Reger, 2017), encountering the Israeli military checkpoint (Gould, 2014; Rijke, 2014; Ryan, 2015a) or through adaptation to adverse conditions, especially as exercised by Palestinian women (Ryan, 2015b). In summary, it’s the endurance of settler colonial conditions through continuous non-violent opposition and engagement with these conditions. As Raja Shehadeh claims, sumud is a third and alternative way for Palestinian that is neither exile nor submission in face of the coloniser (Shehadeh, 1984). It can alternate from its most passive forms of getting by to visible and vivid confrontations and opposition to settler colonial rule (Halper, 2006b). Sumud invokes suffering, resistance, perseverance and survival against all odds.

In this thesis, sumud is identified as explicitly informing the daily acts of resistance of the Jawlanis and the *fellahin* (farmers) of sahl al-Battuf. Notions of sumud will be used to analyse the particular acts and tactics of resistance exercised by Palestinians inside Israel and the Syrians of the oGH, conceptualising sumud as “a relational concept that involves a complex web of alternating relationalities to the self and multiple others” and as “a possibility that is actualized in particular moments and floating up as a potentiality in others” (Meari, 2011, p.53). Both areas are important sites of Israeli waterscape, and both Arab populations have articulated and

undertaken diverse acts of sumud in the face of settler colonial uprooting and dispossession. The empirical chapters (chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) relate and discuss these specific invocations of sumud, in which I argue that sumud is articulated through the political subjectivity which farming acquired as a means of staying on the land.

The recent work of Ayyash (2018) highlights how the examination of fellahin acts of resistance offers a 'decolonial' approach which transcends the limitations of settler-native distinctions or the nationalist/statist framings of resistance. As Vincent Lemire has shown in his work on fellahin's water struggles under the British mandate in Jerusalem, hydropolitical consciousness was imbricated in wider nationalistic and recognition struggles being undertaken by the Palestinians against Zionist state policies, in contestation with some Palestinian elites and intellectuals (Lemire, 2011, p.33). Contestation over natural resources – water and land in this thesis – are argued to be constituents in the multiple elements which make up an Arab political consciousness and sumud.

Scholarly literature on resistance has paid significant interest to Palestinian cases of everyday resistance against a hegemonic settler colonial regime (Gould, 2014; Halper, 2006a, 2006b; Johansson and Vinthagen, 2014; Marie et al., 2016; Rijke, 2014; Vinthagen and Johansson 2013). Resistance, especially under settler colonialism, is an ongoing process not an event (Svirsky, 2017). While resistance is often associated with specific momentous events, this remains a narrow view at odds with what scholars have examined as everyday, subtle, and hidden acts of resistance and confrontations with power (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Bayat, 2010; Brewer, 2010; Mitchell, 1990; Scott, 1986). The oppositional act of resistance, coupled with its practical manifestations in the daily lives of the subaltern is continuously entangled with power and is in continuous flux (Hirsch 2017; Hollander and Einwohner 2004; Johansson and Vinthagen 2014; Vinthagen and Johansson 2013). Certeau, in his seminal work, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), examines the everyday acts of resistance carried out by the subaltern, or the marginalised, and offers an important distinction between strategies and tactics. While strategies belong to the realms of military control and political-economic power, associated above all with organised campaigns to reach goals, tactics are specific actions always in a state of flux,

constantly reassessed and reevaluated in relation to contexts of opposition. An important insight from De Certeau's work is to show the often-underestimated scope for everyday practices of resistance in the face of overwhelming power, as represented in my study of water struggles in settler colonial contexts. The reference to resistance literature would not be complete without reference to seminal work by Spivak-Chakrabarty (1988), and the non-European historical context in which they examine subaltern struggles. Situating peasant movements at the centre of their research, their work is invaluable in understanding forms of peasant dissent and protest outside of rational and nationalistic drivers. The relevance to this thesis is in its attempts to deconstruct colonial discourses around third world dissent and protest and allow for platforms of decolonising our knowledge base and analysis.

As we shall see in this section, the centrality of linking such conceptualisations of resistance with the more vernacular and grounded local concept of *sumud* is central to understanding how settler colonial resource policies and practices have been resisted by farming communities in the Galilee (Audeh, 1983; Bashir, 2006; Darweish and Sellick, 2017; King-Irani, 2000; Sa'di, 2001). It is also instructive, as shown extensively in this study, how accounts and experiences of everyday resistance in the occupied Golan Heights have also drawn on, and developed, the idea of *sumud* (Abu Fakhr, 2000; Al-Marsad, 2018; Kennedy, 1984; Mara'i and Halabi, 1992), highlighting *sumud*'s multiplicity in enacting perseverance under settler colonial conditions.

However, the lens through which everyday resistance and protest is studied in this thesis departs from a romanticised and unified anti-colonial approach. Lila Abu Lughod was attentive of how narrations and conceptualisations of everyday resistance in a way reduced it to a romanticised phenomenon. She insists that resistance should be used 'as a diagnostic of power' (1990, p.41), to allow learning from the everyday acts of resistance "about the complex interworkings of historically changing systems of power" (ibid, p.53). This puts the focus of analysis and study on those framed as the 'others' and asks how the Israeli governing apparatus deals with and enacts ways of contending with these groups. The interest of using the *sumud* and resistance lens is to see how very concretised and centralised systems of Israeli

governance of land and water are challenged and re-configured in the everyday practices of farming communities. These can be minute and insignificant to the settler colonial state at times, while erupting into larger consolidated acts of protest opposition, and negotiations in other times, as both case studies reveal. The settler colonial state's systematic neglect of Palestinian and Syrian farmers, as discussed and explained by the presence-absence lens, lends to further interpretation of cases of acquiescence and recognition sought by these communities through the aspiration to be recognised as equal farmers and to be incorporated into the existing institutional arrangements in order to stay on the land. Here, the resistance of the subaltern is marred with attempts of incorporation and inclusion within the Israeli government plans. Therefore, the subaltern lens allows this research to explore struggles not just as resistance but also those of negotiation, compromise and acquiescence. This produces conflicting narratives and imaginaries, further explaining the contentious and nonhomogeneous lived experiences and decisions of the communities studied. The dilemmas of both communities (as discussed extensively in chapter 5 and 7) is in the adoption of narratives of resistance and or cooperation. While resistance binds together the ontological and political values of land and water, through the rejection of state intervention and control, the cooperation narrative engages directly and actively with the state to secure rights to develop and to be seen as equal in the eyes of the state. This can be seen in al-Battuf through the engagement of different actors to achieve the drainage project, or through the direct support of conservation of the valley. In the oGH, the development of the cooperatives also scaled up the engagement with the occupying power and further incorporated the Syrian farmers within the Israeli agricultural complex."

### 2.3 Settler colonialism, misrecognition and Infrastructural violence

*Settler colonialism is the practice of conquering land and then populating it with the victorious people, the settlers. Such a population shift may be triggered by the need for space for an*

*expanding population, or it may be prompted by the need to assert economic and political control in the new territory; regardless, it results in the dispossession and often the extermination of large parts of 'native' populations and the subsequent cultural, economic, and political subordination of the remainder (Lloyd and Pulido, 2010, pp.796-797).*

Veracini (2013) defines settler colonialism as a political-economic formation which aims to expel a majority of the indigenous population, creating a new territory for the settlers of the conquering state. Wolfe (2006) refers to settler colonialism as an act of elimination. Settler colonial projects and regimes face stark, competing choices for dealing with local indigenous communities. Kellerman identifies three options: genocide (elimination in the words of Wolfe, 2006), tight control, and partnership (Kellerman, 1993). The settler state is generally expansionist and ethnocentric, usually establishing coercive control over territory and the symbolic resources of the indigenous inhabitants of the land (Yiftachel, 2006). This formation, in case of its failure to remove these inhabitants completely, systematically excludes them from nation and state-building identity projects.

Settler colonialism deploys an expansionist spatial logic of accumulation by dispossession. As Lloyd (2012, p.66) notes:

*What distinguishes a settler colony from an administrative or extractive one is in the first place the settlers' focus on the permanent appropriation of land rather than the political and economic subordination of the indigenous population, the monopolisation of its resources, or the control of its markets.*

According to Wolfe (2006), Zionism constitutes an intensification of, rather than a departure from, settler colonialism. However, as a land-centred endeavour, and unlike the fixation of colonialism on natives as labour, the Zionist settler colonial project in Palestine focused on 'Jewish land', 'Jewish labour' and the control of natural resources. The establishment of agricultural cooperatives, *kibbutzim*, was the epitome of that vision during the early years of the State of Israel, creating a new

society devoid of the native and harnessing natural resources for the benefit of national development. The transformation of the inherent meaning in land, territory and terrain has been archetypal of state and settler interventions (Kolers, 2009). Settler societies do not recognize indigenous conceptions of land and property, typically viewing indigenous populations as failing to make productive use of land. The strategy of “indigenous de-territorialization” (Choi, 2016, p.13) has been deployed to strip from these populations both land and other resource entitlements, including affective connections to the land (Elkins and Pedersen, 2005). A settler project succeeds, therefore, when it cements its control of the land it occupies, establishes sovereign political authority and completes its termination of autonomous indigenous forms (Veracini, 2013). Under such conditions, territorial power is associated with fear and violence, where the settler/indigene distinction reproduces binaries of inclusion/exclusion and friend/enemy (Elden, 2010; Lefebvre, 1991, p.280).<sup>11</sup>

The processes of dispossession and elimination of indigenous societies do not only concern policies of erasure and destruction but also the hegemonic imposition of a socionatural order, in this case the construction of unequal waterscapes. The material and symbolic transformation of land, territory and terrain has been archetypal of settler state interventions (Kolers, 2009). While indigenous peoples traditionally placed spiritual and cultural significance to land and natural resources, managing and controlling their use through communal governance, these systems of meaning and practice were swept aside by settler colonialism. Wolfe highlights how settler colonial endeavors on land should not be seen as bounded events (in the *Nakba* for instance), but rather as ongoing processes of establishing new realities on the expropriated land, through the erasure of history and memory of the indigenous and continuous efforts to establish normalcy in destruction and elimination (Wolfe,

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<sup>11</sup> To understand the political construction of such a relationship between the settler and the native, Mamdani (1996) explains how settler colonialism establishes the reason why one is a settler and the other is a native. This highlights the complexity of such a relationship and its dynamics, as it views the existence of one as a necessity of the existence of the other. Settler presence also bolsters nationalist sentiments in the colonized, in opposition to colonialism. Building on that, it is evident how settler colonialism and varying agents of foreign control also play a pivotal role in this transformation, reconstruction and redefining of space and place.



2006; Salamanca et al., 2012). While it remains risky to romanticise indigenous livelihood practices and forms of production, it is evident that such populations adopted and managed their resources independently from the western conceptions of value (Mikhail, 2011). The settler colonial strategy of de-territorialisation of the indigenous population has been deployed to strip indigenous populations from their lands, severing their material and affective connections to the land (Elden, 2010). Moreover, such acts of dispossession are not replaced by inclusive modes of governance within the new settler state, as indigenous populations are routinely excluded from such arrangements, imposing a state of limbo on such populations: being present in the settler colonial state while being banished to spaces of marginality and instability.

My interest in employing the settler colonial lens is to investigate how water and land policies of the Israeli state manifest themselves in the lives and livelihood practices of farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights, and how these policies are resisted. While encapsulated in a settler colonial regime and its constricted spaces of existence, struggles nevertheless emerge to challenge the state's policies of dispossession, exclusion and misrecognition. A distinct 'othering' has been exercised by the Israeli state to justify its exclusionary policies exercised against the Palestinians inside Israel, and in occupied territories against the Syrian and West Bank/Gaza Strip Palestinians to varying degrees. Abdo and Yuval-Davis (1995, p.292) explain that "the main thrust of the Zionist settlement project for most of its history has been to dispossess and then to exclude the Palestinians whenever possible from control over the various resources of the country and the state". This alienation and exclusion of the indigenous becomes solidified in the everyday life of the communities undergoing it, as the "Palestinians are incorporated into the one not connected directly to land and control of land" (Shafir, 2005, p.55).

Israeli dispossession, by detaching the Palestinian and Syrians from their land and limiting their livelihoods subsistence, has resulted in a precarious livelihood and identity politics. Control of land readily lends itself to conflict in settler colonial contexts. Land is an important economic asset and source of livelihoods; but it is also

closely linked to community identity, history and culture. Communities, therefore, can readily mobilise around land issues, making land a central object of conflict. For Veracini, a settler project succeeds when it completes the 'external' supervision and control of the land it occupies, establishes "local sovereign political and cultural forms" and also completes its termination of "substantive indigenous autonomies, and has tamed a landscape that was once perceived as intractably alien" (2013, p. 28). In both case studies examined in this study, I argue that the settler colonial project has not succeeded in these terms, on account of the active persistence of indigenous landscapes and waterscapes.

The Galilee's character of being an Arab stronghold long tormented the Israeli leaders such as Ben Gurion, who visualised the Arab villages "occupying the space", reducing its judaisation character and requiring conquest and 'occupation' (Bashir, 2004, p.17). In such settler colonial processes, the settler aspires to blur the line between settler and native and come to be viewed as *the native*. The space it occupies is heavily invested in in economic terms to render it ordinary (Ram, 2015). The equal judaisation of space and place by the settler state is seen in the occupied Golan Heights, where Israel tries to normalise the landscape and render it ordinary, even a site of tourism and recreation. In both case studies, the Israeli space entrenches itself within the 'others' and creates realities of disenfranchisement for those non-Jewish indigenous populations opposing normalisation. Ram highlights how such sites are far from 'natural' extensions of their host territory as they remain "encamped spaces". Ram's analysis, however, disregards the role of indigenous subjects, who are not as 'abject' in such a state of exception but remain resistant to settler colonial attempts at integration (Isin and Rygiel, 2007).

The settler colonialism lens is adopted, therefore, to bring about a deeper understanding of how Israeli policies of land planning and water management – devised to eliminate, uproot and reduce the space of the indigenous population's existence – can also trigger and solidify acts of rootedness, belonging and *sumud* through farming and resource claim-making. Events of rupture, such as land confiscation, removal and denial of rights and misrecognition, are met with counter-acts of resistance and protest, re-affirmation of identities and a re-rooting in place.

For Palestinians inside Israel, the dichotomies of being citizen strangers (Robinson, 2013) and fifth column citizens, excluded and unequal, tells a complex and problematic story of resistance and protest. The Jawlanis of the occupied Golan Heights, being non-citizens in an occupied land, also live in a state of limbo in an uneasy co-existence with the settler state.

### 2.3.1 Settler Colonialism as Systemic Misrecognition

Only recently has work on the politics of misrecognition explored the symbolic devaluation of places and place-based identities. As Nancy Fraser claims: “To be denied recognition—or to be ‘misrecognized’—is to suffer both a distortion of one’s relation to one’s self and an injury to one’s identity” (Fraser, 2000, p.109). The conditions under which the erosion of collective identities constitutes an injury is a focus of various attachment theories applying a rights-based understanding to territorial communities (e.g. Kolers, 2009; 2012; Moore, 2012) and landscapes (Egoz et al., 2011). The idea of rootedness: what Kolers labels “ethnogeographic communities” share a common ontology of land manifest in culturally-specific conceptions of use and a distinctive nexus of land use practices (2009, pp.109-11).

The coercive imposition of a hegemonic land (or water) ontology by a settler colonial state represents environment-related violence under the Peluso and Watts (2001) definition adopted in section 2.1 above, covering systemic physical and non-physical harm. Indigenous identities exist in a precarious tension with the place-making of settler colonial states, which is predicated on the imposition of a dominant ethnogeographic identity. Settler colonialism carries out an ontological uprooting of ethno-geographic communities. This is not limited to uprooting through the confiscation of agricultural lands but extends to the destruction of a moral economy and cultural identity associated with indigenous farming practices (Bourdieu and Sayad, 2004). Here, misrecognition is systematic and goes beyond the definitional term of mistaking the identity of a group to refer more broadly to the systematic devaluation of minority identities, resulting in the marginalisation and exclusion of

indigenous groups. Systematic misrecognition can be enacted as an engineered strategy of policy making. In the ethno-geographic communities studied here, it involves the imposition of policies of forced citizenship and an ontological colonisation of land and other resources. These ethno-geographic communities have shaped themselves and their landscapes in defence against this misrecognition, asserting a distinctive right to recognition and place-based identity. Consequently, in its effort to erase the presence of those communities in the landscape through denial of access to resources such as land and water, the settler colonial state enacts misrecognition. The ontological erasure of communities' presence is contested by using those same resources as conduits of claim making and identity making.

In al-Battuf, the Palestinians remaining inside Israel after 1948 have faced an exclusionary ethno-national state, which enacted misrecognition of their ethno-geographic identification, and confined their existence in enclosures under military rule and 'a denial of Palestinian sensibilities' (Rabinowitz and Abu Baker, 2005, p.11). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the state began its incorporation of Palestinians inside Israel as citizens of the state and facilitated their normalisation into Israeli society through de-nationalisation strategies and incorporation into state institutions and arrangements. The Israeli citizenship of the indigenous Palestinians enabled limited legal and political tools, which continue to struggle under policies of difference, mainly the judaisation of their lands (McKee, 2014).

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights is another manifestation of a wider settler project featuring the dispossession and displacement of indigenous populations. In the occupied Golan Heights, the Syrian Jawlanis not displaced to Syria have faced strong normalisation pressures, intensified in 1982 when Israel enacted the Golan Heights Law to apply Israeli law, jurisdiction and administration to the territory (a de facto annexation not recognized by the international community). From a settler colonial lens, Gordon and Ram (2016) highlight how the formation of settler colonial geographies in the occupied Golan Heights followed a 'refined' approach of control and destruction, employing what they referred to as 'liberal biopolitical technologies'. As Ram (2015) argues, in the Golan Heights there is an

inherent tension between the normalisation and domestication of an occupation regime and the re-articulation of spatial practices necessary to maintain coercive control over individuals and groups who have resisted this imposition of rule, and the misrecognition it entails. The misrecognition inflicted on the Jawlani community in the occupied Golan Heights expresses this tension, continually surfacing in the discriminatory spaces and socio-natures structuring the landscape.

### 2.3.2 Settler colonial studies and the need for indigenous studies

While settler colonial studies offer analytical tools to understand settler colonialism's environmental practices, politics and their effects, Carroll critically engages with Veracini's (2014) justification of settler colonial studies as a conceptual platform for the task of explaining settler colonial relations. Carroll contests that "the anchoring analytics of elimination and destruction/replacement...loses theoretical grounding when a history of Indigenous displacement (and continual Indigenous presence) is lacking" (Carroll, 2017, para. 18). Moreover, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, an indigenous scholar, asserts that "to exclusively focus on the settler colonial without any meaningful engagement with the indigenous...can (re)produce another form of 'elimination of the native'" (Kauanui, 2016, para. 3). Kauanui is referring here to the adoption and citation of Wolfe's work without paying any attention to the root and origin of theorisation that Wolfe refers to in native scholarship and the fact that this theory – 'settler colonialism is a structure not an event' – cannot be devoid and separated from engagement with indigenous experience. While Kauanui agrees with Wolfe's conception of the endurance of settler colonialism, she contends that indigeneity also is enduring and that "indigenous people exist, resist and persist".

In the Palestinian context, Rana Barakat cautions in her essay *Writing/righting Palestine studies* about the limitations of a settler colonial analysis in writing about Palestine but giving insufficient agency to indigenous communities. She states that relying on a settler colonial analytic has "led to a Zionist-centered reading of the narrative of Palestine" (Barakat, 2017, p.2), and therefore the need to study

Palestinian history from an indigenous lens. Bhandar and Ziadah (2016) further criticise how the settler colonial analytic is used in the case of Palestine and expose some of its shortcomings in the legal context and in its anti-colonial framing of Palestinian solidarity struggles. One of the striking legal dynamics that the authors attempt to engage with is “the cunning of recognition” of other indigenous communities and aboriginal groups in Canada and Australia and the narrow confinement within western anthropological discourses of what it is to be indigenous (Coulthard, 2007; 2014). Indigeneity also comes with its own shortcomings and compromises, as Suhad Bishara claims in the case of the Bedouins in the Naqab (Negev) (Assafir, 2017 in Arabic) as she claims its inapplicability to the Palestinian cause, and its implication in further disintegrating and fragmenting of a political Palestinian identity. Bhandar and Ziadah also claim that formal recognition in the case of indigenous peoples in Canada and Australia reinforced the colonial sovereignty of the state.

Libby Porter, in her work on the postcolonial consequences of planning, argues that histories of Western concepts, like planning, ‘obscure’ colonial relations of domination and subjugation and lead to its normalisation. Citing Franz Fanon (1963), Porter claims that colonial power is reproduced not only through ‘material operations of power’ but also through the subjection of the colonised to forms of recognition that maintain colonial rule, and normalise their alienation (Porter, 2017). As Chakravorty-Spivak contends in her seminal work, *Can the Subaltern speak?*, the struggles of the subaltern have been about gaining recognition and reclaiming a voice to speak up in the face of existential threats and systemic misrecognition. What Spivak calls ‘strategic essentialism’ occurs in conditions where, to get political attention, the subaltern has to claim its voice in a language that the settler colonial state hears and can understand, even if this adopts an identity consistent with their ‘otherness’ (Spivak, 1988). In Porter’s analysis, this is reflected in how political claims for recognition by indigenous peoples against settler colonial powers are largely ideological, compromising their own heterogeneous make-up. Gaining rights to recognition from the settler state can therefore normalise their subjection, reproducing the assumed binary relations between settler-coloniser and colonised.

While the settler colonial state coercively pushes uniform ways of seeing and managing spaces and objects of rule, everyday tactics of resistance can make indigenous presence legible and their imaginaries legitimate and visible, challenging settler colonial imaginaries of ordered development and their “receding visibility of indigenous life” (Veracini, 2015, p.43). James Scott suggests that, despite planners’ intentions, state spaces of control end up being variegated and incomplete. He differentiates between, on the one hand, state-imposed plans that attempt to demarcate space and make it legible from afar (Scott, 1998), and on the other hand, acts of resistance that arise in villages and other places removed or hidden from state centres of power (Scott, 1985, 2009). This echoes an overarching lens by which the case studies are analysed in this thesis: the ‘*presence-absence*’ lens through which spaces are controlled, hegemony is exercised, and counter-hegemony takes place. What I argue as an overarching lens cutting through the theoretical underpinnings reviewed above, is that, for the two case studies, struggles take place in a constant reality of the ‘*presence-absence*’ of the state, infrastructure, citizenship rights, recognition of identities and mostly through the presence-absence of water. Linking all of these elements to conditions of surveillance and abandonment by the state against its Palestinian and Syrian subjects will allow for the indigenous history to be re-articulated within larger struggles over water and identity. The dominance of hydro-hegemonic regimes will therefore be critically interrogated, allowing for a more politicised history and counter-imaginary to emerge where the presence of an indigenous other clashes with, and contests, the new political order imposed by settler colonial rule.

The issue remains as to how to recover indigenous histories by reframing the agency of indigenous subjects under settler colonial rule, and to overcome the binary simplification between native and settler by reversing the colonial logic. To essentialise indigenous imaginaries as natural, romantic and unitary (as highlighted in section 2.2.2), feeds into the binary narrative of settler colonialism. What I try to show in this thesis is not the reversal of the mere binary of settler colonial depictions of the native Arab as ‘primitive’ or necessarily more in tune with ‘natural’ landscapes or waterscapes, but rather that their indigenous struggles exist within, and shape, a

complex, dynamic and hybrid reality of settler colonial rule. This approach recognises the active agency of the Palestinians in al-Battuf and Syrians in the oGH: it rejects a victim narrative, which is often assumed by settler colonial studies on Israel/Palestine (see Plonski, 2016). Hence, I argue for putting indigenous water histories at the forefront of the understanding of the water struggles, rejecting the passive victimisation often implied by settler colonial studies, and exposing acts of resistance carried out in the critical decades of water policymaking in Israel during the 1950s and 1960s, and their scaling-up and re-configurations in the following decades *through* water and infrastructure.

## 2.4 Settler state water and infrastructural violence

This section offers an overview of infrastructure “as an ethnographically graspable manifestation” (Rodgers and O’Neill, 2012, p.403). In the introduction to a special issue of *Ethnography* on infrastructural violence, Rodgers and O’Neill consider how infrastructure often serves to exclude and marginalise yet can also serve as a conduit for social change and protest.

The story of Infrastructure is most dominantly told through the prism of it being a state-led endeavour fraught with inequality, disruption and asymmetric power. It serves as the site of nation-building symbolism, especially concerning water infrastructure, and is harnessed to channel and disseminate legitimacy, ideology and power (Menga, 2014; Menga and Swyngedouw, 2018; Obertreis et al., 2016; Swyngedouw, 2007). Through infrastructure, the state can distribute material capital (of water flows) but also social, ideological and symbolic capital (Swyngedouw, 2004). Hence, state infrastructure can be used as a tool of exclusion and marginalisation, consolidating citizenship fragmentation and inequality in access to resources based on racial, class and ethnic divisions (Ibrahim, 2017; Rodgers and O’Neill, 2012; Anand, 2011). Because of their centrality for nation-building exercises, infrastructures become ontological manifestations of state attempts to govern people (or subjects) and resources (Scott, 1998). As Mukrerji (2009, p.15) reflects, canals and water



carries before becoming technical accomplishments they “had to be an object of political desire”. The rationale, scale, impact, execution and maintenance of infrastructures require us to ask questions about who controls infrastructure and the capital it channels, to whom is it going and who is it excluding especially on an everyday basis. A plethora of literature can be found on infrastructural lives, violence and materiality in the city (Anand, 2012; Björkman, 2015; Coleman, 2014; Kooy and Bakker, 2008; Larkin, 2013; Mitchell, 2014; Obertreis e al., 2016; Swyngedouw, 2007) and other works focused on the anthropology of infrastructure (Franz Krause and Strang, 2016; Star, 1999; Strang, 2004; Strang, 2014) exposing the relationship between water, infrastructure and political rule. These ethnographic approaches allow the understanding of how “exclusion was built into the design of infrastructure” (Jasanoff, 2006, p.752) and since much of the time infrastructures are taken-for-granted or invisible, the violence and political contestation they cause may be hidden.

Structural violence describes social structures—economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural—that stop individuals, groups, and societies from reaching their full potential. While the use of the term violence is often associated with certain visible acts of misbehaviour, Galtung refers to structural violence as realities and circumstances that are ‘avoidable’ and ‘intended’ (Mehta, 2016). Structural violence is therefore entrenched in the structures that govern and mediate interactions and is normalised by state, law and regulation. Because they seem so ordinary in our ways of understanding the world, they appear almost invisible. As Starr (1999) argues, the conditions creating systemic disparity in access to resources, political power, education, health care, and legal standing are just a few examples of structural violence. Structural violence is therefore closely linked to distributive injustice, inequality and dispossession (Farmer, 2004). Denial of modernisation and access to scientific advancement is another manifestation of the structural violence of exclusion and marginalisation exercised against the marginalised and indigenous populations. It normalises the denial of communities’ ability to progress and embrace social change (Li, 2017).

Infrastructural violence obstructs and alters forms of life, and in the case of the Israeli water infrastructure it distinctively segregates and excludes. Infrastructures “distribute life and harm” (Anand, 2011, p.2: see also Li, 2017), evoking emotions of abandonment and suffering because of the state (Rasmussen, 2015, p.11). Being on the margins of the state, as Rasmussen contends, re-configures the communities’ engagement with the state’s “present-absence” and how the state makes its presence felt and visible through abandonment conditions, “understood as suspended between material conditions, social imaginaries, and modes of governance” (2015, p.11). These emotional experiences of being left behind, systematically side-lined from state decision making, is juxtaposed with feelings of resentment due to the encroachment of the state on livelihoods and resources. Such emotive struggles (Davidson et al., 2005) are at the heart of the lived geographies approach adopted in this thesis. Continuous struggles against the state (in this case a settler-colonial state) oscillate between protesting being ‘abandoned’ and deliberately excluded by state policies and practices, and aspiring to create infrastructures and parallel governance structures that are independent of the state’s governing gaze and control. The promise and aspiration for infrastructure also allows the framing of such artefacts as conduits of resistance and opposition to hegemonic state rule. As Rodgers and O’Neill note “infrastructure is by no means only a site where forms of social control and oppression can be observed, but also a potential place for imagining more positive politics” (2012, p.402). As Barnes notes, technologies can indeed help build communities but can also fracture them (Barnes, 2012).

## 2.5 Concluding remarks

The literature reviewed in this chapter and its conceptual underpinnings have guided this research and refined its theoretical argument. To study water in settler colonial societies, we need to be alert to conditions of presence as much as absence of its material and discursive construction. What brings together this chapter, at the convergence of political ecology, lived geographies and settler colonialism, is the role of infrastructure as an object of material and discursive power, in shaping and

contesting settler colonial waterscapes, channelling water through multiple social, political and cultural dimensions. As Nikhil Anand and co-authors claim: “Discourses, narratives and language give form to infrastructure as much as concrete, wires, or zoning regulations” (2018, p.9). Mirroring this observation, the forms of infrastructure dominating the waterscapes of our study will be a central theme of the inquiry, whether large-scale state infrastructures, such as the National Water Carrier, or the counter-infrastructures of Arab farmers are contested and adopted as conduits of claim-making and rootedness. In a settler colonial context, the presence and/or absence of infrastructures in certain locations and contexts can tell us more about the lived experiences of communities and the relations between water and power. Such conditions of suffering with and without infrastructure are visible in the lives of the two case studies and reflect larger processes of exclusion and dispossession. Ultimately, communities’ claims over water reflect larger claims for recognition and self-determination. On a basin-level, the hydro-hegemonic position of Israel has denied Palestinian and Syrian states from claiming their rights to control and access major water resources. Contrastingly, Palestinian and Syrian communities experiencing a localised form of that hegemony are claiming rights to water through infrastructure as an act of resistance, outside of TWM arrangements and scales.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

The overall objective of this thesis is to examine how Arab farming communities have responded to settler colonial land and water policies and how Israeli hydro-hegemony was experienced in local lived geographies. I study material realisation of state water infrastructure (including law as infrastructure) and examine acts of protest and resistance through counter-infrastructures as means of staying on the land and protecting livelihoods. I intend to reveal the complex web of interactions and encounters that farming communities experience to claim rights to water and infrastructure, through which claims to identity and belonging also surface. The research therefore required an embeddedness in the field, and a selection of appropriate case studies where such water struggles were taking place, notably featuring the imposition by a settler colonial state of water infrastructures that discriminated against indigenous ethno-geographic communities. In this chapter, I will begin by sharing the motivation to carry out the research and the rationale for the selection of case studies. I will then describe the main methods used to collect and analyse data. Finally, the last section will discuss aspects of reflexivity and positionality while doing fieldwork and other research.

### 3.1 Research Design

#### 3.1.1 Research motivation

The main objective of the study *Transboundary Climate Security: Climate Vulnerability and Rural Livelihoods in the Jordan River Basin*, carried out in 2012-13 by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK, and Birzeit University, Palestine, was to investigate climate-related vulnerabilities of agricultural communities in (post)occupation environments, namely in South Lebanon, the oGH and the occupied Palestinian territories (Mason and Mimi, 2013). The main findings highlighted how (post)occupational conditions and stresses are perceived by Arab farmers as more significant than climate change, specifically concerning water

allocations. In this project, I was leading the research in the occupied Golan Heights (oGH), exploring a field site and context very different from my usual water-related research in Palestine. One of the focus group sessions which I carried out as part of this research uncovered a recurring theme: identity. Place-based identity was used by the Jawlani focus group participants to highlight issues of land, water rights and access to resources, viewing their agricultural, infrastructural and livelihood practices as an expression of *sumud*. This is where I realised how water has been confined in our research work in the JRB to state-centric dynamics, occluding what that water means for communities who were denied equal access to it. I have worked closely with Palestinian communities affected by manufactured scarcity who had to adapt to discriminatory Israeli policies of water control and access, enacting *sumud* in their actions. Encountering a similar framing of land-based resistance in the Golan Heights was of great interest to me.

My research motivation therefore emerged from apparent parallels in Arab communities responses to the imposition of Israeli water politics in the oGH and the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPT), both under Israeli occupation. Since the Oslo Accords in 1992, water has become a politically charged topic in the oPT, and indeed is one of the issues to be negotiated in the final peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This has consolidated all the efforts of NGOs, Palestinian civil society and international donor agencies on examining water-as-a-resource, essentially de-historicising and de-politicising daily water struggles in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Realising the reductionist approach that such a technical-managerial discourse imposes has led me to study what I refer to as 'water politics from below'. First, the motivation was the need to tell the history of multiple waters: that of the transboundary, the state, Arab agricultural communities and other actors' waters. Secondly, water infrastructures matter in the study of water struggles across the basin. Infrastructures are ideological as much as they are technical and this is reflected in their modes of operation, connections and disconnections. My main interest was in how these infrastructures connect and disconnect communities not just from water, but also from landscapes, livelihoods and place-based attachments. This is when I decided to examine infrastructures as

sites of dispossession and as conduits of resistance and claim-making. The oGH offered an ideal first location for that investigation, as the Israeli water infrastructure there both consolidated strategic geopolitical control of the tributaries of the Jordan River and expressly served a settler colonial project which was resisted by the remaining Syrian populations residing there.

Investigating water infrastructure in Israel and Israeli occupied territories also necessitates the study of the National Water Carrier (NWC) as an emblem of centralised state water control and hydro-hegemony. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the discursive construction of the JRB as a transboundary watershed encouraged Israel's efforts to become a hydro-hegemon. The Israeli water infrastructure facilitated transfers from the north (oGH) through Lake Tiberias and through an assemblage of large canals, pipelines and pumps to reach al-Battuf. This justified al-Battuf as the second site of investigation, as it offered similarities and distinctions with the oGH case in terms of being an area central to the realisation of Israeli hydro-hegemony and associated discriminatory water transfers.

The selection of these two case studies is also justified by the nature of the Arab communities themselves. First, the two case studies feature communities who are under Israeli control; one of Palestinians living inside Israel, who are citizens of the state yet face systematic exclusion and discrimination, and the other of Syrian villages under Israeli occupation since 1967 and annexation since 1982, who have no citizenship rights but remain under Israeli civil administration. Second, both cases represent marginalised communities subject to divergent experiences of settler colonialism, including demographic displacement, confiscation of resources, and discriminatory governance. Their water histories have usually been disregarded and marginalised because of their incorporation into an Israeli state while being systematically excluded from that same state in terms of rights to resources. Due to the geostrategic importance of their locations, their community-based water issues, if recognised, are usually attributed to national and regional scales rather than framed as local struggles against the state. Instead of approaching water politics within the conventional transboundary water management (TWM) lens which has dominated how water is framed in the Jordan Basin, the focus of the research is thus

on 'small w' water, understanding communities' water struggles as encounters with settler colonial power and hydro-hegemony.

### 3.1.2 Research questions and objectives

As noted in Chapter 1, my main research questions are:

***How do settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices manifest themselves in the lives and livelihood practices of farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights?***

To answer this, I pose two sub-questions:

- ❖ How do agricultural livelihoods function in the studied agricultural communities in the context of settler colonialism?
- ❖ What ideas, norms and beliefs shape farmers' daily practices of agriculture?

***How, and with what political effects, are settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices resisted by farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights?***

To answer this, I pose two further sub-questions:

- ❖ What forms of collective action do farmers use to resist and counter state-led policymaking, especially land expropriation and water allocations?
- ❖ What are the political effects of the distinctive forms of collective resistance employed by farming communities?

This research employs a qualitative approach in its design, data collection and analysis. Qualitative research allows the exploration of "the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate" (Mason, 2002, p.1). Informed by this definition, the

research is not a simple production of descriptive narratives of livelihood practices but rather aims to understand how farming transcends the economic act of income generation to acquire political subjectivity and meaning. The main proposition is that, *in the settler colonial contexts studied, the farming of Arab communities acquires similar forms of political subjectivity*. Political subjectivity refers here to the constitution of farmers as subjects with a communal political identity and shared political goals, notably relating to land and water resources. The qualitative data collection and analysis in this research is designed to enable me to interpret, and account for, the lived geographies of farmers subject to settler colonialism.

### 3.1.3 The case studies

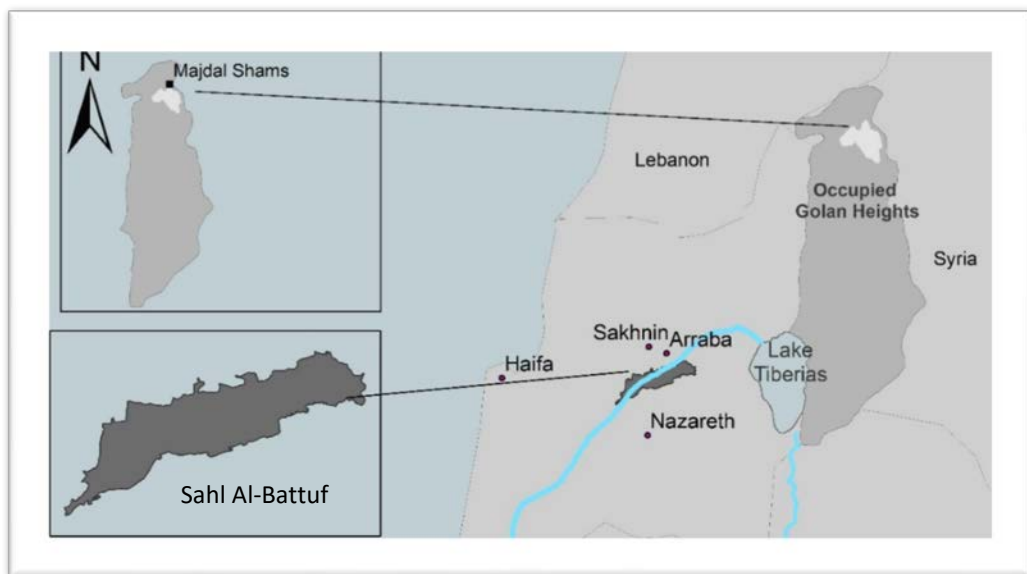


Figure 3.1 Location of case studies (Map developed by Yousra Othman for this thesis, 2018)

#### ***Al-Battuf Valley***

The Galilee has always been a central focus of the Jewish/Israeli land-acquisition efforts and plans. The Galilee was at a point of rupture, just like the rest of Palestine during the 1948 war, which resulted in the shrinking of the Palestinian population in the Galilee specifically by 56%, dropping from 207,490 in 1946 to



90,600 in 1948, coupled with an increase in Jewish populations by 35.5% (from 39,410 in 1946 to 53,400 in 1948) (Falah, 1993). While the Jewish settlement campaign was heightened most profoundly in the subsequent years (1974-1982), the first epoch of Israel's settler colonial encroachment on the Galilee began in 1948 with the destruction of 162 Palestinian villages, distributed in 5 localities (Abu-Sitta, 2004).

Continuously populated by its Palestinian inhabitants before and after the 1948 *Nakba*, the Galilee has been the target of several policies and laws that have been used by the Israeli state to facilitate the Jewish expropriation and encroachment on the Palestinian towns and villages' land, in addition to plans to Judaize the Galilee. Following the aftermath of the 1948 *Nakba*, Israel began construction of settlements in the Galilee (divided into Upper and Lower Galilee) for security reasons and to curb the 'demographic threat' of the Palestinians inside Israel. Those Jewish settlements were built in between the remaining Arab villages and towns, taking the role of *Mitzpeen* (lookouts/watchtowers). From 1949 until 1966, Israel governed the remaining Palestinian towns and villages (including the Galilee) under military rule, continuing to seize Arab lands relentlessly (Jiryis, 1976). Numerous studies have carried out meticulous research on the topic (Bashir, 2004; Falah, 1989; 1990; Forman, 2006; Jiryis, 1976; Shafir, 2018; Yiftachel, 1992). The Galilee was a site of Judaization campaigns to erase its Arab character and contain the 'demographic threat', as will be explained in Chapter 4.

Al-Battuf, our area of investigation, is a rich and vast plain in the heart of the Galilee (Figure 3.1). 40,000 dunums of land remain in the hands of the Palestinian farmers, mainly subsistence agriculturists and small landholders. Most of this land is cultivated to grow seasonal, rainfed crops, mainly wheat, barley, pulses, okra and watermelon. Due to the highly fertile soil, the valley is famous for a certain produce, the rainfed *bateekh* al-Battuf – Battuf watermelons – which were grown under special techniques unique to the farmers of the valley to maintain its shape and productivity. In addition, the valley was an area famous for livestock and cattle rearing. Al-Battuf also has a natural phenomenon of *al-gharaq*, or flooding of around 15,000 dunums, which happens during the rainy season. Farmers with lands in these plots risk having their winter crops destroyed and have to plant their summer crops

later (as the water recedes), which limits their crop productivity. Al-Battuf, although mostly belonging to the Palestinian farmers, has also had its share of land confiscation, which makes it an ideal site for examining water and land struggles. As shown in Chapter 5, the Israeli government's decision to construct the NWC open canal on Arrabeh and Sakhnin lands spurred one of the first confrontations between Palestinians inside Israel and the Israeli state over water.

### ***The occupied Golan Heights***

The Golan Heights, a high volcanic plateau located at the convergence of borders between Israel, Syria and Jordan is a strategic location of geopolitical and hydropolitical significance (See Figure 3.1). With a total area of 1,800 km<sup>2</sup>, the Syrian Golan lands were first occupied by Israel in 1967, which maintains its control over 1,200 km<sup>2</sup>. The Golan Heights are a water-rich region, receiving the highest level of rainfall in the region— between 1000mm in the Northern region to 1600mm at Mount Hermon annually, while the central area received 800mm and the south 500 mm on average. The Israeli occupation in 1967 and then de-facto annexation in 1982 turned the indigenous Arab inhabitants of the Golan into residents with a temporary status, stripping away their Syrian nationality. Most have rejected attempts to accept Israeli citizenship, which triggered riots and a six-months strike in 1982 (Keary, 2013; Mara'i and Halabi, 1992). As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the reaction of the Israeli authorities was to deprive them of their formal Syrian identity, issuing documents stating they are 'undefined'. Israel also discarded the legal frameworks for land ownership recognised by the Syrian government and replaced it with a military system of land expropriation (Mara'i and Halabi, 1992). The declaration by Israel in 1968 that 98% of the oGH lands are closed military zones and the centralised control of water by the state had substantial effects on the agricultural practices of the Syrian residents and confined their geographical spaces of existence to that of their villages (Al-Marsad, 2009).

In both areas, abrupt water and land re-configurations were experienced after the onset of Israeli sovereign control. The dispossession of and inequality in resource

access and control has made land and water struggles central to political mobilisations in the Battuf Valley and Golan Heights. Governmental bodies formulated plans for the colonization of the Golan Heights as early as 1967, and the judaisation plan for the Galilee from the 1950s, as shown in chapters 4 and 6. With agriculture being “the traditional base of pioneer colonization” (Harris, 1978, p.326; Masalha, 1992), the Israeli Land Authority (ILA), the World Zionist Organization’s (WZO) Settlement Division and the Israeli Department of Agriculture amongst others emerged as key actors designing and implementing exclusionary land acquisition against the Arab and Palestinian populations in both locations (COHRE and Badil, 2005; Davis, 1983). Table 3.1 below summarises salient features of the two case study areas. In chapters 4 and 5 the case studies are analysed to identify the effects on Arab lives and livelihoods of settler colonial land and water policies, followed in chapters 6 and 7 by accounts of historical and contemporary land and water struggles against settler colonial rule. The main comparative findings are discussed in chapter 8.

*Table 3.1 Comparative summary of case study areas*

	<b>Al-Battuf</b>	<b>The oGH</b>
Colonial resistance during the 20th century	- 1936-39 Great Arab Revolt in UK Mandate of Palestine	- Great Syrian Revolt 1925-1927 in French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon
Beginning of Israeli settler-colonial rule	- 1948 Arab-Israeli war: <i>Nakba</i> displacement 160,000 Palestinians remaining inside Israel on 6% of the land of historic Palestine - Galilee: more than 160 villages destroyed, but remains	- 1967 Six Day War: Israeli occupation, 5 villages remained with a population of 6,000 (1967) on 7% of land - Destruction of hundreds of Syrian towns and villages

	a dominantly Palestinian populated region.	
Israeli land policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Judaisation of the Galilee</li> <li>- Al-Battuf: land confiscation of 10-12,000 dunums of land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Colonisation of the Golan</li> <li>- Israeli state control over more than 93% of land, leaving 7% only for the remaining population</li> </ul>
Ownership of Arab agricultural land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Al-Battuf: Agricultural land under private ownership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- oGH: Agricultural land under private ownership</li> </ul>
Israeli citizenship status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Israeli citizenship enforced on Arab population but not nationality – citizenship not fully realised as non-Jews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attempted imposition of Israeli citizenship for Arab population but contested and rejected</li> <li>- Unidentified nationality/ residency status</li> </ul>
Israeli state infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enactment of Israeli water law in 1959</li> <li>- National Water Carrier completed in 1964</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Military order 120, 1968</li> <li>- Israeli water law 1959 enacted in 1982</li> <li>- Control of Birket Ram, groundwater, springs</li> </ul>

		and construction of reservoirs
Key expressions of protest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protests against National Water Carrier construction and land confiscation (1954-64)</li> <li>- Land Day 1976</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land reclamation, defense of local springs and increasing water availability (1967-1981)</li> <li>- 1982 general strike for 6 months</li> <li>- 1980s – confrontations against land expropriation, expansion of rainwater storage tanks</li> </ul>
Crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mainly rainfed crops: Wheat, pulses, watermelon, seasonal vegetables (okra, onion, tomatoes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive to intensive agriculture</li> <li>- Mainly apples, but also cherries and peaches</li> </ul>

### 3.1.4 Research methods

The main objective of this research is to explore the dynamics of water struggles in Arab farming communities subject to settler colonial rule. To deal with

such a value-laden issue, in which agricultural practices are politically charged, qualitative research approaches are the most appropriate, as I am interested in understanding the material and discursive (re)production of distinctive ethnogeographic communities, whose landscapes and waterscapes are formative of their collective identity. The study uses three main research methods: semi-structured interviews, including oral histories; participant observation; and archival research (see sections below). Participant Observation will allow me the opportunity to analyse and observe the activities of farming communities on a daily basis, while interviews will offer a more in-depth exploration of the meaning, values and opinions of individuals carrying out their farming practices. Archival research will provide historical details on Israeli land and water policies in the areas studied, as well as the agricultural practices and political mobilisations of the Arab communities.

### ***Comparative case study***

George and Bennett (2005, p.5) define case study research as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events”. The case study research method offers “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 2013, p.25). Moreover, case studies typically generate multiple sources of data in order to exposing aspects of the reality of lived experiences, often challenging produced knowledge about a space, or people, or event. Case study researchers are more interested in finding the conditions under which specified outcomes occur, and the mechanisms through which they occur, rather than uncovering the frequency with which those conditions and their outcomes arise (George and Bennett, 2005). The authors argue that process tracing can be used to test whether the residual differences between two similar cases were causal or not in producing a difference in these cases’ outcomes. In this study process tracing is the systematic assessment of data generated by the qualitative research in order to answer my research questions and test the proposition that in settler colonial contexts the farming of Arab communities acquires similar forms of political subjectivity. This methodological

logic will be used to test whether the two case studies, the oGH and al-Battuf valley, produce the same outcomes (political subjectivity of farming) due mainly to the same causal force (Israeli sovereign control). Relying on within-case analysis, comparisons of a small number of cases (in this study water struggles and resistance in both locations) will also be used to further analyse difference or similarity between the two areas. While George and Bennett acknowledge that qualitative-led case studies share similar epistemological logic with statistical methods, they are more suited to the investigation of real-world contexts with complex causation (see also Byrne and Ragin, 2009).

## 3.2 Data collection methods

### 3.2.1 Access to the field

In 2012-2013, I carried out my work in the oGH as part of the *Transboundary Climate Security: Climate Vulnerability and Rural Livelihoods in the Jordan River Basin* project mentioned earlier. This was invaluable for my PhD research as it provided me with a 'preliminary' fieldwork opportunity and established connections with relevant individuals and groups. Once I arrived to carry out my first PhD fieldwork visit in 2016, I got in touch with my original gatekeeper and re-introduced my research, its variance from the previous study and my intentions to carry out a more grounded and ethnographic approach to the topic of land and water. After re-establishing connections with the previous interlocutors who have become close acquaintances and connections, I began a process of snowball sampling. As I was interested in meeting people who are actively involved in farming practices, I selected active farmers, but also avoided restricting myself to a set category of people to meet. Throughout the fieldwork, people identified themselves as farmers although they were not all committed to practicing farming full-time. A recurrent comment I received, especially in the oGH, is that "we are amateur farmers", or that "we farm to stay on the land". Those identifications alerted me to farming as a cultural and political practice, which therefore required a more flexible approach to the selection

of interviewees. Hence, I ensured that I met people from all age groups, genders, and professions.

My first encounter with al-Battuf was in 2010 when I participated in environmental peacebuilding training organised by a local organisation named Towns Association for Environment Quality (TAEQ), a joint project between Palestinians inside Israel and Palestinians in the West Bank who were working on environmental issues. Our visit to al-Battuf on that training provided me with an eye-opening experience of the struggles faced by Palestinians inside Israel when it comes to access to land and water. Al-Battuf starkly reminded the participants of the realities faced by Palestinian farmers in the West Bank (especially in Area C) where they had no access to water or the right to construct any type of infrastructure without Israeli permits. Al-Battuf farmers who met with us shared stories of their lack of access to water, electricity and the prohibition of any type of construction since the 1960s. Another stark reality imposed on the landscape was the NWC, a concrete river dividing lands of farmers and limiting their freedom of movement, while another water body, known as al-gharaq, also formed and flooded large areas of land. Multiple contradictions and realities of water in the lives of the communities of al-Battuf existed in this geographical space. The realities of a water struggle taking place in the Galilee, among Palestinians who were regarded as Israeli citizens, seemed to reveal the exclusionary logic of a settler colonial state and suggested to me later the possibility of comparing al-Battuf with the oGH. When I began the PhD, I was able to access the field again through connections with a friend and colleague whose family is from Arrabeh al-Battuf, one of the villages in al-Battuf valley.

### 3.2.2 Ethnographic approaches: participant observation

Ethnography provides insights into meanings and processes that motivate social groups (Herbert, 2000, p.550). Herbert asserts that such processes are “both place-bound and place-making”. Emerson et al. (1995) define ethnographic field research in the context of studying a group’s everyday lives. Participating and observing the daily lives of the group is, they argue, an approach of learning and



theorising from the ground up. Ethnography, therefore, is potentially empowering as it provides an opportunity to develop and construct knowledge from the people or 'subjects' of the study.

Michael Burawoy (2000, p.25) rightly states that "you learn ethnography through practice, and perhaps a little bit of apprenticeship. There are guidelines, but few rules." On questions of identity, ethnography offers an invaluable tool in understanding through deep observation the day-to-day activities, spoken and unspoken meanings and knowledge whereby identity is constructed (Adams, 2009). The reflexive element of identity, which emerges when people explain and express what identity means to them, allows a learning experience for both researcher and informants. Participant observation, or the art of ethnography (Burawoy et al., 1991) is the study of people in their own time and space, allowing us to understand not only what people claim they do but to observe what they actually do in a quest of mutual understanding between the participant observer and subjects. While participant observations allow for an intensive level of research, its intensity limits the possibility of generalization (Burawoy et al., 1991, p.2). However, for the purpose of my study, an ethnographic approach was employed not to generalise about the effects of settler colonial policies and practices, and opposition to them, but to expose and compare local lived experiences between two specific Arab communities.

The flexibility offered by doing participant observation leads to a mixed method of reading, writing and observing (Crang and Cook, 2007). By observing people's everyday actions, participant observation offers not only an opportunity to passively observe but also to engage in conversations and dynamics that unearth understandings and experiences of research subjects. Triangulation of what people do and what they express or explain they are doing allows the researcher to explain the deeper meaning of these actions (Burawoy et al., 1991). This requires entering the field with no fixed assumptions as to motivation or experience, making it more an inductive rather than a deductive endeavour. In my case, the general proposition that settler colonial policies and practices politicised farming was open enough to explore – through my participant observation – multiple ways of understanding and

enacting politics through Arab land and water practices, gradually building up an inductive understanding of political agency and identity that could not be predicted by settler colonial theory.

Andrew Sayer (1999, p.20) distinguishes between extensive and intensive research approaches, where intensive research is concerned with “what makes things happen in specific cases, or in more ethnographic form, what kind of universe of meaning exists in a particular situation”. Therefore, intensive research, as in my study, requires the focus on studying “individual agents in their causal contexts” (p.21) and its strength lies in the possibility of interpreting meanings in context, which is the objective of this research. Ethnography, essentially requires the researcher to be “A good ethnographer [who] recognizes that there are patterns of behaviour, shared sets of symbols, and structures that shape possibilities, but she also recognizes individual interests and idiosyncrasies, the role of creativity and improvisation, conflict, and the ways that social position can produce and reflect significant variety in the group” (Murchison, 2010, p.95).

However, in carrying out my fieldwork following an ethnographic approach, I did not adhere to a fully immersed and embedded experience in the field. While my knowledge of the geography, language, history and the hydropolitics of the region allowed me to depend on my professional expertise and my network of water practitioners, the sites where I worked were new to me, even as a Palestinian. I experienced and practiced embeddedness in the field in the oGH, with a lived experience of being part of the community who welcomed me into their homes, offices, orchards, and private lives. Overcoming the limitations of not being fully ethnographic (but following an ethnographic approach), required the use of multiple qualitative methods, including interviews and archives. This triangulation of methods will allow a more comprehensive and rich data analysis.

Therefore, my data collection allowed the exchange of experiences with interlocutors, people I’ve met through direct contacts with gatekeepers and others through snowballing while being in the field; literally being in the orchards of Majdal Shams and the agricultural expanse of al-Battuf. I would drive my car to the valley of al-Battuf and examine the sites of Israeli infrastructure, fenced and securitised, then

make my way to the unrecognised and half-dug zero canal where the aspirations of the farmers to develop their agriculture was put on hold. At these sites, families would pass by in their cars, offering to help me with anything I need, and opening up conversations about al-Battuf, where they would invite me to a cup of tea, or take me with them to buy their seasonal produce. In Majdal Shams, accessing the apple orchards takes you on a maze of locally-constructed asphalt roads where tractors pass you by with truckloads of apples, offering a taste of the year's harvest. This spurs interaction and dialogues that sometimes last minutes and other times end up in longer discussions, home visits, and sharing of experiences of apple planting. The interviews, all carried out in Arabic, sometimes took place in the field while harvesting apples, while at other times they took place in the homes of families over lunch and were therefore not always easy to plan, record and document. This resulted in reliance on voice recorders at times, and field notes in other situations where the recorder was not available. This flexibility also allowed me to engage with female interlocutors rather than the predominantly male farmers who I encountered in the orchards, allowing for a gendered perspective on how farming significantly changed gender roles in an agrarian society and confined women role to that of workers in packaging houses and coolers (see 3.2.3).

The relationships established in the field built trust with my interlocutors. Returning to the field on many occasions allowed for repeated discussions with some of them, breaking any 'romanticised' assumptions and preconceptions about farming and water struggles. These interactions allowed me to experience and observe the myriad ways of negotiation, compromise, and survival tactics employed by the colonised in their continuous struggle with power and hegemony. The hegemony of the settler state infiltrates into daily language used (Hebrew was fluently spoken by farmers in each case study), the places of work farmers engage with to provide income (such as working in nearby Israeli Jewish settlements), their education systems and other community services. All of these daily interactions also challenged me as a researcher to avoid biases, generalisations and binary categorisations. As chapters 5 and 7 will show, acts of resistance, framed by the researcher, are laden with contradictory relations with power, that of negation and opposition, yet also of

compromise and negotiation. This allowed for a more grounded and 'real' experience of the lived geographies of the communities studied.

### 3.2.3 Interviews and social histories

*The purpose of field work is not to strip ourselves of biases, for that is an illusory goal, not to celebrate those biases as the authorial voice of the ethnographer, but rather to discover and perhaps change out biases through interaction with others (Burawoy et al., 1991, p.2)*

Qualitative interviewing is used in this research, when conducting fieldwork in both locations, in order to uncover farmers' situated and contextual accounts and experiences of practicing their livelihood under conditions of settler colonialism. Therefore, the epistemological logic is to interact with these interviewees, listen, and most importantly "analyse their construction of discourse" (Mason, 2002, p.64). Jennifer Mason highlights the need to be critical in analysing what an interviewee says and does not say, avoiding the risk of oversimplification. When gathering accounts of why farmers remain in agriculture under restrictive and limiting circumstances of land and water expropriation and discrimination, it is necessary therefore to compare different interviews and other sources of evidence. This research also explores the potential of producing alternative stories, what Linda Tuhiwai Smith refers to as 'counter-stories' and 'counter-narratives' as conceptualised by Nancy Peluso's work on forestry in Indonesia as forms of resistance (Peluso, 2009; Smith, 1998).

It is anticipated in this research that oral histories will allow an exploration of identity, farming practices and politics. Oral histories in the occupied Golan Heights will involve interviewing and recording oral testimonies of an older generation of farmers who have witnessed the introduction of the apple tree as a main crop. Brought in from the Lebanon Mountains, apple trees have come to symbolise Jawlani identity under occupation, cut off from their Syrian homeland. Due to its centrality in the identity narratives of the people in the oGH, oral testimonies serve to explore

what Alessandro Portelli explains as “not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (2015, 36). Understanding the meaning and value of apples to the Jawlani population, especially the young generation, can provide insights into how identity is being continuously reconstructed under changing circumstances and events. Oral histories, therefore, offer alternative narratives of agricultural practices which will help produce original insights into farming in the oGH. However, limitations of oral histories lie in their subjectivity, conflicting statements and their reliance on memory and personal experience. This will be complemented by the use and triangulation with other research tools outlined in this section. It will be further augmented by multiple interviewing, revisiting and re-interviewing the informants (Cousin, 2005). Additionally, group interviews will also be used to triangulate data and go beyond singular narratives, allowing the representation of all voices, including women and the elderly.

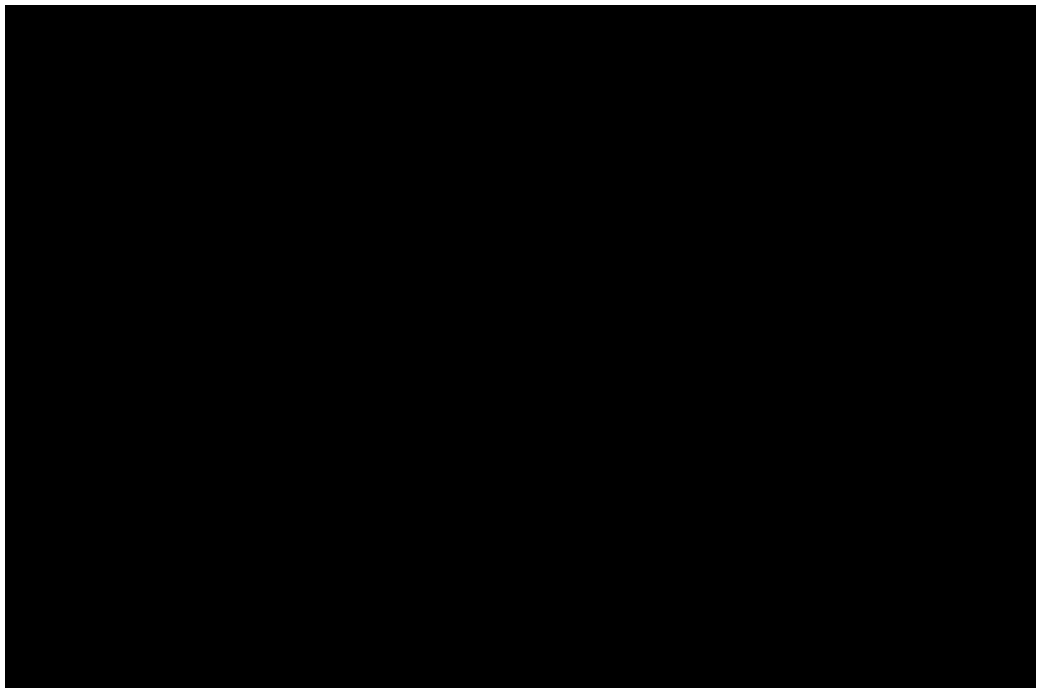
In addition to the methods highlighted above, this research was also multi-sited. I carried out fieldwork at the two main sites, in addition to visiting other critical sites in the Jordan River Basin, including the Yarmouk Triangle, Israeli water associations in the Jordan Valley and the occupied Golan Heights, the Jordanian side of the Jordan Valley and border areas. I consulted Israeli state archive documents, which related to political, water and land management issues specific to the two case study sites, during the period between 1948 and 1990.

I carried out fieldwork in the summer of 2016 and summer of 2017, each lasting 3 months and conducted 40 in-depth interviews with people living and working in the basin. The people interviewed included farmers, community organisers, political figures, water experts and residents of the two case study sites. The main gate keeper in the occupied Golan Heights was the Golan for Development, a local organisation working on local health and cultural services. In Al-Battuf, a friend living in Arrabeh suggested initial contacts and introduced me to her family, who I had the opportunity to stay with and learn more about al-Battuf. All interview references appear in this thesis with surname and date of interview.

During the summer of 2016, I split my fieldwork between the two sites. In July 2016, my focus was on al-Battuf, a geographical area I knew little about. Staying with a local family was an invaluable entry point, as they suggested names of farmers active in al-Battuf. Staying in Arrabeh village for the month allowed me the flexibility to be available to meet farmers at their own time. My first interview was carried out with Abu Saleh, Ahmed Jarbouni, who is a well-known figure and the previous head of the Arrabeh Municipality. Through visiting al-Battuf together, he identified the main sites of relevance to the al-Battuf struggle: the NWC canal, the zero canal, and al-gharaq (as seen in chapters 4 and 5) and allowed me to visualise how al-Battuf lands are distributed amongst those infrastructures. This was the beginning of a snowballing approach where I was able to meet more farmers by word of mouth and my own interactions while walking in the vast valley. In that month, I was able to meet five farmers and conduct interviews with them. I also carried out another four interviews with local civil society organisations (see Table 3.2) who actively work on Palestinian citizens' rights, namely Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel – and the Arab Center for Alternative Planning, based in the village of Eilaboun. The interviews with personnel working on land and planning issues allowed me to understand the precarious conditions under which land is controlled and managed by regional councils and the significance of that in the Galilee land struggles.

In August 2016, I focused my research on the oGH, where I focused on re-establishing my connections with Golan for Development, one of the few organisations operating as a civil society and health service provider in Majdal Shams. I also established connection with Al-Marsad – Arab Human Rights Centre in the Golan Heights – which also provided me with background on the legal context of the reality of living in the oGH. During that month, I carried out apple picking with Abu Naser's family, a reputable political activist and full-time farmer. I stayed with the family during that week and was able to observe and participate in apple picking activities, debates about politics and daily conversations about life in Majdal Shams. I also visited one cooler, Al Marj, and examined the operational processes of apple storing and cooling, which employs women mostly to carry out the cleaning, sorting

and packaging (see Figure 3.2), exposing the gendered roles the water-intensive crop generated. In total, I carried out five interviews in Majdal Shams. During September 2016, I focused my activities on acquiring materials from the different archives (detailed in the next section). A brief trip in the winter of 2016 allowed me to interview two Israeli water professionals, one working in Mey Golan (December 2016, Katzrin settlement in the oGH) and the other a senior official at the Water Authority (December 2016, Tel Aviv).



*Figure 3.2 Women working in the packaging factories in Majdal Shams (Author's picture, August 2016)*

In the summer of 2017, I followed the same approach and focused my interviews in two months. In August 2018, I returned to Arrabeh village and stayed with the local family, while extensively carrying our interviews with male and female farmers, journalists, researchers and local historians. I carried out ten interviews and had multiple other recorded and non-recorded conversations during my visit, especially when in al-Battuf amongst farmers. Another event, Battufna festival (mentioned in chapter 5), was an opportunity to observe and meet locals and even government representatives. For example, a local female (Palestinian citizen) representative of the Drainage and River Authority was at the festival, and I was able

to interview her, in addition to observing how farmers interacted and debated with the representatives about the authority's proposals. I was also able to interview TAEQ staff member and learn about their perception of the potential of al-Battuf and their work with the farmers there. In September 2017, I stayed in Majdal Shams, carrying out interviews and visits to the apple orchards with my interlocutors, where I carried an additional ten interviews, while being able to meet many of the interviewees from 2016 again and follow up on issues arising during our discussions, including any updates they wanted to share.

My interviews and meetings with interlocutors varied from pre-arranged interviews to others that were spontaneous conversations. Many of the farmers who I met in al-Battuf for example, would be gathered around in the late afternoons, which allowed for unstructured conversations and discussions between farmers who were familiar and close to each other. In Majdal Shams, similar situations would occur when I was staying with local families, where visitors and family members shared their reflections and experiences of farming and their recollections of the 1982 general strike.

*Table 3.2 Organisations met during fieldwork*

<b>Organisations met</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Period</b>
Golan for Development	Majdal Shams, oGH	Summer of 2016
Al-Marsad	Majdal Shams, oGH	Summer of 2017
Al-Haramoon	Majdal Shams, oGH	Summer of 2017
Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel	Haifa, Israel	Summer 2016
Arab Center for Alternative Planning	Eilaboun, Galilee	Summer of 2016
Mey Golan	Katzrin, oGH	Winter of 2016



Israeli Water Authority	Tel Aviv, Israel	Winter of 2016
Town Association for Environmental Quality (TAEQ)	Sakhnin, Galilee	Summer of of 2017
Arrabeh Municipality	Arrabeh, Galilee	Summer of 2017

### 3.2.4 Archives

This research also consulted archival documents to establish a historical and political background of agricultural transformation, land and water policy change and events of popular rural resistance (see Table 3.3). However, such archival documents are located in state and academic institutions belonging to the colonial establishment (British, French or Israeli). This raises awareness that archival documents “should always be viewed with judicious scepticism (Khalili, 2011, p.73). The legacy of colonial and settler colonial land and water policies is evidently produced in the geography discipline, with many geographers serving colonial and imperial agendas (Bashir, 2004; Blaut,1985). This only exemplifies how one field of science and policy came to transform land and water planning in the colonies. In such archives, the underlying belief is that “the status of the colonised people has been fixed in zones of dependency and peripherality, stigmatised in the designation of underdeveloped, less-developed, developing states, ruled by a superior, developed or metropolitan coloniser who was theoretically posited as a categorically antithetical overlord (Said, 1989, p.207). In settler colonial contexts, the subaltern voice is further diminished and dismissed. The subaltern here is classified as non-citizens or at best residents of a state who are not equal to its deserving (entitled) citizens. Hence, their lived experience is either distorted or forgotten completely in state discourse. In the case of the oGH and al-Battuf, the voice of the subaltern is lacking in the official state archives and narratives, which requires uncovering their stories in a nonconventional manner. This exposes that those stories are far from straightforward and benign but

rather marred by attempts of negotiation, integration and incorporation with the settler state and its institutions and processes. This research therefore relied on the colloquial and vernacular documentation of the events which shaped the lived geographies of farmers through examining the village books, studies and anecdotes of events which altered the geographies of those two communities. The attempts of erasure and misrecognition carried out by the settler state is resisted through the narration of local sumud practices, raising the voice of the subaltern in a settler colonial context.”

However, the value of archival documents cannot be underestimated as they expose discourses of land and water planning and management which have shaped and continue to shape the practices of the Arab farmers today in the areas studied. It was necessary to be cautious and critical when consulting Israeli state archives for information on farming practices in the Galilee and Golan Heights. The status of archives as sites of plunder and erasure (Sela, 2018), is evident from the Israeli state’s looting and control of Palestinian archives after 1948 and in the invasion of Beirut in the 1980s, which today can be found in the National Library in Jerusalem and in the Israeli State Archives (ISA), among other locations. I used these two sources for my main archival research. While navigating the archive website (which was all in Hebrew), censorship was a major constraint and visits to the archives were replaced by online orders. Since 2016, the Israeli archives, which are available for researchers visiting Jerusalem to request physical documents for review (which most Palestinians are prohibited from, except through issuing of permits), have been available via an online database. However, many files are not available online or heavily redacted for security reasons. For example, many of the oGH files I requested online were unavailable for viewing, or if they were provided, many pages were blacked out. Nevertheless, the material acquired from the archives remains an important source of information, and this material is drawn on in chapters 4 and 6.

The National Library of Israel, located in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, provided the second source for Arabic and Hebrew documents, in addition to newspaper archives. I was able to visit the library on multiple occasions in summer

of 2016 and 2017. Al-Ittihad newspaper, founded in 1944 was the journal of the Arab faction of the Israeli Communist Party. The newspaper was a critical resource for documenting the historical events of the construction of the NWC from a Palestinian Arab perspective which also devoted interest and concern to the fellahin and the working class. This provided a detailed coverage of daily acts of resistance, describing the events which surrounded the construction of the NWC and the fellahin's opposition to it. Moreover, the Hebrew press also provided a different perspective, consolidating the framing of the NWC as a national strategic project, and how the Palestinians' protest of it was framed as oppositional to national goals and aspirations. The Government Press Office (GPO), accessed online, was also an important source of images of the NWC and the oGH landscapes and geographies.

*Table 3.3 Archives and libraries consulted during fieldwork*

<b>Archives</b>	<b>Location</b>
Israeli state archives (ISA)	Online
The National Library of Israel Archives	Jerusalem
The Zionist Archives	Online
Institute of Palestine Studies (IPS) Library Archives	Ramallah, Palestine
Government Press Office (GPO)	Online

A third archival source was found in the works of social historians who resided in Arrabeh al-Battuf. As Rochelle Davis has explored in her seminal work, *Palestinian Village Histories: geographies of the displaced* (Davis, 2011), village memorial books, written and collated by Palestinian refugees about their destroyed villages, provide an enriching understanding of erased Palestinian histories. Davis exposes how such books, largely from a fellahin background, aimed at narrating the fellahin's lived

geography and history and not that of nationalist and statist character that were focused on statistics and state archives. Through representation of the past in the words of the Palestinian refugees themselves, these village books provide a corrective force to official histories narrating the story of those in power. My research aims to tell the story of villages which *remained* yet were re-configured and transformed by the settler colonial state of Israel, of which Palestinians and Syrian became its residents. Revisiting their own experiences, the lived realities of the villages, and their interpretation of those transformations is possible in this research through the examination of village books, written and collated by local authors who have survived the contemporary events in their lived geographies. These books are usually a personal effort by the author to collate materials about the village, its geography, history, politics and socioeconomic activities. Published by local press firms in the region, they are sold locally or gifted to libraries, schools and interested individuals and research centres. The village books I examined contained narratives and documentation of village geography, social and political conditions, economic activities and development efforts. Local authors such as Othman Mbadda Ali (2000), Ahmad Jarbouni (1998), from Arrabeh village, were the main books I've consulted to gain insight into water struggles locally and their imbrication in larger struggles for recognition by the Israeli state. Interestingly these books were written by authors who have also played important and somehow contradictory roles (opposing the military rule, then being appointed, for example, as public officials, head of village council, mayors) and therefore needed to be handled with caution and awareness. For Kufr Manda (as seen in Chapter 4.3.1 and 5.1.1.), a masters dissertation and a locally published book by Nader Zou'bi (2015) on the events surrounding the NWC were also an invaluable source of information. During my fieldwork, I managed to interview three authors (Jarbouni, Nassar and Zoubi) and meet Mbadda Ali (but not interview him due to his health).

The oGH provided a plethora of academic and popular literature that also transcended the western-centric audience. Books by Abdul Sattar Qasem (1984), Nazeer Majalli (1982), Al-Batheesh (1986), Muslih (1993) were among those who wrote in Arabic extensively about the six-months strike and occupation of the Golan

Heights in general. Moreover, a number of local researchers and residents of the oGH have also written to Western audiences in journals such as the Institute of Palestine Studies, in addition to the publication of local organisations such as Al-Marsad and the Arab Association for Development, which published a number of brochures especially in the 1990s. Additionally, local magazines by the Union of University Graduates from the oGH and other magazines were consulted at the Institute of Palestine Studies (IPS) Archives in Ramallah, Palestine. All of these sources have been invaluable to understanding the local experiences and reflections of Jawlanis and allies during those critical times of annexation in the 1980s.

### 3.3 Reflexivity and Ethics

Studying your own society is not devoid of problems, as Altorki explains in her chapter: 'At Home in the Field' (Altorki and El-Solh, 1988). Being an 'insider' invites the researcher to abide by the norms of her/his culture, or for the interviewees to be less comfortable in sharing details about political views, family details or social status. However, it also reduces the time needed to establish contacts and get accustomed to norms and traditions. Establishing rapport, Altorki exclaims, is less problematic and is further facilitated by speaking the language and simply fitting in. In my research, an insider-outsider role also characterised my work in the two locations: in both communities, my status as a Palestinian from Jerusalem offered some degree of flexibility in terms of escaping the gender role played by women in the community, in addition to other political, cultural and educational attributions facilitating access and flexibility. Altorki and El-Solh highlight how the indigenous field-worker "has the indisputable advantage of being able to attach meanings to patterns that he or she uncovers much faster than the non-indigenous researcher" (1988, p.7).

Carrying out research in the Middle East, and specifically in occupied Palestine and the Golan Heights, does not come without its challenges, both physical and cognitive. As Laleh Khalili states, we as researchers need to be careful and aware of how power operates in the field and in the archives (2011). In a context where politics

infiltrates into both public and private spheres of life, it is important to be aware of “how “the political” structures and underwrites the representation of research material” (Khalili, 2011, p.66). Awareness as well of the power asymmetries between us as researchers and the research subjects serves as a reminder of our positionality in addition to comprehending research subjects’ power asymmetry within their communities and with external actors. As Khalili states, a native researcher does not automatically overcome all boundaries and asymmetries that exist in a certain context or site, and “has to be even more vigilant about the ease with which she can be “placed” by her interlocutors” (ibid, p.71). This vigilance is even more necessary when researching marginalised individuals, or dealing with contentious issues of conflict, war and dispossession (Liamputtong, 2006).

To conduct this research, I had to plan my fieldwork in geographical locations that I rarely visited as a Palestinian. While most of my previous fieldwork was carried out in Palestinian villages in the West Bank, this doctoral research allowed me to venture into new geographical territories that I was not familiar with, and to build relationships and networks with communities that were similar yet distinct in many ways to the conventional Palestinian farmer in the West Bank. My identification as a female Jerusalemite coming from an urban middle-class and large family contributed to the dynamics experienced while in the field, both positively and negatively. It allowed for openness in dealing with people who could identify my family name and even distant members of my family, while also creating a feeling of being ‘othered’ as an urbanite. This interesting dynamic allowed me to reflect on historical socio-political class relations in Palestine, and their impact on water and land struggles overall, which were led by the peasants (*fellahin*), not the elites and urbanites of society. Doing fieldwork at home was therefore an illuminating experience, as it allowed me to get out of my city and the typical fieldwork locations in the West Bank, and to explore being a ‘familiar other’ learning and exposing myself to new and unfamiliar territories. The experiences in both case study sites were enriching on a personal development level, in addition to its rich empirical significance.

The field research also alerted me to the dominance of the male farmer, researcher, practitioner in our (and even this research’s) perceptions of water

management and farming. I tried to navigate this male-dominated field by interviewing female farmers, researchers, journalists and civil society members which revealed an understudied and illuminating world of female-led resistance. In the oGH, women still carry out farming tasks alongside men, especially during the harvest season. However, this role has been decreasing in the field due to the intensive mechanised nature of apple growing. Before the intensification of apple orchards, the variety of rain-fed crops and even irrigated vegetables meant a more dominant presence of women farmers in the field. Today, their role has been transferred to workers in the apple packaging houses, where most of the workers employed are women. This has illuminated other re-configurations taking place in the oGH as a result of intensive agricultural practices. Women's role in the general strike and the popular struggle against the Israeli annexation was also pioneering and transformative alongside that of men. In al-Battuf, a similar role change was also noted for women farmers. Interestingly, since intensive agriculture initiatives (including collective drainage projects) were not realised, coupled with the exodus of male farmers seeking job opportunities in the Jewish sector, this resulted in the return of female farmers to al-Battuf to continue rainfed and baali farming practices (Figure 3.3). In my research, I met four powerful women farmers who have made farming in al-Battuf their life-long goal, despite the male-dominated field and societal pressures. Today, they lead the farmers' market events, selling their produce and participating in income-generating activities such as preparing traditional food for visitors to al-Battuf, in partnership with local organisations. However, female farmers were also often excluded from key elements of the water struggle in both cases; for example, the agricultural cooperatives in the oGH and al-Battuf were led by male members only.



*Figure 3.3 Jameeleh Shazli, one of the female farmers persistently farming in al-Battuf, pictured here picking baali Okra, known in Arabic as Bamyeh (Author's picture, September 2017)*

### ***LSE Research Ethics policy***

Before conducting my fieldwork, I reviewed the LSE Research Ethics Policy to ensure my research follows the school's procedures and principles. It made me aware of my responsibilities as a researcher in the social sciences towards my institution and those people who take part in my research. I completed the Research Ethics Review Checklist and received confirmation of committing to my ethical safeguards. This included obtaining informed consent from human participants and ensuring that they are not put in any risk or harm by taking part in this research. Working in Palestine/Israel and the oGH required attention to the risks involved in exposing communities or individuals to further restrictions or harassment by the Israeli state. However, my working on issues of farming and water was perceived to be apolitical by Israeli authorities and therefore raised few suspicions and issues. Participants were willing and open to speak about their experiences, and no risks were identified either by participants or myself from the research. Carrying research outside of the UK required the submission of further preparatory procedures regarding health and safety in the field, political concerns, and other emergency plans. Being a Palestinian



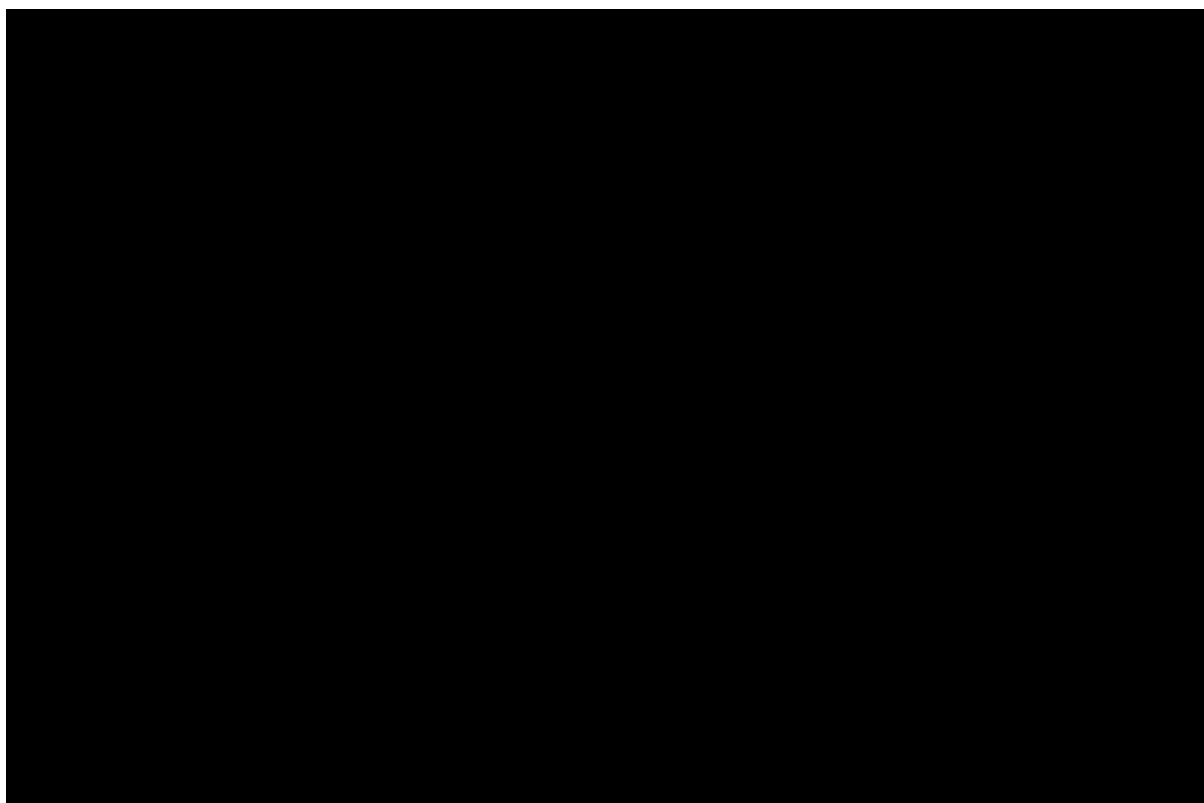
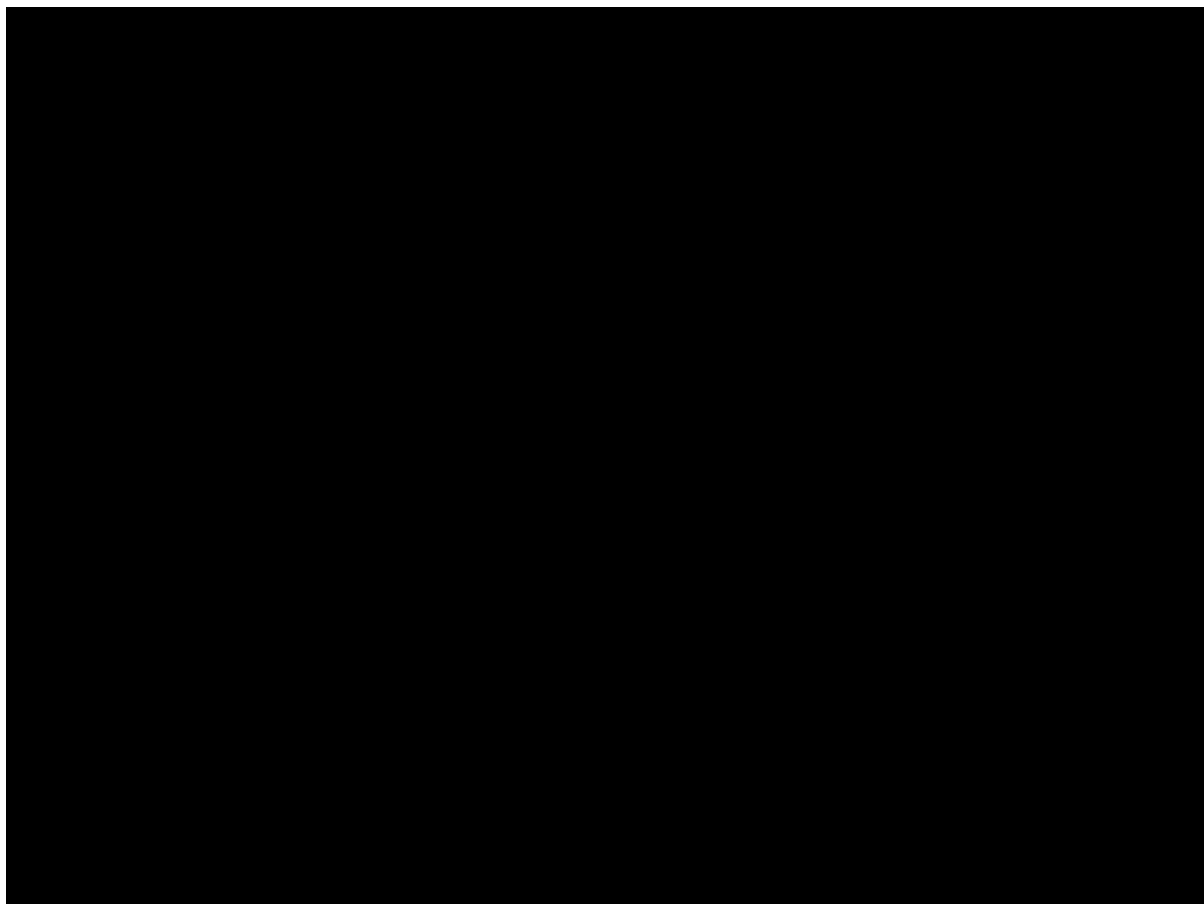
working at home of course prepared me for being attentive and flexible in carrying out my fieldwork based on the political situation at the time. My visits to the oGH in particular were arranged after appropriate checking of the situation along the barriers separating the Israeli occupied part from the rest of the Syrian lands. In the Galilee, less precaution was needed as the area was relatively safe and has not experienced political unrest in recent years.

While in the field, I have clarified with my interviewees the need for consent to carry out interviews and recording of our conversations. The interview extracts presented here are not anonymised as participants agreed to their names being used; indeed, many of the interlocutors have made multiple statements in the public sphere, whether in local media outlets, civil society reports or videos online. The primary data for this research has been collected by interview recordings, documents acquired from the field and relevant archives, my own fieldnotes and pictures. I have securely stored all of those documents digitally. All the interviews were carried out in Arabic; therefore the transcribed ones had to be translated to English, while others were summarised from audio recordings.

### ***Field presentations of research findings in the occupied Golan Heights***

My work in the oGH in particular put me in direct and close contact with the few local research and development organisations working in Majdal Shams. This has allowed me to share my research with a wide and interested audience, who appreciated this historically-focused endeavour in tracing and locating water struggles as part and parcel of larger struggles of recognition and resistance which have shaped the identity of the oGH and its inhabitants. This allowed me to work closely and present my research at multiple times to a local audience. The experience was very enriching, as I felt that the researcher- participant binary was dissolved, but not completely disregarded. I was invited to speak about my research for a local online news agency, *daliluk*. In my last field visit in September 2017, I was invited to participate in a roundtable discussion on the future of farming and share my research findings. This was organised by the oGH Cultural Salon, a local initiative affiliated with the Harmoon Centre for Contemporary Studies, an independent non-profit research

and cultural centre focusing on Syria, based in Qatar and Turkey (Figure 3.4). This opportunity allowed me to meet with wider groups of farmers (from other villages) and listen to the contemporary and pressing issues farmers are facing in regard to unequal marketing opportunities, the internal politics and tensions within cooperatives, apple cooler issues, and wider concerns over farming in the future. This informed my analysis and allowed me to observe the transformation of farming acts from the decades of annexation until today. Such an opportunity was not available in al-Battuf, as farming there (as will be seen in chapters 5 and 8) was not supported by any strong cooperatives or research centres, reduced to acts of a handful individuals who persisted on the land.



*Figure 3.4 Roundtable discussion at The oGH Salon, part of the Haramoon Centre for Contemporary Studies in Majdal Shams (Daliluk.com, September 2017)*

### 3.4 Summary of chapter

In this chapter, I have described my research topic, questions and objectives and the suitability of my research methodology and data collection methods. I also highlighted my own motivation for carrying out this research and the selection of the case studies. I justified my qualitative methodology and identified the main data collection methods. Finally, I have engaged with reflections on my time in the field and my positionality while doing the research.

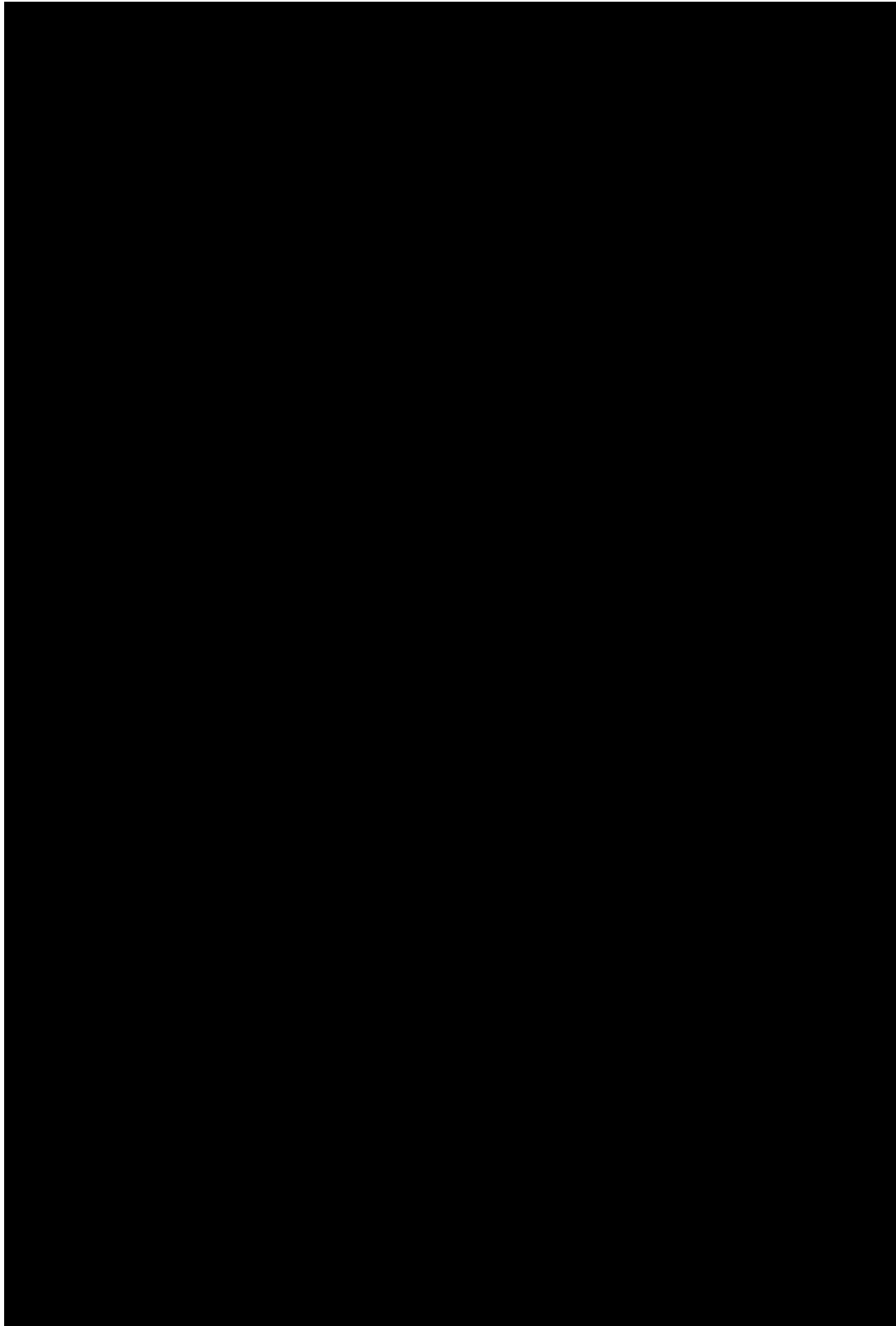
## **Chapter 4: Al-Battuf lived geographies and their re-configuration under Israeli settler colonial rule**

This chapter situates Sahl al-Battuf (the valley of al-Battuf) as a site of struggle and resistance; a hydrosocial and political territory. Departing from the literature on hydropolitics which constructed it (and sometimes even only mentions it) as a site for a settler hydro-imaginary, this chapter examines how settler colonial water and land policies have manifested themselves in the lives of the farming communities of al-Battuf and how they shaped norms and beliefs about livelihood activities and water meanings.

Al-Battuf is referred to in that literature in its biblical Hebrew name, Beit Netofa, and usually shown as a site on the map of a natural reservoir envisioned by the Zionist planners as an integral part of a complex web of infrastructures, mechanisms and arrangements that came to produce the National Water Carrier (NWC) of Israel and its connections and dis-connections (see Figure 4.1). The settler colonial hydro-hegemony has obscured and severed indigenous land-based livelihood practices and re-configured their lived geographies significantly. In this chapter, I illuminate the struggle against the state and the NWC that ensued for the villages of Kufr Manda, Arrabeh and Sakhnin from 1954 to 1964 and connect it with settler colonial geographies and realities of Palestinians living inside Israel. The chapter aims to frame the struggles faced by these populations and many others inside 1948 borders (known as Israel proper) as a struggle for recognition of their ethno-geographic identities and resource rights.

In the first section of this chapter, I will describe land and water relations during the period prior to the creation of the Israeli state. This will provide historical context for how water became an object of exclusion and dispossession, and how it became political on both national and local levels through examining the settler state institutions and framing of irrigated agriculture as a solely Zionist endeavour. The second section examines the lived geographies of al-Battuf communities under the Military Rule, which was imposed on the Palestinians remaining in their towns and

villages after 1948, focusing specifically on relations of farming and water. Al-Battuf's geographical location has brought the politics of water into the everyday lives of a disenfranchised and dispossessed 'remainder of society' just waking up to the aftermath of its dispossession or Nakba. Therefore, this section focuses on sites of dispossession through water, exemplified by the NWC as a strictly settler colonial infrastructure.



*Figure 4.1 Al-Battuf as a reservoir site in the Jordan River Basin (adapted from Schmida, 1985, p.1)*

## 4.1 Lived geographies of Al-Battuf farmers pre-1948

Al-Battuf valley, located in the Lower Galilee, stretches over 50,000 dunums of fertile, clay heavy soil. “This beautiful expanse extends from ‘Hitin and Eilaboun hills to the east, to Saffuriyeh and Shafa’am mountains to the west, and Tur’an mountain range to the south, and Arrabeh, Sakhnin and Kufr Manda mountains to the North” (Jarbouni, 1998, p.142). Al-Battuf, as its name in Arabic suggests connotes the act of “floating”, referring to annual flooding that turns around 20,000 dunums of the valley into a natural lake – “where the dew floats” (Mbadda Ali, 2000). Another explanation given by one of the elders and a geographer himself was *Abu il Touf*, the father of the flood, a Bedouin name given to the valley to describe its winter state of flooding. *Al-gharaq*, or flood, is another local name given to the area, and the most frequently used today to describe this phenomenon. Farmers with lands in these flooded plots plant their winter crops at risk, and if the rainfall is heavy that year, their crops are destroyed, and their summer crops will be planted later (until the water reduces), which puts them in a less favourable condition and limits their crop productivity.

### 4.1.1 Al-Battuf: land and water realities in the valley

While it was prominent for agricultural land such as al-Battuf to be considered *Mashaa’*<sup>12</sup>, an Ottoman decree in 1858<sup>13</sup> necessitated the parcellation of land between the villages surrounding the valley, where the largest area of the land was

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<sup>12</sup> *Mashaa’* refers to collectively owned land by villages. The land is allocated on a rotating basis, so the fellahin will move between lands throughout the years. The private property on the other hand was fixed, planted with trees. Trees were not allowed to be planted in *Mashaa’* lands, only vegetables and pulses. The *mashaa’* came as an outcome of high taxes and the collective efforts by the villagers to oppose it (Zu’bi, 1984).



allotted to Sakhnin (16,000 dunums), Arrabeh (14,000), and Saffuriyeh (10,000).<sup>14</sup> with the remaining villages of Kufr Manda (4,500), Bu'ineh (1,000), El'izeer (650) and Rummaneh (500) receiving smaller areas of land based on population and village size (see figure 4.2) (Mbadda Ali, 2000; Interview with Abu Saleh Jarbouni, previous head of local authority and farmer, Arrabeh 18 July 2016). Since that period, the agricultural land of al-Battuf was reclaimed for rainfed agriculture. Having served for generations as a site of livestock grazing, the valley became highly fertile and suitable for agricultural activities. Since then, these two agricultural practices, grazing and farming, have been inseparable for the fellah in al-Battuf during this period. So *ba'ali* agriculture, the vernacular term used to describe the livelihood without water, in the rich clays of al-Battuf and its water retention quality characterises it as one of the most fertile plains, especially with its unique climatic condition of receiving 600mm of water in the winter. These biophysical and social elements have contributed to a distinct crop variety in the valley and the maintenance of a subsistence mode of agriculture. Winter crops were dominantly wheat, corn and pulses while the summer crops were watermelon, melon and sesame and seasonal vegetables. Subsistence agriculture required a continuous presence on the land, in addition to whole families participating in the daily chores. The farmers would even move to the Battuf in the summer to protect their harvest and limit their commute in the hot months, building small sheds to protect them and their crops, a ritual called *Ta'zeeb*. This complete process of farming and livestock grazing, in addition to the crop rotation between seasons, maintained a very healthy soil and provided families with year-long subsistence and exemplified the livelihood of the fellahin and their attachment to the land as ethno-geographic communities. As Ayyash argues, fellahin's existence on the land transcended notions of nationalist, ideological and economic values, viewing land and life as "inseparable for the Palestinian fellahin, and only those who best knew the land lived on it, and they lived on it because they knew it best, were part of it, as it was a part of them" (2018, p.31).

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<sup>14</sup> Saffuriyeh is a village in al-Battuf that was destroyed in 1948, and its inhabitants becoming refugees. Saffuriyeh village owned 10,000 dunums of land in al-Battuf, which were confiscated, the village destroyed and its inhabitants becoming refugees in 1948. Today, Tzipori and other settlements is built on the village lands, and the agricultural lands used by the settlers.

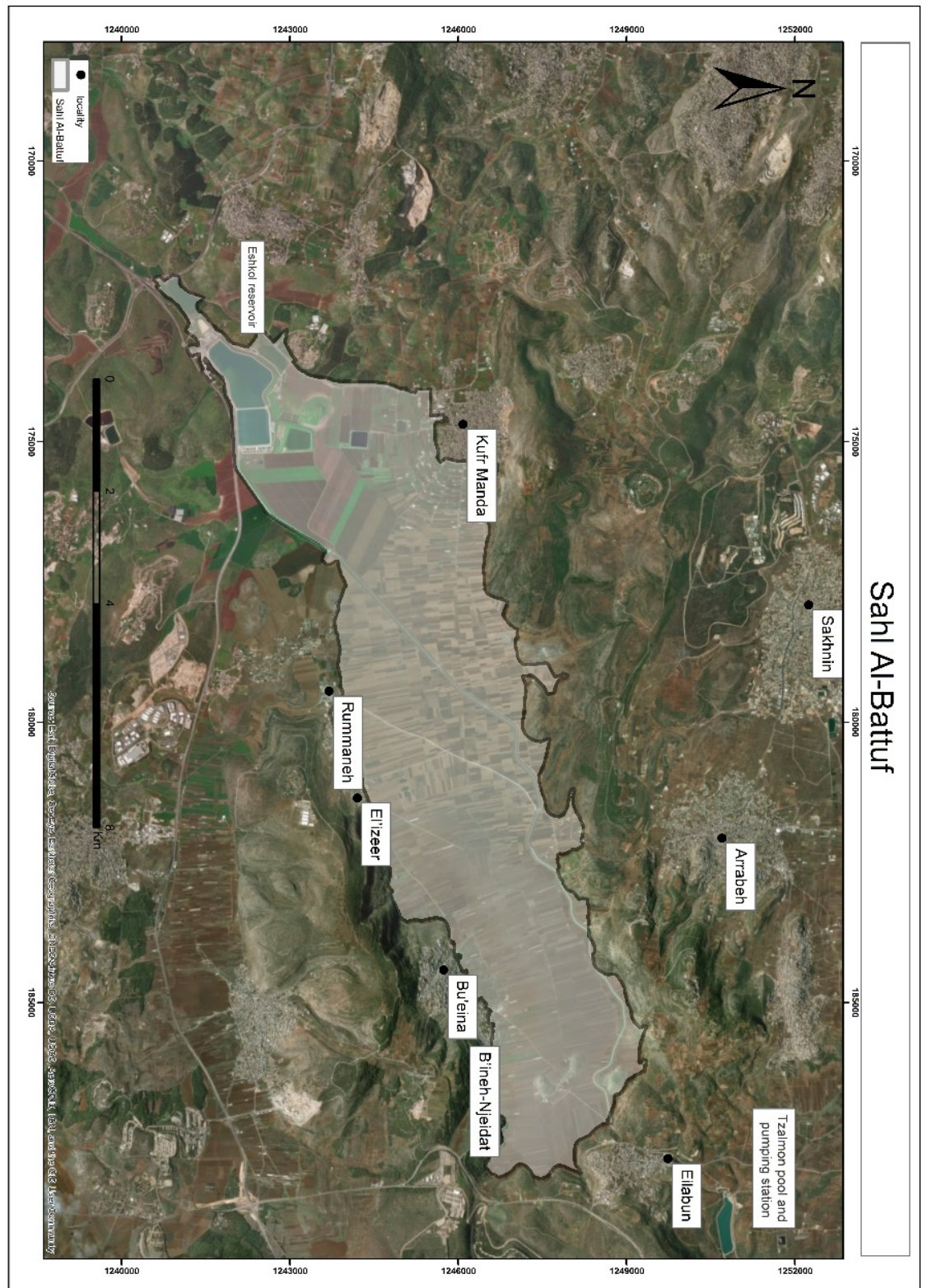


Figure 4.2 Sahl Al-Battuf overview (Developed by Yousra Otham for this thesis, 2018)

In al-Battuf, al-gharaq phenomenon was a distinct feature on its eastern end. Al-gharaq limited the agricultural productivity of an estimated between 10-20,000 dunums (depending on annual rainfall), but also allowed for the planting of moisture-loving crops, like okra. Al-gharaq phenomenon was not unique to al-Battuf and can be also witnessed distinctively in Marj Sanour in Jenin, in addition to Deir Ballout in Salfit, and al-Bireh (all in the occupied West Bank), and before its draining in Lake Huleh (near the Lebanese border). As Tesdell and Issa (2017) also highlight, *Al Balu'* is another name given to distinctive seasonal pools or winter ponds and is derived from the root word 'to swallow'. In the colonial and settler colonial mind-set of the British and Zionists at the time, these were areas to drain and utilise optimally with the introduction of drainage interventions, technological fixes and advancements. Al-gharaq, and al-Battuf in general, has always been a site of colonial interest and development aspiration, and the drainage of the valley has been a widely agreed upon approach. During the British mandate, the District Commissioner of the Galilee District, received a letter from T.L. Ward, who was pushing for the drainage of al-Battuf (ISA, 1947), and was discussing with the Director of public works preliminary estimates of cost. The drainage scheme, he explained, "if executed, would prevent the flooding which occurs almost annually at the eastern end of the depression and as a result some ten thousand dunums or more of good land, now useless in winter could be made to grow crops from the winter rain" (ISA, 1947). These plans never materialised and instead were in contrast reconfigured drastically to fit the Zionist and Israeli imaginary, which sought a landscape which complemented and realised the material and discursive water hegemony it had long lobbied for since the times of Sykes-Picot.

The earliest 'Anglo-Zionist' plans of Hays-Lowdermilk identified sahl al-Battuf as the site of a natural reservoir and a critical component of the national planning of Israel's water supply (Lowdermilk, 1946). As the plan was to divert the headwaters of the Jordan River, the ideal approach was to provide a storage reservoir that would control the flood water and redistribute it to where it was needed. To realise the Zionist aspirations for a nation-state, the priority was to reach

the coastal cities and the Naqab (Negev), where the Zionist dream of making the desert bloom would take place throughout the ensuing decades after 1948. At that time, Israel was wary of making Lake Tiberias the storage reservoir for political reasons and due to concerns over sharing the Lake with Arab riparian states, which resulted in the conceptualisation of the Lake “as enemy space” (Alatout, 2011, p.230). Lowdermilk, commissioned by the Jewish Agency (JA) to carry out an exploration of the potential of Palestine as a site of land and water abundance, praised Jewish land and water reclamation as an emancipation of land which under Arab rule had suffered from neglect and destruction. While fraught with ideological praise and a clear support for the Zionist enterprise,<sup>15</sup> Lowdermilk plan was the first to be adopted as a water resource plan, which was technically and scientifically complemented with later technical plans of James Hayes and Savage, which were funded by the Commission on Palestine Surveys in the U.S. (Schmida 1984). What unified those plans, although not implemented, was a fundamental feature that characterised forthcoming Israeli water plans: out-of-basin transfers, and the full utilisation of all water sources for irrigation and electricity production. These plans required the transformation of al-Battuf into Beit Netofa reservoir, which Lowdermilk was the first to include in Israel’s water planning. This would fill the valley with 1 billion cubic meters and fully submerge the villages lying in the valley, like Kufr Manda, in addition to covering all the agricultural land area of the remaining villages.

The UN Partition Plan (Resolution 181, 1947, p.143)<sup>16</sup> reiterates the significance of sahl al-Battuf in the construction and concretisation of the Zionist and later Israeli water hegemony. In the borders article of the plan, emphasis is given to the JA’s priorities regarding water for irrigation, which necessitates the inclusion of the valley in the Jewish state borders:

*From the south-west corner of Kafr I'nan village the boundary line follows the western boundary of the Tiberias sub-district to a point close to the boundary line between the villages of Maghar*

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<sup>15</sup> Lowdermilk’s clear anti-Arab sentiment is expressed when he stated, “if individual Arabs found that they disliked living in an industrialized land, they could easily settle in the great alluvial plain of the Tigris and Euphrates Valley, there is land enough for vast numbers of immigrants.” (Lowdermilk, 1946, pages 127-128)

<sup>16</sup> The Partition plan of 1947 was a proposal by the United Nations, recommending the partition of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish state. The UN General Assembly adopted the plan and Resolution 181 was enacted. However, the plan was not implemented, and the 1948 war broke soon afterwards.

*and Eilabun, thence bulging out to the west to include as much of the eastern part of the plain of Battuf as is necessary for the reservoir proposed by the Jewish Agency for the irrigation of lands to the south and east.*

Zionist water imaginaries and plans were therefore placed at high priority even in the demarcation of borders for the partition of Palestine between Arabs and Jews. This signifies and complements a distinctive role water and water bodies have played in the Zionist nation building highlighted in previous literature (Zeitoun et al., 2012). As Alatout (2012) claims of the Jordan River becoming the border, sahl al-Battuf was also the site of border making and claiming of a Zionist Jewish state, where water *became* and was *made* political.

#### 4.1.2 Hydro-imaginaries: scarcity and abundance of water

Al-Battuf's unique water-retention soil quality allowed the realisation of a self-sufficient eco-system, where the need for irrigation was not present for the fellahin at that time. Utilising the absorptive capacity of the soil, the fellahin in al-Battuf worked within the limitations of nature and adapted the rainfed or *ba'ali* agricultural practices utilised for generations to produce traditional crops. As will be seen in this section, this was contradictory to the Zionist water and land aspirations, which utilised technological and infrastructural tools to overcome and control ecological conditions. However, this is not to be understood as a normalising of Arab vs. Jewish conceptions of adapting to or overcoming natural limitations as this would to adopt an environmentally deterministic approach, which this thesis aims to avoid and challenge (see section 2.3). Before 1948, Palestinian farmers were utilising technological tools and mechanisms to drill for groundwater, diverting river flows and establishing prosperous water-intensive farming, like the famous citrus orchards in multiple locations in historic Palestine, but not in al-Battuf. This thesis argues that the settler-colonial laws have significantly re-configured land-water relations and meaning for the colonized. It also emphasises that a historical examination can explain the underlying causes of a consistent and naturalised denial of access to

water and infrastructure in farming, and the dominance of a water scarcity narrative to control flows to non-Jewish agriculture.

While the Zionists were constructing an abundance narrative (Alatout, 2009) and strengthening their efforts to intensify irrigated agriculture, the seminal work of Imseh reveals how on a Palestinian end, one writer and expert, by the name of Najib Nassar, adopted a construction of Palestine as a water scarce region, where he saw dryland farming (*ba'ali*) and its development as a condition for the advancement of Arab farming and 'a more durable attachment to the landscape' (Teddell, 2018, p.72). Juxtaposing Nassar's model of an agriculture suiting the limitations of climatic conditions and rainfall, the Zionist imaginary aspired for controlling of nature rather than adjusting to its limitations, creating the impetus for conflict and contestation over water rights and claims. The earliest traces of water conflict in Palestine before 1948 can be traced to the British colonial mandate period, when reports and studies nurtured competition over land and water rights in Palestine between Jewish and non-Jewish water users. As Wishart (1985) argues, three British documents shaped the water conflict on the ground. These were studies conducted to explore the limitations and prospects of Jewish immigration to Palestine and its implication on economic development. The Simpson report of 1930, which focused on immigration settlement and economic development, provided less optimistic estimates of Palestine's cultivatable area and recommended legislation be enacted to settle water rights, emphasising "that agricultural development among Arab farmers was a requirement for future peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Palestine" (Wishart, 1985, p.53). However, a letter in 1931 sent from the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to the JA's Chaim Weizmann, aimed to emphasise British support to Jewish immigration and maintained a neutral position on it, further delaying any legislative decisions which would settle water rights for Arabs. The British White Paper of 1939, also mirrored Simpson's estimates and was concerned with how landless Arabs were to be provided with land, arguing that the JA had already acquired enough land for Jewish settlements development.

Clearly, British colonial policies were often ambiguous in their effects on Arabs and Jews (Smith, 1993), which agitated fears and concerns, especially for Arabs who had been witnessing a curtailment of their agricultural livelihood practices in light of the JA's acquisition and development of land and agriculture.<sup>17</sup> Water and land rights, therefore, became an object of conflict and contestation between Arabs and Jews in the 1930s and the Peel Commission aimed at addressing those issues. Meanwhile, the Zionist investments by that time were significant in combating what were considered ecological constraints to water availability. The concessions given to them by the British, such as hydropower production on the Yarmouk River, or the electrification of Jaffa (Meiton, 2015; 2016), or the drainage of the Huleh swamps (Anton, 2008; Sufian, 2007b), were all articulations of a particular hegemony over land and water resource development.

An important actor in harnessing of natural resources was Mekorot water company. Established twelve years before the creation of the Israeli state by the JA, the Histadrut Labour Federation, and the Jewish National Fund (JNF), its ideological founders restricted its work to supporting exclusively Jewish enterprises and users (Davis et al., 1980; Galnoor, 1980). Mekorot's domination over water management meant that by 1947 it had succeeded in constructing and operating more than 200 kilometres of water lines to Jewish communities exclusively, establishing "the first example in Palestine of a regular system of charges for water supply" (Wishart 1985, p.62).<sup>18</sup> Agricultural development exclusively guaranteed for Jewish agriculture imposed a narrative of water-as-resource (Yates, Harris, and Wilson 2017), relegating water to its technical and expertise dimensions, as Wishart (1985, p.61) explains:

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<sup>17</sup> In addition, the Peel Commission formed in 1936 after Arab leaders demanded a new commission to curb Zionist immigration, settlement expansion and decide on Palestine absorptive capacity also investigated issues of land settlement and agricultural economic activities. The Peel Commission report of 1937 (UN Website, nd)

<sup>18</sup> Mekorot, the Israeli water company, founded in 1937 before the establishment of the state, was owned jointly by the government, Jewish Agency and the National Federation of Labour 'Histadrut' (Bilski et al., 1980). Today, Mekorot is a wholly owned government company, under the Ministry of Energy and Water and the Ministry of Finance. It is formed of a group of companies which control, plan and manage 100 water mega-projects throughout Israel and occupied territories.

*Water in Palestine was no longer a free good. Agricultural development had transformed water resources above and below ground into valuable capital assets. Water which had previously been allowed to "run off unused" or which had been "applied inefficiently" was exploited more economically.*

The failure to enact water rights legislation contributed to the persistence of conflict over Palestine's natural resources. Coupled with the slow pace at which modern agricultural methods were transmitted to the majority of Arab farmers and the reluctance to carry out irrigated agriculture in light of uncertain land and water rights, this limited irrigated agriculture to richer Arab landowners who had the necessary capital and security. Wishart's extensive examination of Mandate legislation reveals that the irrigation ordinance of 1942 was never enforced due to Zionist political opposition, consolidating Mekorot's monopoly in providing water to Jewish agricultural settlements. This shows how the colonial administration has materially and discursively established conditions of differential access to water from the early 1920s, consolidating the framing of Arab modes of agriculture and water use as primitive, and bolstering a Zionist approach of efficiency and development (for more detailed account of agriculture under the British mandate, see Kamen, 1991). This is why the JA's water harnessing ambitions were clearly identified as an element influencing border establishment between the Arab and Jewish countries in the partition plan, which further highlights the influence and power of the JA in restricting the amendment of the ordinances that would have elevated Arab claims to a level playing field. As such, the JNF and JA's control over water quotas, resulted in a reality where only 2.3 per cent of the water resources available were allocated to the Palestinians in Israel after 1948 in a trend that continued until the present (Davis et al., 1980).

To conclude, agriculture for the Palestinians before 1948 has responded to politically created water and land scarcity (Temper, 2009, p.76), reinforced by unequal British colonial Mandate's approach towards Zionist aspirations for land and water control. This continued to be the case after 1948, most evidently seen in the occupied territories in 1967. This has been the premise of how water scarcity was



politically utilised to exclude non-Jewish actors from acquiring rights to water. In the case of al-Battuf, like many other locations in historical Palestine, rainfed agriculture remained a dominant and well developed practice acquiring high level of adaptation to the climatic, biophysical and political conditions of the time (Tsedell, 2015).

## 4.2 The uprooting of Palestinians from their land (1948-1976)

To analyse the struggle over water in al-Battuf specifically and the Galilee in general, the 1948 dispossession and *Nakba* serve as the year of rupture. The *Nakba*, or Catastrophe, refers to the Palestinian experience of exodus in the aftermath of Zionist ethnic cleansing, where around 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their cities, towns and villages. Since 1948, Israel as a settler colonial project established its nation-state, where Palestinians became a minority group (multiple estimates post 1948 refer to a population of around 160,000 people). Following that, the Palestinians were governed under Israeli military rule from 1948 until 1966 which was imposed on the remaining Palestinian towns and villages<sup>19</sup> to deter the population and mainly internal refugees from returning to their homes and villages. The Palestinians inside Israel faced multi-faceted discrimination and alienation in those decades, consolidated by an Israeli policy of aggressive confiscation of the land which remained under the Palestinian control. Palestinians inside Israel, who today amount to 1.2 million, have been depicted as the 'Forgotten Palestinians', in between the Jewish citizens of Israel and the dispossessed Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, leading to complex and contradictory relationships with the state and the land they live on (Pappé, 2011). The collective experience of those Palestinians as both underprivileged citizens and settler-colonial subjects (Rouhana and Hueidi, 2017) has definitely shaped unique lived geographies to their counterpart Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, or the Syrians in the oGH.

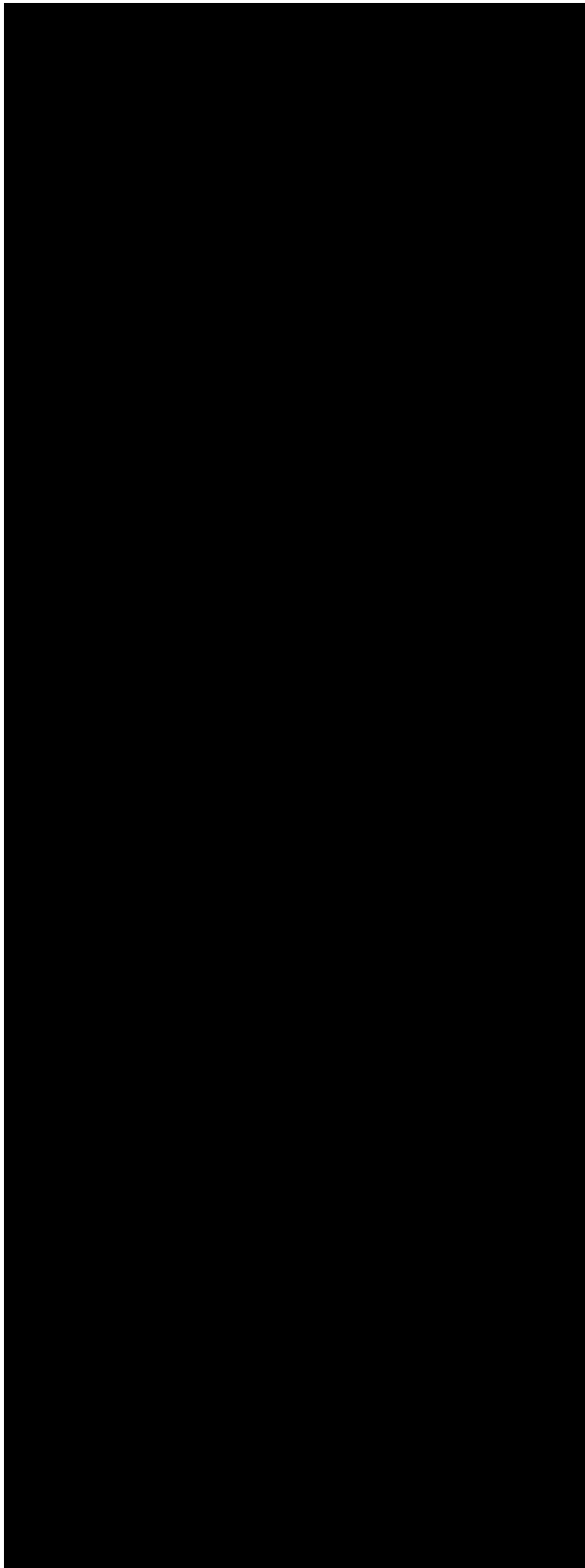
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<sup>19</sup> The military rule was only imposed on the 'Mixed cities' (cities where Arabs and Jews lived – like Haifa, Jaffa) only until 1949, and Acre in 1951 (Sabbagh-Khoury, 2018). Most of the populations of Palestinians remaining were concentrated in the Galilee villages and the Naqab, in addition to the little triangle area.

The realities of living under military rule forced the Palestinians inside Israel to conglomerate in specific geographical areas (see Figure 4.3), imposing strict control and a re-configuration of their lived geographies as Palestinians. Basing its decisions on British colonial mandate emergency regulations, the Israeli government picked and chose five of those regulations to govern the Arab minority (Jiryis, 1976; Masalha, 2002; Rouhana and Hueidi, 2017). As Bäuml states, three of those gave control to the military governor “to control, limit, and even prevent the freedom of movement of citizens under this rule” and the other two were to prevent people “from entering areas that had been proclaimed closed” (Bäuml, 2015, p.109), therefore creating and implementing an ‘uprooting’ policy to detach the Palestinians from their ancestral land.

Fundamentally, the Zionist state dealt with its non-Jewish population as an excluded group and thus shaped their collective existence and practices in the realm of marginality and exclusion (Bäuml 2017, p.109):

*The aim of the military government’s actions was to minimize and almost abolish the civil equality that the Arabs should have enjoyed as Israeli citizens. The military government resulted in the exclusion of the Arabs from all Jewish state systems, their discrimination in every domain, the deepening of their internal divides or the creation of new ones, the erasure of their identity, and the hindering of their sense as a national collective.*



*Figure 4.3 Palestinian inside Israel population after 1948 (from Lustick, 1980)*

Moreover, those Palestinians who remained as an Arab minority in the state of Israeli after 1948 continued to be identified as the 'state enemy' even though they were a "poor, heavily unemployed, traumatized minority that had just witnessed the destruction of its homeland and nation" (Bäumli, 2017, p.106). This logic necessitated their rule by military force rather than civil rule, maintaining and securing "the continued traditional segregation and exclusion of Arabs from the Zionist project" (ibid). Under military rule, citizenship was not granted to all Palestinians instantaneously. The Citizenship Law of 1952 granted Israeli citizenship to 40% of the Palestinians inside Israel at the time, while 40% received them gradually, and the remaining 20% who were considered Present Absentees (PA)<sup>20</sup> were also considered citizens later (in the 1950s) as the hopes were that they would leave Israel to go to other Arab countries (Masalha, 2002).

Many important scholarly work have investigated this citizenship dilemma of Palestinians inside Israel and its use as a category of exclusion and estrangement (Robinson, 2013), of being citizens without citizenship and even settler-colonial citizens (Rouhana and Sabbagh-khoury, 2018; Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury, 2015; Shafir, 2005, 2018; Sultany, 2003). While citizenship was granted gradually to all Palestinians inside Israel, it remained an exclusionary citizenship identity as they "are caught between the illusion of inclusion derived from Israel's democratic regime and its discriminative characteristics embedded in its definition as a Jewish state. Caught in this tension, they are expected to accept their inferior status and to adopt a civic identity that politically rejects them and their collective memory." (Pinson, 2008, p.204). Therefore, this adoption of a civic identity devoid of nationality and political identification with the new state created a deep dilemma for the Palestinian citizens. As Shafir further contends, the only citizenship framework which incorporated Palestinians was the Nationality Law of 1952 which is also "the one not connected directly to land and control of land" (2005, p.55), materialising Israeli-Jewish

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<sup>20</sup> The definition of an absentee, as the 1950 Knesset Law of Absentee Property states, included "every Israeli citizen who left his regular abode in Israel (a) to a place outside Israel before 1948 or (b) for a place in Israel which was at that time occupied by forces which sought to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel or fought against it after its establishment". For more see Cohen (2003)

hegemony over land (and water) and reserving citizenship rights “to those who were part of the colonisation of Palestine”<sup>21</sup>.

From majority to minority, the Palestinians inside Israel dealt with the years following the Nakba as a period of adaptation of conflictual relations between them and the Israeli state, as Manar Makhoul (2018) reflects through the use of novels written by authors who themselves are Palestinians inside Israel. He speaks of an attenuation of the Palestinian discourse from one of liberation and an Arab struggle against Zionism to one of daily lives of Palestinians inside Israel. Palestinians inside Israel thus subtly become *Israeli Arabs*, a term used by the authorities, emitting the Palestinian national connection. Interestingly, Makhoul further elaborates on the conundrum of Palestinians inside Israel, who gradually perceive themselves as “discriminated against people” and as he powerfully proclaims, “people who are fighting a national struggle for liberation do not complain about discrimination; only citizens fight against discrimination” (2018, p.10), denoting acceptance to be part of the Israeli state. This collective identification transformed the identity of Palestinians inside Israel and shifted the discourse of their struggle to that of recognition by the state, and one which aims to fight the discrimination which they face.

Makhoul further claims that Palestinians inside Israel “sought to recover from a disastrous war through modernization, which they believed would ultimately lead to integration within Israel as equals” (ibid, p.15). They believed that their lack of integration was due to their backwardness but soon realised that it’s due to the exclusivist nature of Zionism (p.16). Assi’s examination of Palestinian writer Emile Habibi’s work, most notably *The Pessoptimist*, introduces a bold and alternative notion of Palestinian identity in this period, seeing identity in this context as a form

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<sup>21</sup> “Citizenship has never been simple or unitary in form in Israel – a situation it shares with many other colonial and postcolonial societies” (Shafir 2005, 55). As Shafir highlights, this hierarchy of stacked citizenships which he identified in three categories: one was related to the Nationality Law of 1952, which, as mentioned above gave Palestinians citizenship rights. The second concerned the law of Return of 1950, which was a citizenship framework solely designed for Jews, making Jewish populations worldwide citizens upon arrival to Israel. The third refers to a republican citizenship framework, which “provided full, civil, political, and social citizenship [...] and excluded Palestinian citizens in many spheres to date” (ibid: 55).

of practice, survival tactics employed in a game that involves affirmation and rejection, collaboration and resistance, but never fixed. It depicts an “odd formation of an Arab citizenry and citizenship consciousness within the oppressive apparatuses of the military government experience (Assi, 2013, p.88). This quest for recognition and equality was paralleled in the politicisation of the population through identification with the Communist Party, the attempt to establish a nationalist movement ‘Al Ard’, and an increase in the Arab intelligentsia’s involvement in the political affairs of their communities (Zureik, 1979, pp.186–87):

*Within a hegemonic Zionist political culture, where deviation from a Zionist definition of political precepts is neither encouraged nor tolerated, it would be unrealistic to expect Arab efforts in this direction to be a complete success. However, neither could they be considered a total failure. While the extent of Arab politicization has not solved the predicaments facing Arabs in Israel as a subordinate group, they have at least managed to keep alive a sense of Palestinian identity and attachment to the homeland*

In conclusion, the military rule and subsequent decades of civilian rule succeeded in meeting the Israeli state’s objective of controlling and excluding the remaining Arab population from an ontological identification with the land and weakening any remaining collective identification and identity amongst them. Land and natural resources (as they were pre-1948) have become exclusive to the Jewish nation state building and were prohibited from contributing to any Arab collective identification or economic value. Through the military rule, the government maintained its control of the natural resources and the Arab subjects. Falah (1996) refers to this process as a ‘de-signification’ of the cultural landscape of the Palestinians, due to the settler colonial hegemony and control over land and territory. With this de-signification, national identity and attachment to place is maimed and destroyed, leaving behind a politically and socially disfigured community.

#### 4.2.1 Military Rule, the Judaisation of the Galilee and the uprooting of Palestinians

*“Land is life – or, at least, land is necessary for life. Thus contests for land can be – indeed, often are – contests for life” (Wolfe, 2006, p.387)*

*“To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on, about, or because of land. The actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about. At the moment when a coincidence occurs between real control and power, the idea of what a given place was (could be, might become), and an actual place – at that moment the struggle for empire is launched. This coincidence is the logic both for Westerners taking possession of land and, during decolonisation, for resisting natives reclaiming it” (Said, 1994, p.78)*

The military rule imposed on the remaining Palestinians inside Israel stifled their everyday life in two ways. First, it geographically separated communities from their lands and fields and imposed a permit system which allowed the military governor to control the movement of people. Second, the objective of military rule was to carry out land confiscation to infiltrate and impose a settler colonial presence in the midst of pre-dominantly Palestinian/Arab spaces, such as the Galilee. The British colonial mandate emergency laws of 1945 served as the platform for land confiscation under the Military law. As Sabri Jiryis explains in his remarkable work *The Arabs in Israel*, “by the beginning of the 1960s there was little land left in Israel to be redeemed” (1976, p.80) as the military rule utilised five land expropriation laws which facilitated its control over land:

1. Law of Absentee property in 1950 reflected “insatiable appetite for Arab Land and “the cruellest of the land expropriation measures” (p.85). It constructed the idea of the present absentees and the liberty to confiscate thousands of

dunums and property even from people who remained inside Israel but were not present at their village or town.<sup>22</sup>

2. The Defense (emergency) regulations, 1945 were perennial law on which the military government was based, and Article 125 referred to the closed areas article
3. Emergency (security zones) regulations, 5709-1949. These were until 1972 enabling the ministry of defense to designate the protected areas along the border or any part of it as a security zone. The ministry of defense declared “almost half of the Galilee, all of the Triangle<sup>23</sup>, an area near the Gaza strip, and another along the Jerusalem Jaffa railway line near Battir as security zones.” (ibid, p.90)
4. Emergency Regulations (cultivation of waste lands) ordinance 5709-1949. This concerned land that was “abandoned by their owners and cultivators and left untilled, plantations being neglected and water resources remaining unexploited”. The ministry of agriculture had the authority to cease and confiscate any land it deemed unexploited (ibid, p.94)
5. Law for the requisitioning of property in times of emergency 5710-1949.<sup>24</sup>

The Galilee remained an Arab region before and after the 1948 war. Despite these laws, the Palestinians inside Israel managed to hold on to some of their remaining lands, yet under precarious conditions where the state still had the ultimate power to expropriate land for security purposes and the public good. Since most of the agricultural land of the Galilee belonged to private smallholder land owners, it was protected from the earliest Zionist land acquisitions, and was maintained its Arab character after 1948 (Bashir, 2004). The settler colonial geography was yet to be imposed on the Galilee. Spreading over 1.5 million dunums

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<sup>22</sup> Through such laws, Israel was able to confiscate millions of dunums of Palestinian Absentee properties, around 40% of their land (Tannous, 2012). Not only did the land confiscation not stop in 1948, but it extended to encroach on the remaining lands of Palestinians inside Israel through planning regulations and rules of state land requisition.

<sup>23</sup> The Triangle is an Arab Palestinian concentration of towns and villages in central Israel, near the Green Line separating it from the West Bank.

<sup>24</sup> All of these laws were employed to confiscate land from the remaining Palestinians. To further consolidate the ownership of the state to these lands, the Land acquisition (validation of acts of compensation) law 5713-1953 was also passed<sup>24</sup>, consolidating state authority over Arab Land. As Jiryis (1976, p.96) refers to it as the “epitome of its five predecessors”. the opposition to the land acquisition law was strong however it managed to pass and consolidate the state authority and control of Arab land.



of Palestinian land, it was framed by the Israeli politicians as a space requiring 'liberation' and 'conquest' to impose on it a Jewish character (Bashir, 2004). The Judaisation attempts under the military rule aimed at increasing the Jewish population by confiscating land from its Arab owners and building Jewish settlements within the geographies of Arab existence, severing the remaining villages' geographical continuity and connections (Falah, 1993). With dwindling land remaining, the military rule resulted in a case of dysfunctional urbanisation that impacted the value of the villagers' land, and the viability of farming as a livelihood.<sup>25</sup>

The Galilee experienced a second wave of 'Judaisation of the soil' from 1974 to 1982 (Falah 1989, p.239) which consolidated the efforts of the Israeli state to penetrate the Arab core of the Galilee and establish Jewish development towns to dilute their populations and offset their 'demographic threat'. This was part of plans of 'Judaisation of the Galilee' – government plans which necessitated large scale expropriation of Palestinian land in the Galilee and the investment in bringing Jewish settlements to the Galilee. The relevance of this important period is that it aimed to turn Arab spaces of existence into enclosures and confined areas, closed to agricultural expansion. As Ghazi Falah asserts, the objective was to "limit Arab utilization of land as a strategy of territorial control" (1989, p.237). In the 1975, Israel's announcement of the confiscation of 20,000 dunums in al-Mal lands (agricultural land belonging to al-Battuf villages). This was followed by a secret document, leaked in 1976 which studied the situation of the Arabs of Israel and presented approaches to deal with them, mainly to curb their influence and most importantly to take their lands. It was written by Israel Koenig, the Northern District Commissioner of the Ministry of Interior whose recommendations were officially adopted by the government in their successive plans to develop the Galilee (COHRE and Badil, 2005). Such judaisation plans and laws, with their discriminatory core,

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<sup>25</sup> As Falah further contends, Jewish cities were being constructed in the heart of the Galilee, which were all in close vicinity to Al-Battuf and its villages. These 'development cities' were used for both security and strategic measures, implanted in the middle of the remaining villages of the Galilee and by 1974, there were 117 settlements, shrinking spaces of existence of the villages and imposing a process of urbanisation of those spaces, as no new Palestinian town or city has been established between 1948 and the present day.

were justified as an approach adopted by the Israeli government to liberate the Galilee from its Arab character and people (Nakhleh, 1978).

The Palestinians of the Galilee therefore were faced with existential threats enacted by the Israeli state against their source of livelihood (agricultural land) and identity (as ethno-geographic communities), which reinforced their mobilisation around land, most evidently in the 1976 *Yawm Al Ard* (Land Day). For al-Battuf farmers (especially Arrabeh, Sakhnin and Deir Hanna), their lands in another area called al-Mal (known by the state as Area 9), was under an imminent threat of confiscation. All mobilisation efforts and resistance were therefore embodied in Land and land protection. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1976, a general strike was declared, and the Israeli police attacked demonstrators, resulting in violent confrontations and the killing of six Palestinian Arabs and the wounding of a handful of people and the arrest of many. Land Day became a symbolic and powerful celebration of belonging to the land which united all Palestinians inside Israel, the West Bank and Gaza and also the Syrians of the occupied Golan Heights in solidarity against the encroachment of the settler colonial state on their lands (Bashir, 2006; Nakhleh, 1978; Wakim, 2001). Its relevance to al-Battuf case will be explored in section 2.2, which situates its struggles as a preceding platform for mobilisations which expanded during Land Day. Al-Battuf and al-Mal are both sites of the few remaining Arab agricultural lands, and the experience of land confiscation in al-Battuf can be argued to have been the impetus of larger demonstrations and resistance during Land Day.

While the resistance of the Palestinian masses who participated in Land Day succeeded in stopping the government's confiscation of al-Mal land, the judaisation process continued in the Galilee through other means: planning and settlements. As for planning, the Israeli government created regional councils in the Galilee to control planning and use as much land as possible where Arab villages exist. Misgav regional council, established in 1982, as part of the Judaisation of the Galilee plan, consolidated its control over Jewish settlements and also incorporated thousands of dunums belonging to Arab villages (Bashir, 2004). Settlements, known as *mitzpim* (lookouts/ watchtowers) were also constructed in the core of the Galilee around al-Battuf and al-Mal areas as spies for the government to report any illegal activities

(Kanaaneh, 2008; Yiftachel and Rumley, 1991). Al-Battuf lands, amounting to more than 40,000 dunums, while still owned by Palestinian families, have become largely controlled by Misgav and Kfar Tavor regional councils – both Jewish settlement regional councils. This has disregarded the Arab local councils power to influence planning there and placed all regulation regarding development of al-Battuf valley under the control of the Ministry of Interior and Misgav and Kfar Tavor. This is relevant for studying agricultural transformations in al-Battuf today, as such transfer of jurisdiction meant the total abandonment of agricultural lands due to the state full control and intent to keep the Palestinian populations off their land, but this time through planning rather than confiscation.

#### 4.2.2 The demise of Arab agriculture

Agriculture in the Arab sector was one of the last remaining economic activities after the 1948 war. Heavily weakened by the aftermath of the Nakba and insurmountable land dispossession, the military government instantly exercised its control on the remainder of this weak, mainly fellah-led sector. The Israeli agricultural policymaking was jointly controlled and managed by the Jewish Agency and the WZO's settlement division, both ideologically driven entities whose sole purpose was the development and consolidation of Jewish-only economies and sectors. Therefore, the state's control of the remaining Arab agriculture was to subjugate it to the decision-making and priorities of the Jewish state, leaving the farmers with no influence and power to affect this process. The Ministry of Agriculture established a "Department of the Arab village".<sup>26</sup> to oversee its policy implementation and survey the existing agricultural activities of the Palestinian Arabs.

The ramification of military rule on farming were unprecedented, accelerating the demise of Palestinian Arab agriculture, by significantly reducing the

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<sup>26</sup> The Department's policy was implemented by the Military Government and by the Prime Minister's Advisor on Arab Affairs (Bäumli, 2009)

average plot size of the Palestinian farmer. While the Palestinian farmer owned on average 8.4 dunum in 1945, this was reduced to 5.3 by 1951 and in 1960 it reached 4.9 (Abu Kishk and Jaraysi, 1976). Only 30% of the Galilee lands remained for the Palestinians living there, reducing the economic dependence on it for livelihood and instigating an exodus from the land towards Jewish economies, where farmers became labourers (Falah, 1993).

The water realities for the Palestinian agricultural sector were also a limiting factor in its development, and a condition for its stagnation in comparison with a land and water rich Jewish sector. After 1948, as stipulated in the Water Law of 1959, all water resources in Israel were put under the control and responsibility of the Israeli state, which defined water as public property. Under a highly centralised authority of the state, water was securitised and framed as necessary to nation-building and the exercise of Jewish sovereignty under conditions of perceived water scarcity (Alatout, 2007). These categories and their articulation with one another made the water law a core instrument in Israeli structures of power, solidifying the Jewish character of state institutions like Mekorot (which became a state company after 1948) and its sister company, Tahal (the water planning company), contributing to the marginalisation of Israel's Palestinian citizens and their water needs, let alone rights. According to a report prepared in 1964 by the Water Commission <sup>27</sup>, the 1959 Water Law "has placed all the Country's water resources under the control of the state to ensure that they may be conserved, protected and exploited for the best interests of the citizenry as a whole. While protecting individual rights to use water, the water law has vested in the government wide-spread powers to control and restrict the activities of individual water users in order to further and protect the public interest" (ISA, 1964a).

The Water Law, as part of an assemblage of regulations, ideas and norms (Meehan, 2014) about water control in a settler colonial state, is significant in its construction of water as an object of state management. In this context, the selection of water projects in the newly established state was not based on economic logic,

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but rather on the desire to create a modern and developed Jewish society, with agricultural production and irrigation of the desert a national priority. The growth of the Israeli water sector facilitated, through infrastructure development, the “emergence of a central structure designed to carry out ideological directives” (Galnoor, 1978, p.349).<sup>28</sup> Also central to the historical development of Israel’s water supply, through land acquisition and control over water sources, has been Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael, the Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF). Indeed, KKL-JNF has increased Israel's water supply to such an extent that it has dubbed itself “Israel's fourth aquifer” (JNF, 2017) exclusively to its Jewish citizens:

*Israel has three water sources: Lake Kinneret, the Mountain Aquifer and the Coastal Aquifer. Israel also has KKL-JNF. KKL-JNF gathers water, drop by drop, from Negev and Galilee flash floods, and from wastewater treatment facilities throughout the country, to enrich Israel’s water economy by a total of 260 million cubic meters.*

Therefore, the government's activity in the Arab sector was focused in its early years on creating a ‘watertight’ process of monitoring and controlling the Arab citizens, and formulating mechanisms to deal with them including citizenship, land regulations, economy and education (Bäumli, 2009). Agriculture, being the “major foothold remaining for the Arab economy in Israel” (Khalidi, 1984, p.70) was framed as a dormant field, a favourable condition by the Israeli state, as any revival of Arab economic activity outside of the control of the Jewish economic activities posed a serious danger (Bäumli, 2009). Therefore, the Israeli government, with heavy involvement from an appointed advisor on Arab Affairs to the Prime Minister, designed policies of containment and integration of the Arabs into the Israeli economy. This was in order to prevent the formation of a separate and independent Arab economy, which was seen as competitive and undermining. It was proposed that the containment should take shape by transforming the Arab sector into labor force within the Jewish economy.

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<sup>28</sup> As Lipchin claims, the Zionist ideologies driving water and agricultural policy in Israel have “left a legacy of mismanagement and environmental degradation” (2007, p.251).

The initial approach of the military government regarding Arab agriculture was to carry out extensive surveys and studies of the existing agricultural activities in more than 50 villages and towns (ISA, 1952a,b) and gauge the potential. These studies admit to a significant drop in cultivated land since 1948, forcing the Arab farmer to change the way [he] carries out agriculture. At that point, the national average of landholding of the Arab farm was 40 dunums, over 60% of which were less than 30 dunums. This created a reality where little change the farmer could do to alter his agricultural practices without extensive intervention from the state. The Ministry identified 22,000 non-Jewish earners, 40% of them working in agriculture, cultivating 550,000 dunums out of 1.24 million dunums which are used for livestock, pasture and forests in the Galilee, Triangle and Naqab (ISA, 1960a). The Ministry showed interest in developing irrigation schemes in the Arab villages, claiming to have worked on expanding irrigated plots and drinking water for the Arab villages by working with Mekorot, with the plan to supply 59 villages with drinking water networks – around 150,000 people. It also claimed that 44 villages were supplied or were in the process of being supplied with water for irrigation. The Ministry was also interested in certain crops and systematically altered traditional crop varieties with the desired crops: cotton, peanuts and tobacco. In 1958 for the first time, 2700 dunums of cotton on ba'li land were planted and 1,500 dunums of peanuts. The tobacco plots have expanded since the establishment of the state from 8,000 dunums in 1948 to 43,000 today.

A more concise report was a 6-page document advising the ministry's approach and course of action towards agriculture in the Arab village (ISA, 1960b). The report detailed the situation in the Arab village, from population to land use, livestock and animal rearing, water and farming techniques. It attempted to provide quantitative measures and predict changes to the Arab economic activities. However, it also attempted to advise the ministry on the best approach to deal with agriculture in the Arab villages. On the issue of water, the report does not elaborate on the sources of water used for irrigation but claims that irrigated plot in the Arab areas increased by from 8000 dunum in 1949 to 28,000 dunums in 1960 and was

anticipated to reach 30,000 dunum with the completion of the water supply plans (ISA 1960a).

The sources of this water, however, were not ones that had been invested by the ministry or by Mekorot, but rather were provided from nearby springs and existing water sources (wells) which the farmers relied on. This is further confirmed in the report's assessment of existing available water sources as "enough to irrigate an additional 5000 dunums", without any commitment to increase water allocations to the Arab farmers through developing infrastructure and increasing provisions from Mekorot. The report highlighted that the use of water in the Arab villages is at 9 MCM per year, 7.7 of which is used in irrigation. While a rapid increase of irrigated land (from 4,000 dunums to 24,000 dunums) in the Arab villages was noted, the main recommendation was to provide minimum quantities of water, based on current demands of 1960.

The conclusions of the 1960 reports stated clearly that there was not a single village without an inclination towards leaving agriculture for the following reasons: the Arab agriculture cannot compete and provide income like other sectors; higher education is increasing and moving people away from agriculture, the household family members are increasing due to better living conditions. Therefore, the report predicted a demise in agriculture in the Arab villages but advised that certain agricultural activities needed to be supported by the ministry. The reasons for that support were justified with three main points: first, that the Arab fellah has skills working rocky and difficult terrain and has high endurance to such conditions that the Jewish farmer doesn't have; second, that the fellah grows many crops that the Jewish farmer is not able to grow because they require a large work force and are more traditional (like tobacco, cotton, olives and sesame); third, that the fellah is abandoning agriculture because of the profitability of other sectors therefore the need to cap prices like that of oil and tobacco and enhance profit for the farmers and help them remain in this sector.

It is therefore evident that while the Israeli policymakers had predicted the demise of the agricultural sector, they had also been complicit in its design, while also persistently re-configuring it during those critical years after the establishment

of the state to cater to Jewish economy's needs. Some of the crops that the ministry of agriculture supported the farmers in growing in al-Battuf were sugar beet (to supply its sugar plants in Afula), sesame, onion and tomatoes (to supply processed food factories).

By 1973, the realities of the Arab agriculture were clear to take a different trajectory than the MoA approach of reviving Arab agriculture promised in the 1960s. In 1973, only 7.6% of agricultural land under Arab control was irrigated, in comparison with 50% of the Jewish lands that year, proving that the ambitious plans set forth by the state were only designed to secure tight involvement in agriculture in the Palestinian sector before it abandons it, leaving farmers without any prospect for agricultural development and inclusion (Abu Kishk and Jarayisi, 1976). Furthermore, by 1979 69,000 dunums were under irrigation in the Arab lands (Khalidi, 1984). While these numbers portray a steady increase in irrigated agriculture, its limitation becomes visible when compared to the Jewish irrigated land, which by the end of the 1970s grew by 1.5 million dunums. Moreover, Mekorot's lack of involvement in enhancing water infrastructure is proof of a farmer-led initiative to draw water from local wells and spring sources. This resulted in a situation where Arabs cultivated 20% of all cultivated land in 1978, while receiving 2.3% of all water used in agriculture (ibid, p.72). Falah (1993) also shows that according to Israeli statistics from 1981 concerning rural areas, the numbers became bleaker, with Arab agriculture dropping to 13.8% of the sector, receiving 0.4% of the water allocated to irrigated crops.

Water, therefore, has become a constraining factor for the Arab farmers, as access to water for agriculture was confined to Jewish settlements and agriculture and deliberately denied for Palestinian farming. Coupled with the lack of land available for profitable farming, sustaining an income-generating livelihood solely on rainfed crops became an impossible task. It is under such conditions that the Palestinian farmers in al-Battuf and the wider Galilee were forced to re-configure their livelihood practices and relations with land and farming. Moreover, those periods were fraught with struggles for citizenship and opposition to misrecognition



inflicted by the Israeli state towards its Palestinian citizens, imbricating water and livelihood struggles with struggles for recognition and belonging.

As al-Battuf case will show, the state and its institutions became present in the lived geographies of farmers every day, dominating the landscapes of their existence and re-configuring their relations with the land, mainly through two significant events: land confiscation for the construction of the NWC, and the introduction of new crops and open market mechanisms for Arab agriculture. That clashing presence of the state, as a hegemonic actor of expropriation but also apparent support (read manipulation) for farming had its implications for how farmers in the valley challenged the state, as shall be seen in Chapter 5. As Sa'di describes this carrot-and-stick approach, it aimed to "introduce structural changes among them: to alter their collective identity, to change their modes of life, and to rearrange their spatial distribution. The end result was to incorporate them as small, marginal, and subordinate collectives devoid of a collective identity, vision, will, or resistance ability; in Foucauldian terms, to render them docile bodies" (Sa'di, 2011, p.92).

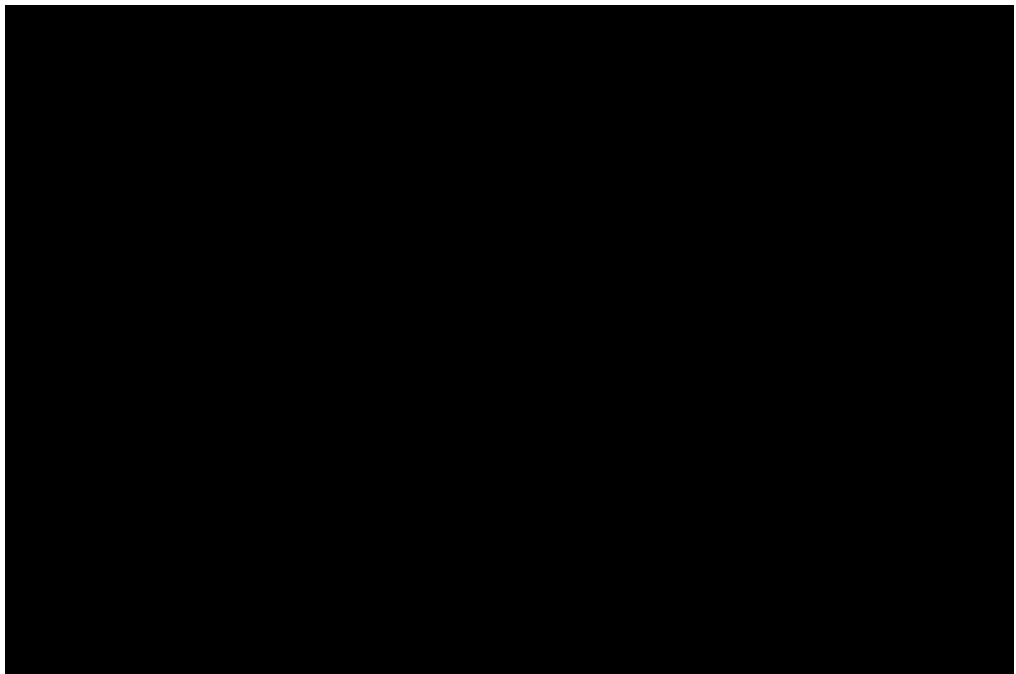
#### 4.3 The lived geographies of farming in al-Battuf (1948-1976)

As mentioned above, al-Battuf, like much of the Galilee, was not a site of extensive Zionist encroachment prior to 1948. After 1949, with the displacement of Saffuriyeh village in the valley, confrontation between Arrabeh and Sakhnin villagers and the Israeli settlers began. Following the *Nakba*, Saffuriyeh village and lands were claimed by the Jewish settlers who began growing it with wheat. This specific land, belonged to Arrabeh and Sakhnin and was the border between the villages. The confiscation of land was opposed by the villagers, who at night snuck into the fields, harvested the wheat and succeeded in redeeming it back to the village (Abu Saleh, 18 July 2016, Arrabeh):

*In 1949, when they displaced Saffuriyeh village, they also confiscated 400 dunum of our land and cultivated it, assuming it's*

*Saffuriyeh's land. The Makhateer [elders] of our village went to demand that this is our land but they refused to give it up. During the harvest time in May-June, youth from the village went and harvested all of the 'new Jewish' settlement wheat. 100 people went for the harvest. This way we got it back.*

The Saffuriyeh village destruction and occupation by settlers, and the struggle which ensued over land can be described as the first incidents of formulating tactics of opposition to Zionist encroachment on land and livelihoods of al-Battuf. While al-Battuf lands remained largely intact (see Figure 4.1), 10,000 dunums of Saffuriyeh's land were confiscated by the state and hundreds of dunums were expropriated under the guise of being left uncultivated. Out of the 51,000 dunums, 40,000 continued to be used by the farmers. One of the abrupt changes to agricultural practices throughout the military period was the confiscation of pasture land, since it was Mashaa' and collectively used by the farmers. Closed military zones and forestation areas extensively limited the livestock herding component of agriculture for al-Battuf farmers and more focus was invested in farming.



*Figure 4.4 Sahl al-Battuf in 1950 (Government Press Office, Brauner Teddy, 1950)*

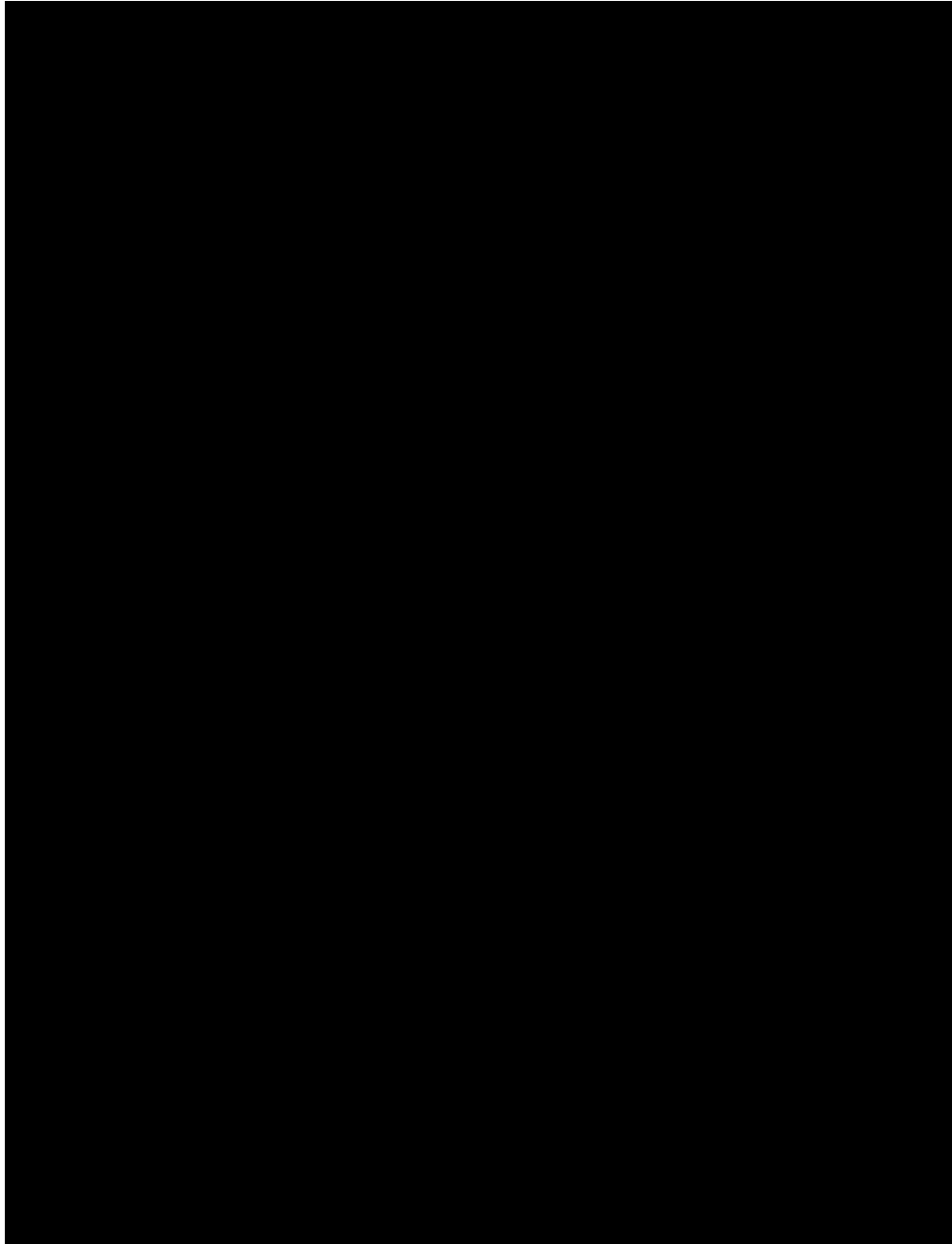
As this section will show, the fellahin became involved in contestation of resource politics and water imaginaries of the state, putting them at the forefront of the conflict with an enterprise carrying out its uprooting (Ayyash, 2018). The NWC, as an artefact of state policy and imaginary, came to al-Battuf and imposed its presence in their lives, transforming their livelihoods and bringing water to the forefront of their struggle, as chapter 5 will show.

#### 4.3.1 NWC encroachment on al-Battuf land (1954-1964)

The politically charged decade of the 1950s was instrumental in setting out national water strategies for the riparian countries of the JRB. The United States diplomat Eric Johnston was sent out to negotiate an agreement in 1953 for unified development of the Jordan Valley. Concurrently, Israel was moving forward with its 1953 seven-year plan, developed from the Lowdermilk-Hays plans of a 'truly regional' project. Its work commenced with construction of an intake to the NWC in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in 1951 to commence the drainage of the Huleh Lake (see Figure 4.5), which was met by Syrian military and political opposition (Neff, 1994; Schmida, 1984).<sup>29</sup> Under such conditions, Israel was keen to commence the construction of its water infrastructure to establish facts on the ground and deter any Arab attempt to divert the waters of the upper Jordan.

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<sup>29</sup> The DMZ, delineated between Israel and Syria following the Armistice Agreement signed in 1949, was an area of 100 m<sup>2</sup> from top of Lake Huleh to southern banks of Lake Tiberias. Israel was taking control of the area and carrying out prohibited acts like taking control of the waters of Lake Tiberias, drainage of Lake Huleh, expulsion of Arab residents there and creating settlement, which led to clashes with the Syrian army throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Molony and Hamill, 2009; Muslih 1993; Neff, 1994).



*Figure 4.5 Israel's original seven-year plan, showing the Beit Netofa reservoir (from Schmida, 1984)*

As alluded to in the introduction to this thesis, the urgency with which the NWC assemblage and specifically the 'Beit Netofa' reservoir was planned, designed and carried out was driving intensive efforts to realise a technically challenging and politically explosive project. According to Tahal company meeting minutes (ISA, 1954a), al-Battuf was framed as a site of construction of the Beit Netofa reservoir, never examining the effect of the plans on its inhabitants and their livelihoods. All the attention of Israeli policymakers was on realising the NWC and transferring water

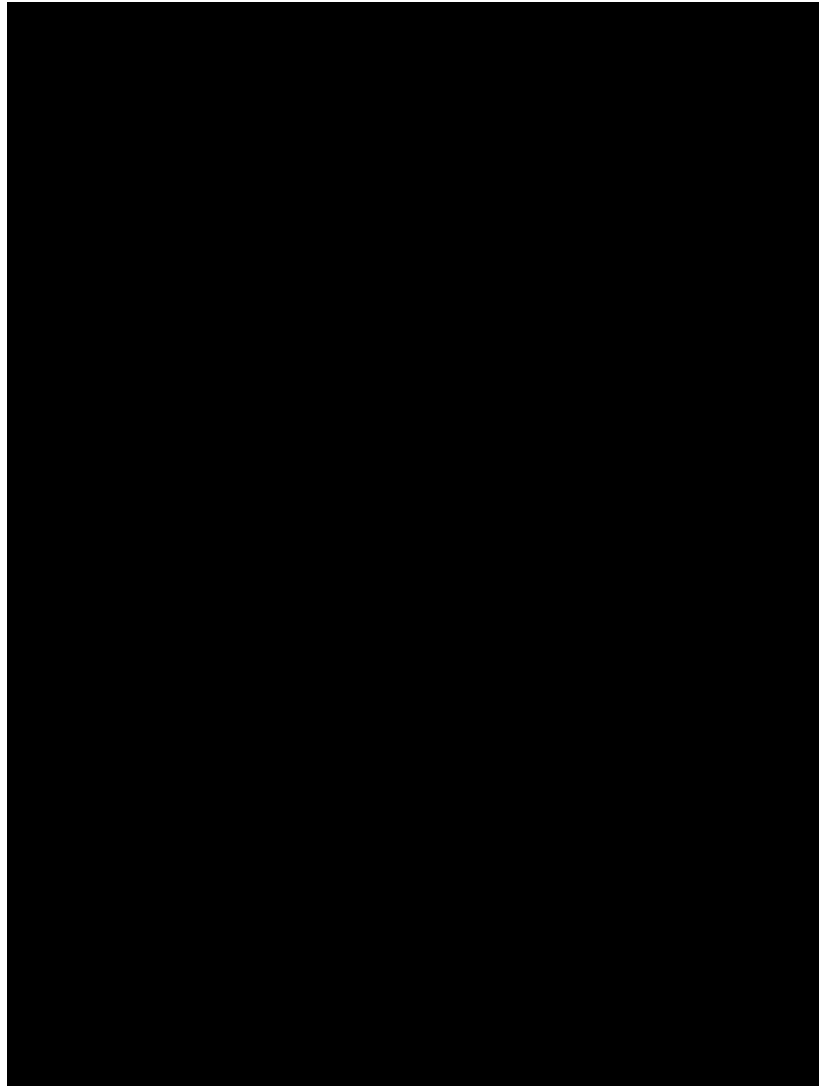
to the Negev. However, the material realisation of these large-scale plans was far from straightforward. The terrain was exceptionally challenging to excavate and ensure watertight canals and reservoirs. In addition to that, heightened security concerns were expressed by the planners, because of the nature of the works. The engineers of Tahal were concerned over the Jordan-Beit Netofa section of the NWC, which required an open canal from the northeast point in Lake Tiberias, making it vulnerable to Arab countries' threats and vandalism. As Simcha Blass<sup>30</sup> explains in the meeting minutes of 27<sup>th</sup> of December 1954 (ISA, 1954b):

*Planning the Jordan River-Beit Netofa section is very difficult. I've looked at planning literature and I haven't found conditions as harsh and most of the work will take place in front of the eyes of the enemy. And we should construct accordingly so that it will not be easily targeted/damaged. This is a difficult topic and we need to start planning retroactively even though no work will be begun this year.*

The Beit Netofa reservoir had a very significant symbolism to the hydraulic mission of the state. In defiance of nature and the continuous attempt to tame it, the reservoir embodied the triumph of the technologically advanced Jewish state against nature and with that against its 'desolate' conditions and inhabitants (see Figure 4.2). The Israeli press highlighted this symbolism by characterising the project as 'a second Sea of Galilee' (The biblical and Hebrew name of Lake Tiberias) (Maariv, 1952), emphasising how the Galilee will be transformed to become unrecognisable (Maariv, 1950). The National Carrier, in its river-like bends and channels is was further described as an 'artificial Jordan River' (Davar, 1964): a concrete waterway which defies gravity and channels much more than water: Zionist ideology and national identity. Evidently, the Zionist pre-state and Israeli state obsession with water – how to increase its availability, how to transport it outside of its basin, how to manage it and use it efficiently – has been and remains until today a defining aspect of national water policy.

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<sup>30</sup> Director of Tahal and a proponent of the abundance discourse as mentioned in earlier chapter.



*Figure 4.6 Title reads: 'the water will rise and the desert will bloom' with a sign of Tahal company stating that Al-Battuf is the site of Beit Netofa project (Davar, 1952)*

The realisation of the NWC as a political, ideological and technical project was also a driver of state decrees and orders to begin work on the ground, even before the confirmation of the suitability of al-Battuf as a reservoir site. As al-Battuf was considered the ideal political realisation of water control, the NWC and Beit Netofa reservoir became a reality imposed on the Palestinian villages there, re-configuring their lived geographies for decades to come. From the villages of Eilaboun to Kufr Manda, Arrabeh and Sakhnin, the Palestinians began protesting the planned works by Tahal, the Israeli water planning company, which began setting up offices in Eilaboun. Tahal, supported by orders from the Minister of Finance to confiscate land,

demolish houses and move forward with the works for the planned reservoir 'at any cost', employed all tactics to ensure its control: disrupt social cohesion by employing residents who are close to the state as contractors, Druze soldiers<sup>31</sup> as security personnel or Makhateer and notables of the villages who were Mapai members (the ruling party led by Ben Gurion) to influence the public to sell their lands and support the NWC works (Al-Ittihad, 1954; Cohen, 2010).

The NWC project first encroached on Eilabon's land with the first tunnel construction along its route in 1953.<sup>32</sup> In November 1954, the military Governor's representative notified Kufr Manda residents that their village will be the site of a reservoir for the NWC, and hence they needed to look elsewhere for a place to live. The reservoir, upon its completion would hold 1 billion cubic meters and cover 20,000 dunums of Kufr Manda and nearby villages of Rummaneh, Eli'zeir and the agricultural lands of Sakhnin and Arrabeh. Delegates from Tahal, headed by Uri Tahon who oversaw land settlements for the company and later became a consultant on Arab Affairs to the Deputy Prime Minister, visited the village in attempts to reach an agreement regarding land compensation and transfer of the village. Kufr Manda villagers vehemently refused to receive these notices and began mobilising against land theft 'in the name of development' that only aimed to dispossess them of their land and livelihood, as will be discussed in section 5.1.1.

According to the original plans, Beit Netofa was considered the main reservoir to store and regulate the water transfer to the Naqab. However, as a 1955 accounting report of the planning committee of the NWC reveals, technical issues were continuing to arise and highlight the unsuitability of the valley for a 'watertight' reservoir. Drilling and seepage tests carried out at different locations in the valley showed the critical technical difficulties of constructing a canal on clay soil (ISA, 1955). Concerns over leakage, sloughing and leaching of the clay subgrade into the canal were many and it was predicted that those would cause problems and failure

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<sup>31</sup> The Druze communities inside Israel are distinct as they have a history of cooperating with the state of Israel after its creation, including an imposed military conscription in the Israeli army. Collaborating allowed them to get permits and make a living, therefore creating a split between them and their Palestinian counterparts (Shihade 2012). See also (Kaufman 2016) for details about Druze inside Israel, in Lebanon and oGH

<sup>32</sup> Shmuel Kantor, The National Water Carrier, <http://research.haifa.ac.il/~eshkol/kantorb.html>

of the infrastructure (ISA, 1962a). Extensive research was undertaken to find a way to overcome this. A model of the canal was constructed by the Technion university in Haifa out of natural clay and tested under different conditions and designs in December 1960, in addition to seeking foreign expertise to deal with such conditions, relying on similar issues arising in California within the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), and France (ibid). Regional politics also influenced the final decision to abandon the Beit Netofa reservoir. As Israel was carrying out the excavation work in the DMZ, Syria opposed it and filed complaints against Israel at the United Nations. Eventually, Israel was prohibited from continuing the work and diverting the Jordan River from the DMZ. Coupled with the technical difficulties explained above regarding the topography and soil conditions of al-Battuf, the NWC plan of the reservoir was amended and Lake Tiberias became the site of water regulation (Davis et al., 1980; Schmida, 1984).

While the Jordan River Basin's scholarly historical accounts mention the Beit Netofa reservoir as a site of unrealised Israeli plans for water storage and regulation, it fails to consider it a site of contestation, protest and struggle of Palestinian communities inside Israel. While the project was not realised, the lived experience of the Kufr Manda population during that period has constructed the NWC, its planned reservoir and Tahal staff as instigators of dispossession and uprooting, which they have opposed and consider an important experience in their sumud and persistence on the land, as shall be seen in section 5.1.1.

The state's abandonment of the idea of turning al-Battuf into a reservoir, for the reasons highlighted above, did not end the re-configurations of al-Battuf nor the NWC project. While Lake Tiberias became the site of storage of the UJR diversions, the pipelines transporting water to the Naqab were still planned to pass through al-Battuf. In 1961, the Ministry of Finance announced the confiscation of lands from al-Battuf, mainly the lands of Sakhnin and Arrabeh villages. With the land under confiscation having a width of 93m and a length of 17 km, the announcement meant the confiscation of an estimated 1,500 dunums of fertile land which had private owners. On the ground, al-Battuf became a central site of the NWC assemblage. The 17km canal was constructed by 1964, Eshkol reservoir in the western part of the



valley was built in 1965 and Tzalmon reservoir and pumping station<sup>33</sup> was also constructed to pump water into the NWC canal in al-Battuf (see Figure 4.7).

This spurred the second round of protests, as shall be discussed in section 5.1.2. The hydro-imaginary of the project was eventually realised with the construction of the 17 km canal, confiscating the land of the farmers of Arrabeh and Sakhnin. As this thesis argues, settler colonial geographies of water and land control were juxtaposed with indigenous lived geographies to produce overt uneven waterscapes of dispossession and exclusion, made visible through the imposition of state infrastructure. The NWC realisation altered the farmers modes of livelihood, and their tactics of staying on the land and claiming rights to water and infrastructure.

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<sup>33</sup> Three pumps at Tzalmon raise Lake Tiberias water, along with three other pumps at the shores of the lake, which pump water from 209 meters below sea level to 154meters above sea level.

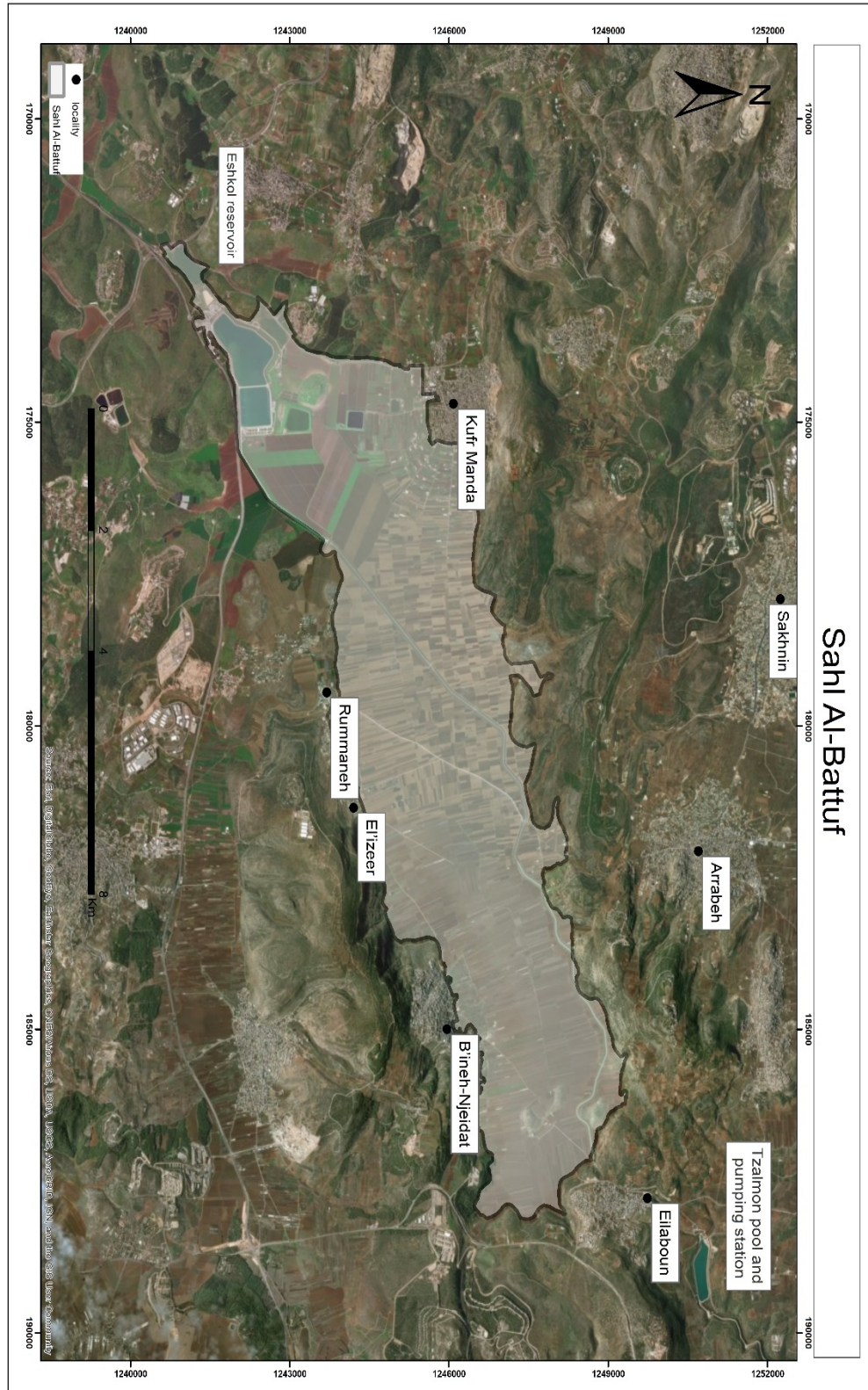


Figure 4.7 The location of Tzalmoum pool and Eshkol plant (developed for this thesis by Yusra Othman for this thesis, 2018)

#### 4.3.2 Farming re-configurations – the subordination of farming under Israeli rule and the abandonment of the land

The fellahin of al-Battuf have depended solely on rain-fed agricultural crops like the famous watermelon, onion, sesame and okra which they cultivated in small landholding parcels. Even under these conditions, the Israeli state utilized the fertile soils of al-Battuf, creating a market for sugar beet, onion and tomatoes for production, even cotton. However, that interest in reviving and supporting Arab agriculture was short-lived and only served the interest of the state in a time where Jewish settlements were just starting. However, the inclusion in extensive irrigated agriculture was heavily restricted to Jewish Kibbutzim and Moshavim. In 1962, the Arab agriculture received only 1% of the total budget (Al-Ittihad, 1962a).

Testimonies from interlocutors in Arrabeh tell of a time, after 1965, when farmers experienced *golden years* in their farming. Tnuva<sup>34</sup>, a Jewish food processing cooperative was the monopoly cooperative specialising in milk, dairy and food products. The interlocutors described how Tnuva trucks would come to al-Battuf, and the whole family young and old will pick sugar beets and fill out those trucks to be sent directly to the Afuleh sugar factory<sup>35</sup>. Such a rapid marketing of their products pleased the fellahin, who had never had an organised agricultural production line. Seeing how the government's reliance on their produce enhanced their economic situation instantly, they were willing to develop and change their agricultural practices and crops provided that the Ministry and agricultural companies assisted them. Multiple crops, like cotton, tomatoes, onion and almonds were largely

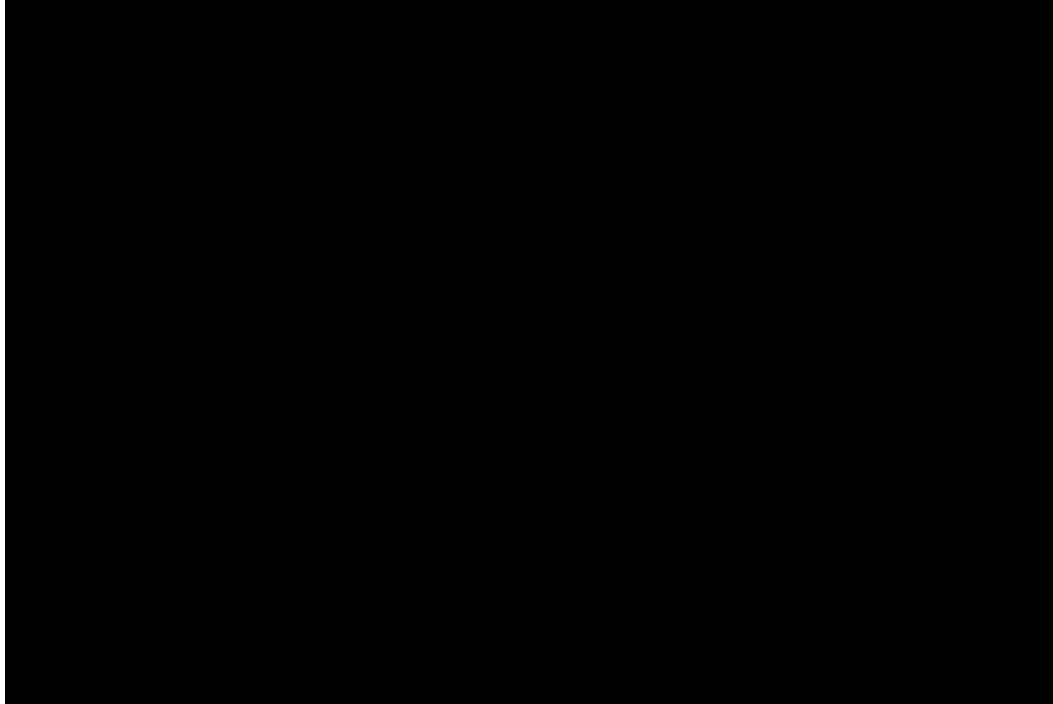
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<sup>34</sup> Tnuva was established in 1926, when the moshavim and kibbutzim decided to coordinate and unify all stages of processing, producing and distributing fresh agricultural produce. At first, Tnuva distributed only fresh milk for drinking and later on also dairy products. In the early 1930s, as it became more established, Tnuva began marketing additional fresh farm produce: eggs, poultry, vegetables and fruits.

<sup>35</sup> During the 1970s, Israel invested in the production of sugar beet to compensate import embargos and secure self-sufficiency in sugar production. A sugar factory operated in the city of Afuleh, which reached its peak production in 1978 and was stopped in 1980 when imports were relaxed and became much cheaper (U.S. Department of Agriculture, retrieved from:

<http://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=il&commodity=centrifugal-sugar&graph=beet-sugar-production>

produced by the Arab farmers for Israeli plants and factories, replacing the traditional subsistence crops of cereals and pluses (see Figure 4.3). The government was keen on taking advantage of cheap Palestinian labour, while providing the minimum support in infrastructure and technological development, as al-Battuf's new crops remained mostly rainfed.



*Figure 4.8 Palestinian Arab farmers (men and women) carrying out cotton production and weighing in Sahl al-Battuf, for a joint Jewish-Arab cooperative named El-Cotton (Government Press Office, Cohen Fritz, 1959)*

However, the golden years were short lived. Soon after cheaper alternatives were available for the government (export channels, the strengthening of the Jewish agriculture, mechanisation), there was an abrupt abandonment of interest in Arab agricultural activities. The sugar beet factory closed, and this negatively affected the farmers. Onions as well began being produced by Jewish farmers and became a competitive crop and later abandoned. Being rain-fed, the Palestinian produce was making around 2 tons/dunum while the Jewish produce was making 12. Eventually, the government's abandonment was experienced by the farmers of al-Battuf as a return to the Ottoman times and to a situation of despair, with the diminishing value of their crops accelerating their abandonment of land to look for more reliable

income generating activities. Ali Antar, a veteran farmer and a strong local voice of the remaining farmers working in al-Battuf explains (Ali Antar, farmer, Arrabeh, 26 August 2017):

*Most Arrabeh-Sakhnin from the 1950 until the 1970s, around 25 years, remained dependent on agriculture as their primary source of income. In that time, the land used to produce, and the farmer used to benefit [financially] from the crops they harvested, and the reason was very clear to us: at that time, there was no competitor in the Jewish sector. The Jews were just beginning agriculture and are developing the kibbutzim and focusing on wheat and cotton. In that period, they also respected the Arab farmer because they needed him and his crops...there was also coordination between the fellahin and the ministry of agriculture - this we have witnessed slightly especially in the 1970s. I remember that the agricultural production was coordinated with the fellahin somehow, and they were interested in the agricultural produce and not necessarily with the fellah himself and his wellbeing.*

This early interaction with the Ministry was further consolidated through its extension service staff who were Palestinian Arab and highlighted the beginning of the ordering of the agricultural practices and realities of the fellahin and their incorporation into the official governmental agricultural policy. The short-lived golden years of agriculture simply faded away once the Jewish sector developed and matured, leaving the farmers in dire need for support and formulating tactics to enhance agricultural production, which shall be discussed more thoroughly in section 5.2. Coupled with contestation over land expropriation in al-Battuf for the benefit of the NWC project, the lived geographies of farmers in the valley became fraught with conditions of abandonment and imposition of harm as the NWC took their land, deprived them of water, in addition to making visible their detachment and exclusion from state planning and policymaking. The overt visibility of the NWC canal cutting across their thirsty lands asserted that the geographies of the settler colonial state and those of the fellahin are always uneven and separate. Nevertheless, the fellahin began mobilising and unifying to demand access to water and marketing mechanisms to enhance their position as producers. The struggle for water was multi-faceted, as villages in the late 1950s and 1960s were still not connected to a water network, so

demands for water oscillated between demands for potable water networks for the villages and for access to irrigation for their lands.

This chapter has provided an extensive overview of the re-configuration of the lived geographies of al-Battuf and the Galilee under decades of systematic dispossession, the uprooting of land and livelihoods under Israeli military rule, as well as the subsequent decades of land expropriation. The core conclusion to draw is that the Israeli settler colonial presence has effectively altered and maimed the relationship between the remaining inhabitants of the Galilee and their land through a process of uprooting and re-configurations. Therefore, the struggle of the Palestinians in the Galilee was and remains a struggle over land but also a struggle over the relationship with the land. To root themselves back to the land which remained, al-Battuf inhabitants, the fellahin, enacted continuous re-configurations of land not only as a means of production but also as a source of belonging to a homeland (JPS, 1976). The next chapter will provide an extensive overview of how resistance to uprooting took shape and the re-configurations of land were utilised to restore and reclaim rootedness to the lands of al-Battuf.

## Chapter 5: Acts of protest and resistance in Sahl al-Battuf

This chapter focuses on the ramifications of settler colonial policies of land and water expropriation, which were discussed in Chapter 4. The re-configurations of the lived geography of the farmers of al-Battuf were met with oppositional acts and resistance intrinsically linked with livelihood practices. Attending to the second research question of this thesis, this chapter examines those acts and their political effect on the livelihood strategies adopted, most notably water and infrastructural demands. Section 5.1 focuses on the oppositional acts against the land expropriation for the construction of the NWC in Kufr Manda (1954) and Arrabeh and Sakhnin lands (1961-1964). Section 5.2 examines how water became a political object of struggle and a tool for claiming rights to recognition from the state through the demand of a drainage project. Section 5.3 reflects on the struggle which characterises al-Battuf: a struggle with and without water, infrastructure and state support and how such struggles shaped and were shaped by relationships with water and land.

### 5.1 The NWC struggle (1954-1976)

*The water is running through our land and we are deprived from using it. We tried to protest this through different means: going to the court, demonstrations and protests. We were imprisoned and prosecuted. They had no intention of providing any water to the people, although they promised many times. They wanted to take the land only. (Abu Saleh Interview, 18 July 2016, Arrabeh)*

Going beyond the state and inter-state hydro and environmental imaginaries that have dominated the writing and scholarly work on the Jordan River Basin, sahl al-Battuf sheds a light on a regional and localised environmental imaginary that opposed and contested these state-level impositions. While confrontations around water in the TWM literature have focused on Israel vis-à-vis Arab countries, this chapter will tell of more localised but equally essential confrontations taking place on a 'sub-national' scale. The events at Kufr Manda and following that in Sakhnin and

Arrabeh, were constructed in the Zionist-Israeli imaginary as an inherent opposition of the fellahin to state progress and development, and framed as a persistent resistance to attempts to transform and redeem the land. This was consolidated with framing Arab protest as driven by political and ideological reasons of enmity to the state, seeing the Arabs as working to obstruct a highly nationalistic and ideological project.

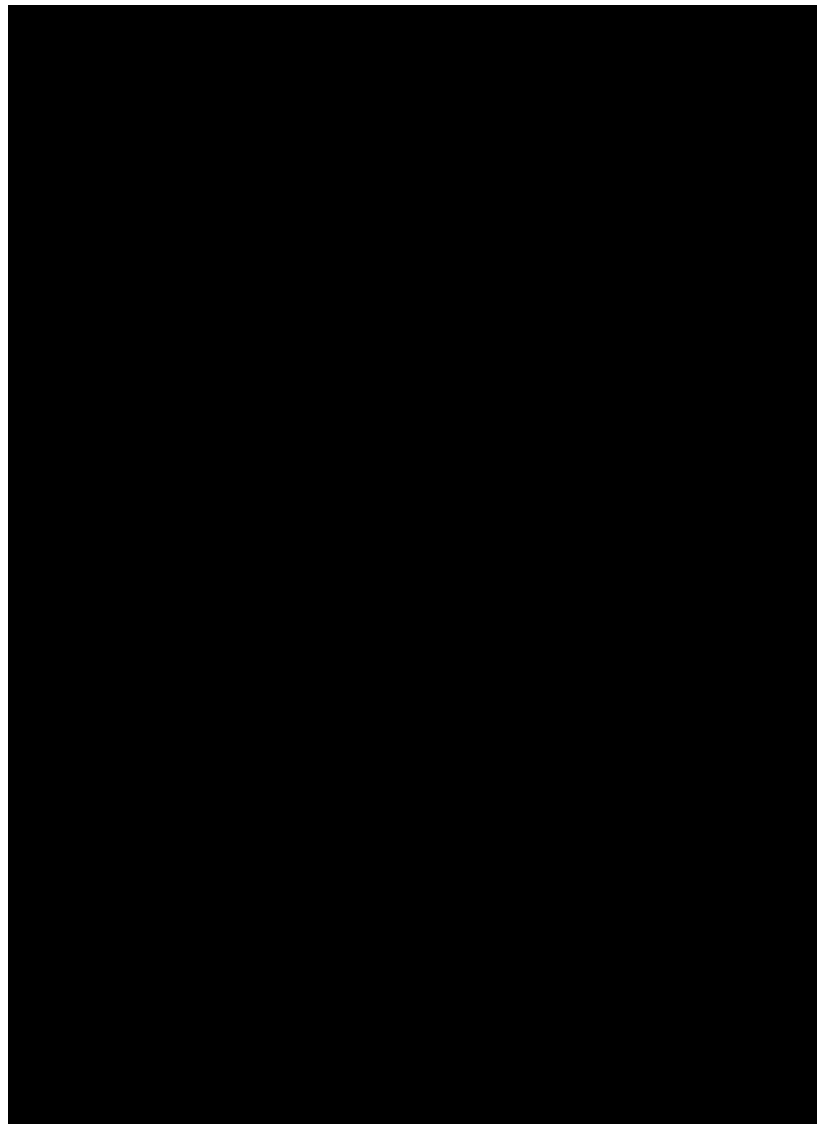
The resistance of the villages of Al Battuf occurred when the NWC encroached on their land, clearly taking shape on a localised scale, detached from larger scales and implications of the project on the waters of the JRB but simultaneously influenced by an Israeli drive for control of the tributaries of the Jordan. The NWC and the protest decade (1954-1964) it ignited therefore serves as an entry point to examine and analyse the changes and reconfiguration of space, identity and belonging of Palestinian communities inside Israel today.

#### 5.1.1 Kufr Manda and Uri Day (1954)

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1954, Tahal staff, protected by police forces, began surveying the spring area around the Mukhtar's house in the village of Kufr Manda. All the men went to the hills to avoid being forced to receive demolition notices, and the women and children were the ones left in the village. However, Tahal staff and the police were persistent in forcing the villagers to accept the reality of their displacement and began confronting the women and children. As the men of the village descended from the hills, the confrontation was heightened (Davar, 1954; Al-Ittihad, 1954), including violent confrontation and clashes with the police force. This was claimed to be the first confrontation between the police under military rule and the Arab population after the Nakba (Zoubi, 2015). Eventually, 120 men from the village were arrested and forced to walk 12 km to Shafa'mr police station. They all were put overnight in a horse stable and badly treated. Some were imprisoned for 6 months, like the Mukhtar of the village, Mahmoud Abdel Wahab, who was known for his patriotism. According to the Zionist imaginary, the Beit Netofa reservoir was a



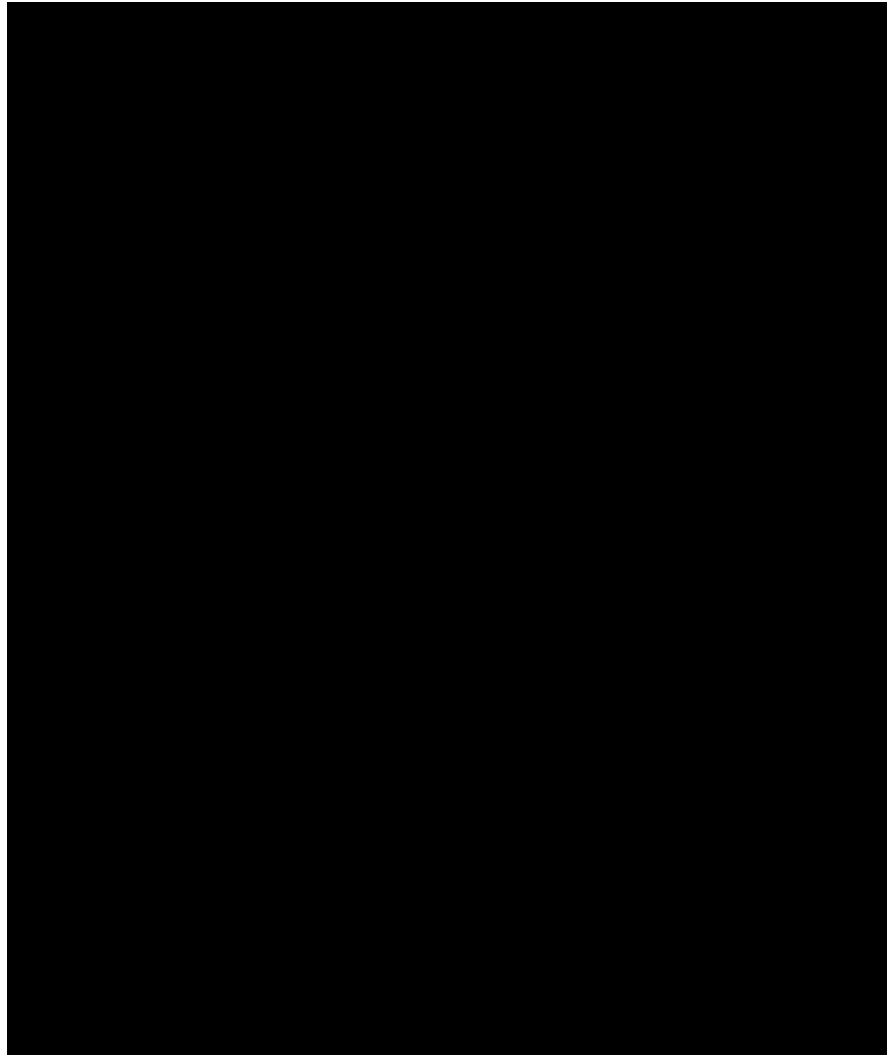
'natural' waterbody that was facing 'a storm at its banks' as the below newspaper article shows (Figure 5.1). While the reservoir had been planned to submerge the village and its residents (some of whom were displaced from the destroyed village of Saffuriyeh in 1948, themselves internal refugees), the opposition against the project was labelled as 'anti-development' or 'enemies of the state', as their protest was seen to obstruct the NWC project as an ideological and national necessity of the state.



*Figure 5.1 'Storm on the banks of Beit Netofa' during the protests and violent confrontation with the police in Kufur Manda village (Davar, 24 December 1954:19)*

Delegates from Tahal were headed by Uri Tahon, an instrumental figure associated with the villagers' struggle against the NWC in al-Battuf. Tahon oversaw land settlements for the company, negotiated land compensation deals and later became a consultant on Arab Affairs to the Deputy Prime Minister. He visited the village in an attempt to reach agreement regarding land compensation and transfer, presenting the villagers with Tahal plans and explaining how their whole village will be flooded, and that accepting compensation is their wise choice. Kufr Manda villagers vehemently refused to receive these notices, and began mobilising against "land theft in the name of development" that only aimed to dispossess them of their land and livelihood (Al-Ittihad, 1954), only six years after the catastrophe of the Nakba.

In Nader Zoubi's book (2015), the Arabs' multiple acts of protest carried out during the military rule were characterised by a collective concern over land dispossession and a collective threat to their existence. In the case of the Kufr Manda clash, representatives of the nearby villages of Eilaboun, Arrabeh, Mughar, and Kufr Kanna released condemnation letters and statements (see example of one in Figure 5.2), citing the violence used against Kufr Mnada as an act of terror and emphasising their position against the looting of al-Battuf lands. Even under the military rule, village representatives were communicating with the state, and exercising their rights to protest and condemn what they perceived as illegal and unjust actions. One of those protest actions were condemnation letters, which were sent to the Prime Minister's office, Ministry of Agriculture and Knesset members. Delegations of villagers also organised meetings with Knesset members and mobilised, mainly through the Communist Party, demonstrations and protests in Nazareth and Acre to raise the issues facing the fellahin.



*Figure 5.2 A letter signed and sent on 28 December 1954 from Arrabeh village to the Israeli Prime Minister condemning the attacks on Kufr Manda and al-Battuf lands as an attack on all of Palestinians inside Israel (stated in the letter as the Arab minority in the country (Bldna website, 2017)*

As discussed in section 4.3, the realisation of al-Battuf as a reservoir slowly began to dissipate. Politically, a diversion of the Upper Jordan tributaries to this reservoir became heavily attacked, as Syria appealed to the UN Security Council to freeze all work. An American threat of cutting aid to Israel if she didn't comply also pressured Israel to concede to an alternative vision (Lowi, 1993; Schmida, 1984; Sosland, 2007). Geologically, multiple studies also showed that al-Battuf was not an optimal site for water storage, due to a large fault in its tectonic plates that would result in high loss of water.

Under political and geological forces, coupled with the unleashing of an Arab wave of protest and contestation of the project, Israeli water experts dropped the idea of the reservoir and Lake Tiberias became the new site of water storage and regulation. For Kufr Manda village, the day of their confrontation with Uri Tahon, Tahal's staff and the police, and their success in stopping the work was seen as a day of triumph. *Yawm Uri* or Uri's day is still commemorated today in December of each year by the village of Kufr Manda. It is celebrated as a day of triumph against Uri Tahon and Tahal's personnel, marking the villagers' success against the state's encroachment and threat of dispossessing them of their lands, village and the transformation of their lived geography. As Figure 5.3 shows, Kufr Manda village stands today with the imposition of the NWC infrastructures in its geography, namely the Eshkol Reservoir, built in 1964 and its adjoining filtration pools while its agricultural lands remain cultivated despite the state infrastructure's imposition.



*Figure 5.3 A recent picture of the Eshkol reservoir plant, facing Kufr Manda village (below) (Author's pictures, September 2017)*

The NWC project, therefore, still required the transport of large quantities of water to the Naqab and al-Battuf was still the site of the realisation of that canal which will realise this transfer. This resumed the

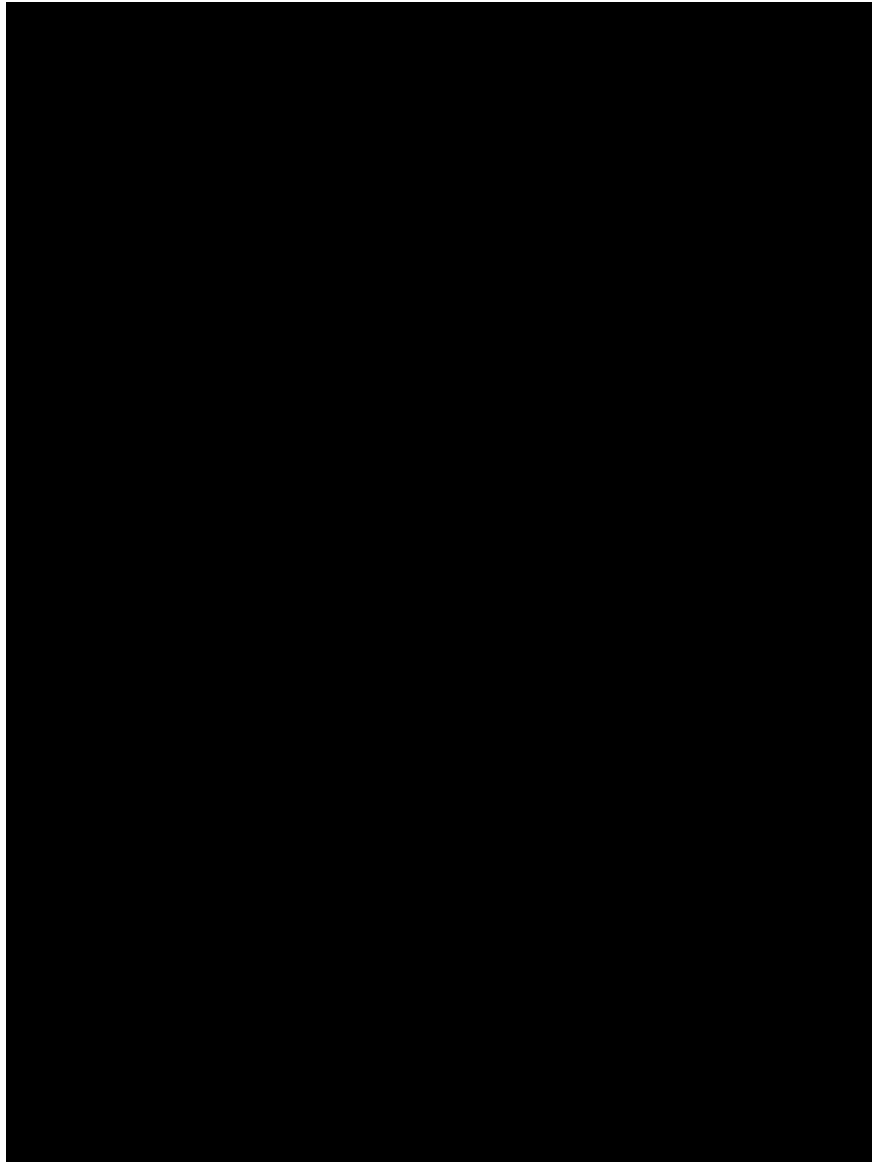
Israeli state encroachment on al-Battuf land; this time in land belonging to Arrabeh and Sakhnin.

#### 5.1.2 Arrabeh and Sakhnin: the struggle against the canal (1961-1964)

A few years after the confrontation mobilised by Kufr Manda against the imposition of a reservoir on top of their village, the struggle of Arrabeh and Sakhnin against the NWC began in 1961 when the Ministry of Finance announced the confiscation of lands from al-Battuf with a width of 93m and a length of 17 km, 12 km of which belong to Arrabeh and Sakhnin villages. Uri Tahon from Tahal sent a request to the Ministry of Finance to issue an order of confiscation<sup>36</sup> of al-Battuf land for the construction of the NWC. Directly following that, another request was sent by him to increase the width of the canal and the border to 120m, 10 days after the original request (Zoubi, 2015), increasing the land to be expropriated (see Figure 5.4) and causing additional tension and anger from the fellahin.

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<sup>36</sup> The letter cited the 1943 order of land confiscation for public good purposes as a legal justification for land expropriation.



*Figure 5.4 Uri Tahon's letter to the Ministry of Finance requesting an increase in the width of land confiscation from 100 to 120 meters for the NWC canal, dated 11 January 1961 (from Zoubi, 2015, p.60)*

This time, protest acquired a more organised approach: in addition to petitions, letters and delegation visits to the Knesset, the fellahin organised themselves in a joint committee of the affected villages to protest the imminent land expropriation and resorted to the courts to resolve their issues with the state. Moreover, the committee presented alternatives to the state's plan which would reduce land expropriation – that the pipes of the canal be underground in a tunnel, for example. Hanna Naqqara, a political activist and lawyer renowned for being the

'Lawyer of the Land and the People', brought the cases of the fellahin of Sakhnin and Arrabeh against Mekorot to the Central and High Court of Justice, seeking nullification for Tahal and the state's encroachment on fellahin's land. Demonstrations in Sakhnin reaffirmed the position of the fellahin in April 1961, that there will be no compromise on their land (see Figure 5.5). Popular meetings were held in Deir Hanna and Sakhnin, mobilising the farmers to lobby for their rights. Land remained the key element of mobilisation and struggle of the fellahin. Reviewing Al-Ittihad newspaper articles during that period (Al-Ittihad, 1961; 1962a,b,c), the fellahin negotiated their position with the state and the courts. Their demands were focused on:

- a) The pipeline remaining underground so the fellahin can still use their land;
- b) No confiscation but a free agreement and negotiations between the state and the fellahin,
- c) Agreement with the fellahin on the location of the excavations<sup>37</sup>;
- d) Narrowing the width of the land, as the canal width is 4m only but the confiscation is 92m; and
- e) Facilitating the fellahin to benefit from water to irrigate their lands and provide electricity to their villages.

As evident from reviewing newspaper archives during that period, the fellahin's claims were framed as demand for recognition of their rights from the state, and a quest for equality with Jewish farmers, who received abundant support from the state and were able to change the design and layout of the NWC pipes in another valley (Zoubi, 2015). The demands, therefore, were local and reflective of the fellahin's aspirations to develop and were not framed as political or acquiring any larger political significance apart from the necessity to defend land as an intrinsic part of their existence and identity.

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<sup>37</sup> The current location divides up the land and limits their mobility threatening agriculture in the most fertile land.



Figure 5.5 Sakhnin demonstrates against looting al-Battuf: “we cease to exist without land” (Al-Itihad, 1961)

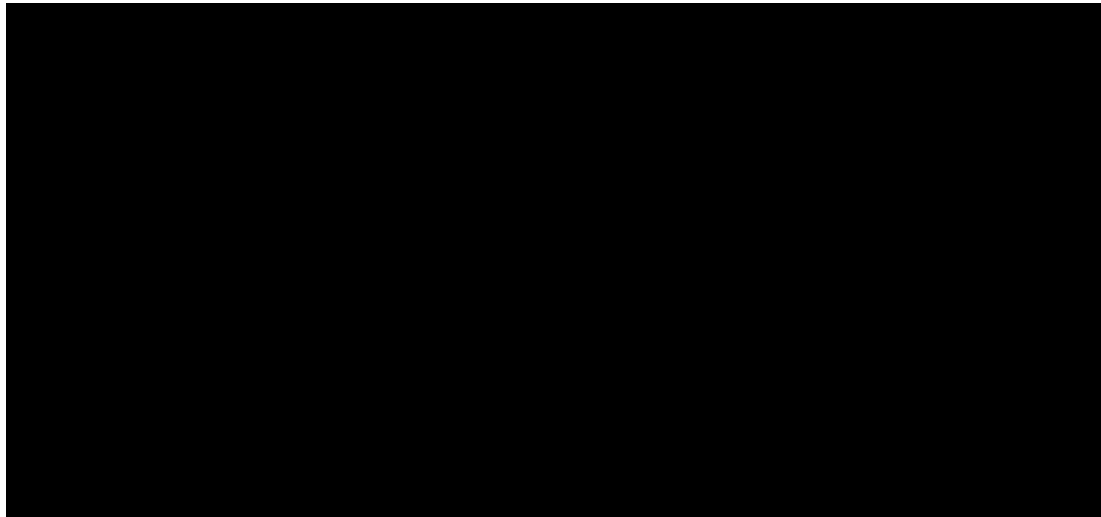
While the fellahin and the political parties backing them attempted to maintain a unified front, allies of the state within those communities played a role in deterring and weakening the position of the protestors. Hillel Cohen examines how such actors were operating to facilitate the selling of land for the construction of the NWC and how they were attacked in multiple ways by communities. In weddings, for example, sentiments against ‘traitors’ were expressed by singing nationalists songs despising them and declaring a unified front against their actions. One such song was sung at a wedding in Deir Al-Assad (another village which lost significant areas of land called ‘Al Shaghur’ to the establishment of the Jewish industrial settlement of Karmiel) (Cohen, 2010, p.119):

*Whatever happens  
 We will not leave our land.  
 Death to traitors to the nation  
 And to the lackeys of the military regime.  
 We will not abandon the Shaghur and the Battuf*



Another more direct confrontation was through sending threatening letters to known collaborators, as in the case of a collaborator from Deir Hanna by the name of Hasan. Hasan was assisting Mekorot in purchasing land in al-Battuf for the NWC canal. Cohen (2010) reveals how Hasan succeeded in convincing two leaders of the protest the NWC to negotiate with the state and therefore weaken the collective refusal to accept land expropriation and claim rights to water and electricity. He justified it by saying that “there is nothing to be gotten out of a lost campaign against the authorities, because the government, which has invested hundreds of million in the plan so far, will not be deterred from carrying it out” (ibid, p.119).

Indeed, on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1962, the fellahin woke up to find the canal excavation beginning on their land by Tahal company, although the Supreme Court case was still ongoing. Marching towards al-Battuf, the fellahin of Sakhnin and Arrabeh laid their bare bodies under Mekorot Bulldozers (see Figure 5.6), refusing to allow the excavation to take place (Al-Ittihad, 1962b). This action forced the workers to freeze the work, until August 1962. While access to water for irrigation was also demanded by the fellahin, the critical epoch of the military rule necessitated the fight to secure and protect land first as it was seen as an eminent threat to their survival as an ethno-geographic community. The fellahin and the Communist Party pushed forward in lobbying for alternatives for al-Battuf in the Knesset and in courts, reasserting their demands of equality and recognition. Since a confiscation order was not sufficient to expropriate the land without its owners’ approval, the government had to resort to the Central Court to issue an order of land possession, which will transfer the possession of these lands to the state with no legal means of reappraisal.



*Figure 5.6 'Sakhnin and Arrabeh's fellahin stand against the bulldozers' (Al-Ittihad, 1962b)*

In their tactic of scaling-up the protest, the fellahin submitted seven claims to the Magistrate Court by 61 Arab citizens from Arrabeh and Sakhnin, asking the court to postpone the decision of land confiscation until a ruling was made by the Supreme Court (Al-Ittihad, 1962c). The testimony of the Mukhtar of Sakhnin, Tawfiq Hanna Shaqour, reiterates the fellahin's position and demands (ibid):

*We don't want to cause harm to anyone and we don't object to a canal that will irrigate millions of dunums. Our request is that we are treated like Jewish citizens are treated. We are demanding that the canal be underground like the other 140 km where the canal runs underground from Saffuriyeh until the Naqab.*

The testimony of Mekorot's chief engineer, on the other hand, focused on the economic urgency of the project and that the state would lose around 10,000 Israeli Liras daily if the project was postponed. Moreover, he stated that if the project did not happen before the winter, it would have to be postponed for a year. While he confessed when questioned by Hanna Naqqara that there was an alternative to dig the canal underground, he stated that that "will require new technical and financial considerations" which Mekorot was avoiding. The testimony could not have been more indicative of a policy being decided at a higher political level. The NWC and its realisation on the ground was a top priority for the Israeli state and its assertion of

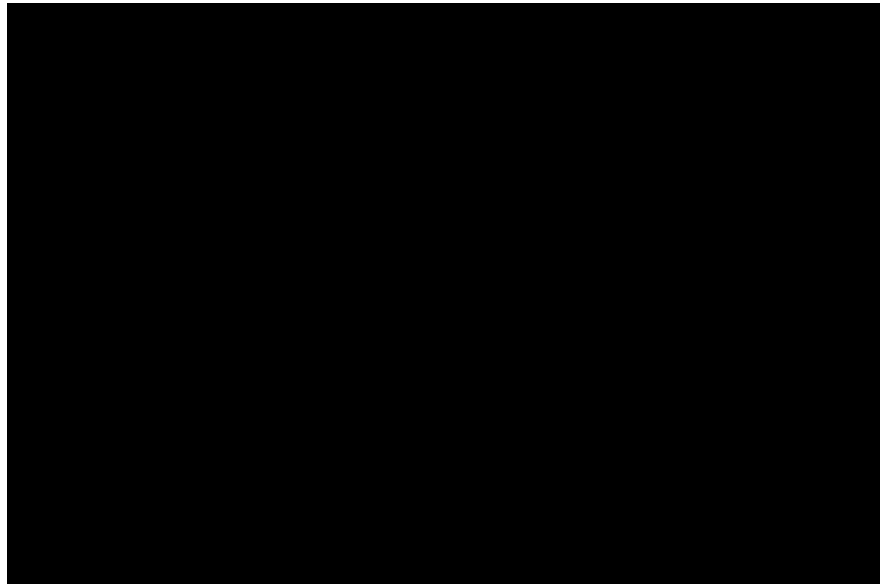
control over the tributaries of the Jordan during a time of heightened tension between Israel and the Arab states, as discussed in section 5.1. Any postponing of the NWC construction was therefore perceived as impossible in light of regional water conflict which was heightened during those years. Ben Gurion's government at the time continued to carry out incitement against the fellahin of Sakhnin and Arrabeh, accusing them of opposing development, inciting racism against Israel and being mobilised under influence and lobbying of the Communist Party. It was evident that for the Israeli state, any postponing of the NWC canal inauguration would result in a catastrophic situation and affect the state budget, making the digging of the canal in al-Battuf a priority for the state (Al-Ittihad, 1962d). On that day at 3pm, Bar Ze'ev, the head Judge of the Magistrate Court decided to revoke the requests of the fellahin and issue the order of land possession so that Mekorot could commence the work in al-Battuf. On the ground, the protests and meetings of the fellahin continued to protect their land, through signing of petitions and letters of protest to the Knesset, Ministry of Justice, Head of State, Head of government and Ministry of Agriculture, but to no avail. The fellahin continued resorting to these measures until the Magistrate Court in Acre ruled against the fellahin, ordering them to hand their lands over within seven days for Mekorot to continue the excavation.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1962, Mekorot bulldozers resumed their excavations in al-Battuf, accompanied by 500 policemen and women. They began destroying the crops of sesame and watermelon harvested by the fellahin, eventually confiscating 1,500 dunums of their land for the NWC works. The day of confiscation is referred to as the 'day of looting' يوم النهب. The site was a crowd of police vehicles, described by the newspaper as being like 'the old times', referring to kufr Manda's clash with the police regarding the plans by the state to turn the village into a reservoir for the diversion of the Jordan river (Al-Ittihad, 1962d).

With this confiscation, the NWC became a reality on the ground in al-Battuf, and by 1964 it began its operation of diverting water from the Northwest of Lake Tiberias to the Naqab. The sentiment against the NWC remained amongst the Palestinians as a project which aimed to disposes them from their land and inflict

harm on their precarious existence (see Figure 5.7). The struggle has never been only about the 1,500 dunums that were looted but the general looting of Arab fellahin lands as state policy. Mahmoud Darwish, a renowned Palestinian Poet, wrote about the canal to depict its violence against the land and people as a poisonous snake on the land (Al-Ittihad, 1962e):

*The canal cuts through 150km in a pipe underground until it reaches the Arab villages...there it refuses to continue on its path underground but rather comes over ground – it wants to expand on the surface and float and relax – cutting the fertile land in the shape of a 93m coffin...over the ancestors' bones, over the youth's blood and the death of their children's future.*



*Figure 5.7 Palestinian fellahin stand by as Mekorot's staff construct the Jordan-Negev canal (Government Press Office, Cohen Fritz, 1959)*

### 5.1.3 The first Attack on the NWC – Eilaboun Tunnel (1965)

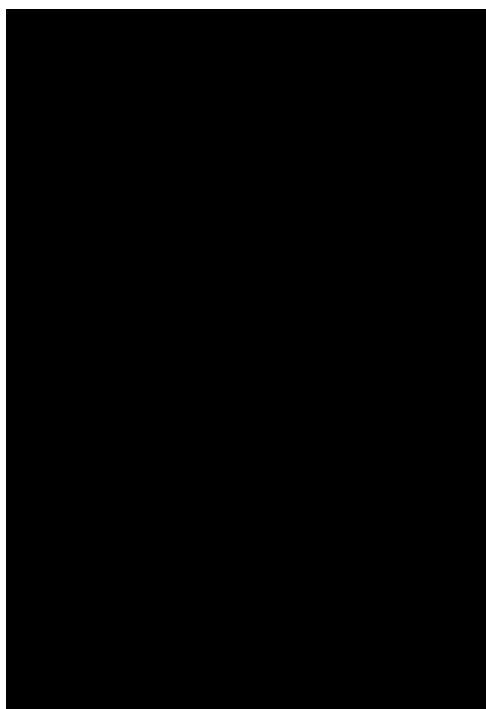
While most of the tactics described above to protest and mobilise against the NWC took place on a regional level and involved the villages inflicted by it, the project remained very controversial to the Arab states, jeopardising their position and control over a scarce and highly securitised resource. While Israel was inaugurating the NWC, which changed and re-configured the water management unilaterally, Arab riparian states' claims to the shared water were significantly weakened. The

NWC also constituted the first and only out-of-basin transfer, and any retaliating action by the Arab states would have been a resounding impact and instigated conflict and confrontation over water. The Mukheibeh dam, a dam on the Yarmouk river and tributaries, was announced in 1964 as part of an Arab plan to divert the headwaters of the upper Jordan to secure water away from the Israeli state and its newly built infrastructure. Israel carried out successive attacks on the dam works in 1966 and 1967. The targeting of water infrastructure was therefore a tool used to deter attempts to divert water from the basin.

Moreover, and because of its discursive and material significance, the NWC was also a site of attack by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Arab countries. Elhance (1999, p.102) alludes to this in his book *Hydropolitics in the Third World*, where he refers to it as the first (albeit unsuccessful) sabotage by the PLO.<sup>38</sup> The Eilaboun tunnel attack was the first action to be carried out by the military arm of Fatah on Palestinian soil on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1965 (see figure 5.8 below). This attack was carried out by Ahmad Mousa from the destroyed village of Naseraddin (Tiberias district), who was killed on his way back to Jordan. Sahl al-Battuf and nearby villages affected by the NWC construction therefore became a site of local and nationalistic struggles and imaginaries further strengthening Palestinians' awareness of the politics of water control carried out through this NWC diversion.

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<sup>38</sup> Elhance (1999) analysis of this attack is that it has been the spark of a Palestinian demand for restoration of sovereignty over surface and groundwater in all the Palestinian lands.



*Figure 5.8 A poster depicting the 7th anniversary of the Eilaboun tunnel attack carried out by Fatah (Palestine Poster Project archives)*

However, for the communities in the Galilee and in Sahl al-Battuf, the NWC's significance to the Zionist state and its political and regional repercussions were not issues that were raised or considered in their struggle against its construction. During that period, the Arab Palestinians inside Israel were dealing with an encroachment of the military government, its security services and collaborators who were unified in subjecting this fragmented community to further chaos, tightening the grip of the government on the Galilee through land expropriation by any means, and through dissipating and suppressing any nationalistic sentiment and political mobilisation taking place there. Therefore, the NWC's violent imposition in their lived geographies and the protest it spawned was part and parcel of mobilisation strategies against the belligerent military rule and its allies, but which acquired a political identification in the 1970s and onwards. The local effect of transboundary projects, therefore, acquired meaning first and foremost to the local communities due to its abrupt transformation of their livelihoods and land encroachment, rather than its regional significance.

Evidently, the imposition of the NWC canal on the fellahin's land placed them at the heart of territorial conflict with the state over a politically significant project which surpassed their capacity to oppose and resist. Their concern with the project was with its violent expropriation of fertile land which they depended on for their livelihood in addition to its threat to their belonging as an ethno-geographic community confined and stripped away from its agency and rights. For them, the project meant a loss of land and exclusion from benefiting from the canal. The NWC, as "an act and object of political imagination" (Mukreji, 2009, p.15) therefore consolidated a presence of the state which produced uneven waterscapes (Swyndegouw, 1999) and engaged the fellahin in territorial politics which will come to define their land and water struggles in the following decades.

## 5.2 Uneven waterscapes and the local struggles of access

### 5.2.1 Struggles for drinking water

In the midst of relentless efforts and work on the ground to put the NWC into operation, the villages of Sakhnin and Arrabeh were equally mobilising for access to a drinking water network. While the demands of the fellahin in al-Battuf were around water for agriculture, their villages were still lacking in basic services such as water, electricity and sewage provision. The NWC, when it became fully operational in 1964, was electrified and water was flowing through its channels, reflecting clearly the production of an uneven waterscape. The sahl and the nearby villages, like most of the Arab towns inside Israel, were struggling for basic services. The villagers' attention was focused on demanding water for drinking first, while still advocating for a right to water for irrigation as will be discussed in section 5.2. Struggles for access to the water network were common in the Arab villages, towns and cities which remained, as Mekorot maintained its monopolistic control over water distribution and allocation. As Lena Dallasheh shows in her examination of water management contestation with Mekorot in the city of Nazareth, water becomes part

of negotiating citizenship, where the Palestinian citizens demand rights through engaging and negotiating with the state apparatus and utilises water as a conduit of seeking autonomy (Dallaseh, 2015). Clearly, the tactics adopted in the case of al-Battuf for drinking water networks and irrigation schemes were sought by the villages as a way to raise citizenry demands and rights, only to be confronted with an embedded pre-emptive indifference and neglect which makes up the settler colonial policymaking.

Demanding a water network was a collective effort of a number of established cooperatives throughout the Arab towns and villages in light of Mekorot's neglect of their needs. In Sakhnin, *Al-Muna* water cooperative was established in 1960, and through membership subscriptions and fundraising, the cooperative was in charge of developing plans for a water network, hiring engineers and lobbying the government to push Mekorot to provide its 'services'. Al-Muna cooperative, as early as 1962 had around 300 members and was actively seeking additional people to join. By 1965 it had more than 600 shareholders and members (ISA, 1969). In Arrabeh, a renowned Sheikh Kayed was spearheading community development work and was the director of *al-Nada* water cooperative there. Sakhnin, Arrabeh and Deir Hanna cooperatives frequently sent petitions and letters to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Regional offices of the agricultural department in Nazareth demanding that these official bodies contact Mekorot and Tahal to commence the water projects in their villages. The cooperatives had already raised funds, which were all deposited in special bank accounts to be paid to Mekorot as per government regulations. Eventually, al-Muna, after purchasing 4" pipelines and securing a government loan of 162,000 Israeli Lira for the electricity connection (which further delayed the project), was able to have Mekorot dig a well for drinking purposes for the three villages of Sakhnin, Arrabeh and Deir Hanna (ibid). In an overview of its accomplishments, al-Muna cooperative states how 370,000 IL were raised, partly by the stakeholders with the rest in loans from the Bank, to carry out all the construction work for the network, including a payment of concessions for Mekorot in order to dig the well. The cooperative work at that time was extending to raise funds and seek members to demand water for irrigation of their fields. In its



agreement with Mekorot, the concession regard 52% of water for drinking purposes while 48% would go to irrigation. However, at that time, the water provision only reached 30% for drinking and none for irrigation (ibid).

Interestingly, the article expresses how such efforts developed and civilised water use and tools, exemplifying a quest and need to develop infrastructure and become a modern citizen of the state (ibid):

*To the people of my village: we completed the water project after tremendous efforts and the view of sprinklers in the village, water in the household and the solar water heaters became a familiar view after the bucket, the jarra [traditional jug made from clay] and the well disappeared. Support the cooperative and pay any debts you owe to achieve development and develop our village, so we can follow and catch up with modernisation.*

In 1965 and after tremendous efforts and lobbying by the water cooperatives, the water well in Arrabeh was inaugurated in the presence of then Minister of Agriculture Moshe Dayan. Sheikh Kayed, the director of al-Nada water cooperative, linked their access to drinking water to leverage for other outstanding issues and restrictions imposed by the military government. In this event, he demanded a lifting of the ban on entering closed zones and help for farmers to reclaim barren land, in addition to support for farmers in marketing their products, the establishment of an agricultural college, the construction of access roads to al-Battuf, an increase in compensation given to the farmers because of the NWC, and an increase in the number of bridges along the canal to facilitate the movement of the farmers. Opportunities for claim making to rights to services were rife in those locations during the 1960s, embedding an entry point to claim rights to further services the Palestinian citizens perceived as legitimate and fair. However, the reality remains that service provision in a settler colonial context were used by the state as tools of control and acquiescence, increasing “the dependency of Palestinians upon the state” and therefore containing their political activism and mobilisation (Zureik et al., 2011, p.91).

## 5.2.2 Struggle for access in al-Battuf

While demands for connection to a national water network were rising in al-Battuf villages, the situation in the sahl after the construction and completion of the NWC was becoming dire for its fellahin. Since the NWC cut through the length of al-Battuf, it left them with no access to their lands, inflicting further harm and suffering. In the design of the NWC, four bridges were built to provide access its 17km length, but they were not enough. Mekorot also employed security personnel who were on the site prohibiting farmers from reaching their land without a permit and prohibiting tractors from entering. This triggered the farmers to carry out additional acts of protest to gain access. The dirt road was only accessible by foot and farmers had to make a 20km journey to reach their lands. The police were fining the fellahin if attempted to make the journey by cars or tractors.

The lands are grown with sugar beets at this time, and the fellahin needed to be there to carry out weeding and maintenance of this crop which they relied on heavily. The fellahin organised themselves in a protest on their tractors on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1964 from Arrabeh to the office of the Ministry of Agriculture in Nazareth and handed in their demands there: 1) finish with the bridge construction and construct more to make it easy for the farmers to reach their lands; 2) stop police harassment and allow the fellahin to use their tractors to transport them to their lands; 3) asphalt the main road that connects the village to sahl al-Battuf; and 4) ease the mobility of fellahin throughout the length of the canal (Al-ittihad, 1964a). Moshe Dayan, Minister of Agriculture at the time, promised to remove obstacles on al-Battuf fellahin and accepted their demands to allow their cars and tractors to pass through the 4 bridges of the canal (Al-Ittihad, 1964b). Knesset Member at the time Diab Obeid sent letters to the NWC's director, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1965, to present the plight of the fellahin, how they suffered to reach their lands, and how the lack of sufficient bridges "cause suffering and waste of time of the farmers to reach their plots" (ISA, 1965a).

As archives reveal, the farmers continued to up-scale their demands for access to and use of NWC roads, and not only the dirt road. Sakhnin local council

representatives submitted petitions signed by the farmers to the police, the Ministry of Agriculture and Mekorot to allow private vehicles to drive on the NWC road in sahl al-Battuf, to transport the workers (female and male) that worked on the sugar beet fields as it was very difficult to drive on the dirt road. They hoped that this request would be approved as it would not cause any harm to the project (ISA, 1967a). Continued efforts were sought through different channels, therefore, and the farmers, village council members and Knesset members continued invoking their citizenship rights to claim localised rights to access, use and develop their land and water. Another letter sent on in October 1967 from Sakhnin local council to the Prime Minister's Advisor on Arab affairs protested against Mekorot's trespassing on fellahin land in sahl al-Battuf, while erecting posts and cables around the canal. This depicts the time when the fencing around the NWC canal began to materialise, expropriating more land (and soil) from the fellahin to fence the area and fortify it as a securitised zone. The letter describes (ISA, 1967b):

*Mekorot was not satisfied with this and begun for the last couple of years to move these cables and posts into our land. Last summer the company brought bulldozers and began excavating soil from our land in the northern part of the canal and used it to anchor the posts and build a 4m street and canals nearby with a depth of half a meter and width of 2m approximately. All in our land and without any legal orders. Last week the director of the company in Tel Aviv and engineers came to the village and notified us that they will continue the work in the section that they haven't finalised last year. Please intervene to stop the company.*

Livelihood practices were also severely affected by state intervention in al-Battuf. As another letter of appeal reveals, the forestation officer issued warnings to the farmers to move out of the area where they were camped by a given date or otherwise face court. For hundreds of years the farmers have been camping in al-Battuf (Ta'zeeb) to work on their land during harvest time and to allow their livestock to eat. Such appeals regarding access restriction and abrupt government regulations were constantly opposed and challenged by the communities affected, with a focused demand on rights to livelihood and access to their lands (ISA, 1967b).

Struggles over access to land and protection of livelihood therefore took precedent over demands of access to water for irrigation (see examples of lack of access in Figure 5.9). Al-Battuf, which was before that a site neglected by the state, has become a critical site of ordering of landscape, water and political subjects. The presence of the state and its various institutions (Mekorot, Forestry Ministry, Ministry of Agriculture, the Israeli Army) required the farmers to interact and deal with the state through utilising different methods. Examining these dynamics at this critical time reveals an adoption of tactics for recognition employed by the fellahin and their representatives, shaping their citizenry identity and demands.



*Figure 5.9 Recent pictures showing how the NWC canal cuts through the valley and divides it in half with only one bridge in sight (Author's picture, September 2017)*

Land confiscation struggles were omnipresent in the Palestinian Arab villages and signified a widely held sentiment regarding access to resources. For example, the village of Beit Jan,<sup>39</sup> which is a Druze village that suffered from the expropriation of thousands of dunums, established a committee for the protection of Beit Jan lands. When the water network finally came to the village, the committee issued a

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<sup>39</sup> Beit Jan is a Druze village, 20 km north of al-Battuf which has experienced intensive land confiscation by the state

statement following the inauguration of the network by Moshe Dayan asking “what’s the use of water now?”. The committee was referring to the government’s relentless land confiscation which have left them with no land. While they valued the importance of water in bringing about development of their village, there was little land left for them to develop (Al-Ittihad, 1966).

The provision of water networks by the government, as seen in the multiple examples above, oscillated between a veiled segregation and exclusion policy by the Israeli state against its Palestinian citizens (especially those which are politically opposed to the state’s discrimination policies) and a stick-and-carrot approach to maintain a good relationship with the Arab constituents by enhancing the infrastructure of their towns and villages. While water was imbricated as part of negotiating citizenship, the Palestinian citizens were experiencing intensive and aggressive land confiscation and dispossession by the state. Here, a theme brings together struggles over land as being above or more elevated and prioritised than struggles for water. As the appeals of the committee cited above reveals: what’s the use of water after all the land is gone? A conundrum was facing the Palestinian fellah in al-Battuf in his attempts to stay on the land, literally and figuratively, while addressing veiled and overt segregation over distribution of resources and claiming rights to water:

*Mekorot was not interested in supplying the Palestinian Arab regions with water, and with difficulty it supplied it to them even with drinking water. The state and the Water Authority were the ones in control. We became without resources. Another issue is the land, 95% of the land in Israel is state land and these lands were given to the kibbutzim and Moshavim. (Interview with Mustafa Natour, agronomist, Nazareth, 28 September 2017)*

While the town, villages and cities adopted mobilisation strategies and invested heavily in connecting their localities with water, the struggle continued with intermittent flows and Mekorot’s bureaucracy and justification of unequal distribution, maintenance and service provision. Struggles on the ground were also reflective of political realities and national policies. The 1970s and 80s were decades

of a reinforced and consistent narrative of scarcity in Israel (Alatout, 2009). As will be observed as well in the oGH case in the next chapter, limitations on water provision for Arab farmers were justified by a national discourse of scarcity – and that water had to go to the essential sectors – mainly Jewish coastal areas, agriculture and industry. The Palestinian citizens always faced hardships claiming water allocations, and bureaucratic hurdles and restrictions from Mekorot were the norm. Such obstacles were not generalised on all of them but were enforced on those village councils and farmers who were more vocal in their opposition to state policy. Arrabeh and Sakhnin's historical opposition and protest the NWC (and Arrabeh's affiliation and strong membership in the Communist Party) reflected on the villages' access to water for irrigation and even their struggle for a water network for the villages (Cohen, 2010).

The NWC, and the fellahin's opposition to it, weighed heavily on the denial of water in those critical decades of government interest in Arab agriculture, and on the potential to acquire water quotas for irrigation. As one farmer recalls, the fellahin's opposition to the NWC reflected being denied access to the resource, even to temporary canal installed during the construction:

*There was a temporary canal that was dug parallel to the main canal which farmers used to provide water for their livestock...but the minute the canal construction was finished, it was covered. This was a 6" pipeline and it was destroyed - I witnessed it and I also drank from that pipe...the farmers thought that this pipeline will remain for their use, but ultimately realised it was there for providing water for the construction of the project – for cement making. It was used during that time for livestock, and even to water some crops nearby, like tomatoes and tobacco...it wasn't developed at all, but the farmers were not prohibited from using it. This 6" pipeline was not removed correctly even, it was destroyed by the bulldozers, it was a provocation for the farmers. It was running all through al-Battuf's 17 km of length. Here you can say the tension between the fellahin and the state was heightened. (Interview with Ali Antar farmer, Arrabeh, 26 August 2017)*

The government's deliberate negligence and reprisals against the NWC opposition (and favouritism of close allies with the state) also weighed on service

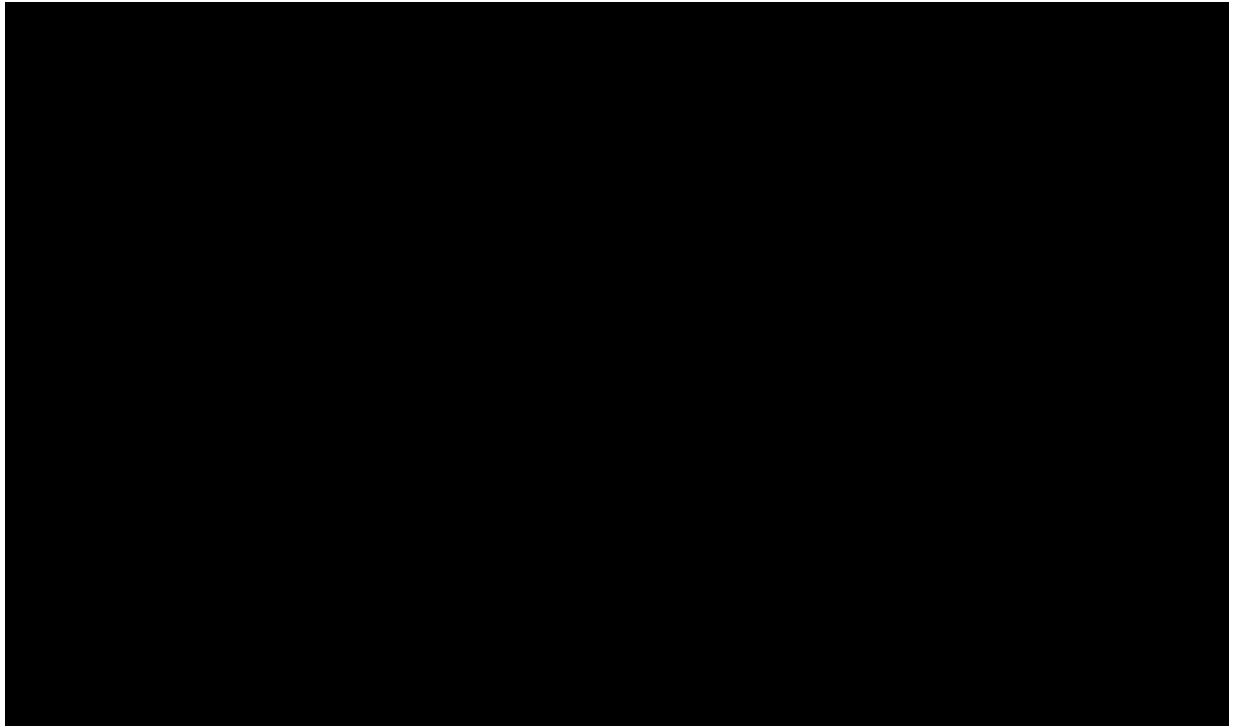
provision in the valley. The rejection of water demands also resonated with very dominant and prevailing narratives of scarcity that were the driving force of the NWC. However, that narrative was used to justify denial of allocations and reclamation of water rights for the Arab farmer only:

*Following that NWC, there was another round of confrontation between the fellahin and the ministry of agriculture and the state. All other localities began receiving water, like Kufr Manda, Shefaamer, Tamra, Kabul and only Arrabeh-Sakhnin were deprived because they stood against the NWC. This is when the water war began. The fellahin began demanding support to enhance their production of tomatoes and other crops through irrigation and water access. At that point the demands were rejected stating that there wasn't enough water nationwide and other issues regarding lack of clear land unification and other reasons. Especially Arrabeh and Sakhnin lands in Al Battuf never got water. You have some villages and farmers who received water (I'zeer, Rummaneh) in the 1980s.<sup>40</sup>, and before that they also provided water for Tamra, Shefaamer, and the Triangle area. We didn't receive any water development projects with false pretences, and impossible demands. This is where the political factors come in. They don't want to provide water because they don't want people to stay on their land. They want to uproot us away from the land. This is where we entered into - let's call it - confrontations over water. They insisted that we will not have it. (Interview with Ali Antar farmer, Arrabeh, 26 August 2017)*

El'izeer and Rummaneh's wells (shown in Figure 5.10) were examples of such uneven water allocations. El'izeer well for instance had such a high yield that the water had to be pumped through a 16" pipe to feed the canal 24 hours. Meanwhile, the remaining farmers of Arrabeh and Sakhnin kept protesting and demanding access to that water, but their demands were ignored.

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<sup>40</sup> In a governmental review of the villages of Al-Battuf, Mekorot wells drilled there were providing the villages of B'ineh, E'izeer, Rummaneh, 'Arab Njeidat, and Arab il Heeb (Bedouin communities) with drinking water and agricultural water for B'i'ineh [300dunums], E'izeer [120 dunum], and Rummaneh [100 dunum] (ISA, 1965b) and they are still provided with water until today.



*Figure 5.10 Map showing Mekorot wells (red dots) to serve the Arab Bedouin villages of Al-Battuf (El'izeer and Rummaneh), with excess yield pumped back to the canal (ISA, 1967a)*

The denial of access to water for irrigation was not a specific phenomenon inflicted only on the farmers in al-Battuf. Palestinian citizens elsewhere in the Israeli state were also suffering the aftermath of the Arab agricultural development plans, mentioned in section 4.2.2.<sup>41</sup> These plans retrospectively limited water provision for agriculture carried out by the Palestinian Arabs and hence also restricted what these farmers could grow, in the event that they received water. While the Jewish farmer received allocations based on their annual crop needs, the Arab farmer was allocated a specific and conditional water quota:

*The procedure was that the Arab farmer will receive 500 cubic meters per 1 dunum, on a condition that the total quantity of water used is no more than 5,000 cubic meters per year. This created a huge gap between the two [Jewish and Arab farmers]. First of all,*

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<sup>41</sup> The 1959 water law had ramifications on existing use of water. Well owners were limited in the amount of water to pump, incurring fines if they exceeded their allotment. Similarly, irrigated agriculture that depended on springs was also heavily restricted, if not by directly prohibition, by Mekorot's pumping and drilling of wells nearby springs, heavily reducing the available flows.



*the only crops to survive on 500 cubic meters/dunum were only almond trees and olive trees. Any crop of vegetables and other trees requires around 700-800 cubic meters per dunum. Because of these unfair regulations, today Arab farmers receive 3.5% of water allocations for agriculture, despite constituting 20% of the population. The total agricultural land used today by Arabs amounts to 700,000 dunum excluding the Naqab. For the Jews, that number is 4.2 million dunums. They receive 96.5% of the water. So, we have 18% of the land, and use 3.5% of the water. This limited the development of agricultural development extensively and this was all part of a policy and not just by coincidence. (Mustafa Natour agronomist, Nazareth, 28 September 2017)*

Moreover, constraints over water allocation were also coupled with restrictions on type of crops which Palestinian farmers were allowed to grow:

*A permit was needed to grow crops like tomatoes, carrots, potatoes, and there were crops that Arab farmers were denied to cultivate, such as carrots, potatoes and onion. They were forbidden from growing these crops because they were all mechanised and required less labour. Crops like tomatoes, aubergine, cucumbers, peppers, green onions were allowed but they had to receive a permit. Meat and poultry were denied completely to be produced by Arabs – they did not receive permits to produce dairy, poultry, eggs, meat etc. That meat and dairy sector production alone constitutes 40% of the overall agricultural produce of Israel. (ibid)*

The systematic weakening and eventual demise of the Palestinian citizens' agricultural sector therefore established the state's goals through overt and covert strategies. The denial of adequate water allocations for agriculture destroyed the prospect of a viable and competitive agricultural sector and thus has achieved its objective of consolidating the agricultural sector within the exclusively Jewish Kibbutzim, Moshavim and private actors. With or without water, the Palestinian farmer inside Israel was forced to abandon agriculture as a livelihood and income-generating work and become fully dependent on work in permitted Jewish economic activities. These experiences allude to a reality which imposes a scarcity narrative on Arabs and not Jews – a reality of 'scarcity for the few'.

While the Israeli state consolidated its denial of water for agriculture, precipitation was a water source that could not be completely controlled. The persistence of rainfed farming activities illuminates how it acquired political subjectivity, becoming a necessary act of perseverance and *sumud* under precarious conditions prohibiting it from prospering into a financially profitable activity. Maintaining and rooting a relationship with the land became a dominant driver of continuing farming activities. However, land was becoming a financial burden, requiring that farmers devise tactics to increase the profitability of farming activities and water therefore became imbricated in enacting and solidifying rootedness and *sumud* on the land. That the land became a burden by no means allowed its abandonment; therefore farmers' presence on it was a contrasting reality of suffering and hope. As mentioned earlier, water *came* to al-Battuf through the construction of the NWC canal, which has solidified and made visible a politics of difference. The settler colonial waterscape of abundance was juxtaposed against the lived geographies of abandonment and stagnation experienced because of water. Farmers in al-Battuf, following the 1970s and the rise of popular struggle and community mobilisation, began claiming rights to water they already had an excess of: the floodwater of al-Battuf, known as *al-gharaq* as their emancipation from those realities of abandonment and a catalyst to enhance their *sumud* and protection of the land.

### 5.3 Draining al-gharaq and claiming rights to infrastructure

Following the momentous events of Land Day in 1976 and the mobilisation of Palestinian citizens, land regained its centrality in the popular movement and civil society work in the Galilee and beyond. The success of land day protests was " due primarily to the united front exhibited by the peasantry"<sup>42</sup>, where forced alienation

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<sup>42</sup> The fellah acquired a somehow mystical role of being the one tending for the land of Palestine after the Nakba, as described by generations of refugees and diaspora, consolidating a romantic identification with the fellah and the rural landscape of the villages in Palestine (Davis, 2011; Sayigh, 2008; Swedenburg, 1990). This nurtured a powerful sentiment of the peasant as a national signifier, mainly developed post 1948. Inside 48' areas, the

as predicted has proved “to be the crucial catalyst in any future Arab uprisings in Israel” (Zureik, 1979, p.187). Nevertheless, as this political mobilisation grew from the bottom up and was supported by political parties, especially the Communist Party, it was fraught with narratives of recognition, equality and inclusivity within an Israeli state. The demise of agriculture was seen as a strategy of the state to accelerate the abandonment of land, to which political parties proposed mobilisation for acquiring rights from the Israeli state through empowering farming and reclamation of land in the Galilee. The narrative employed by such parties was to accomplish equality between the Jewish and Arab farmer.

No other natural phenomenon is indicative of the state’s abandonment of al-Battuf than the persistence of al-gharaq, Ali explains while he shows me around different sections of the valley (see Figure 5.11). The water of al-Battuf, whether in its abundant flow through the NWC canal, or in its excess when al-gharaq forms, can be seen as an ‘uneasy’ co-existence of narratives of abundance and scarcity. The contention of farmers met during the fieldwork – living with and without water – is that the NWC canal represents a case of abundance of water but not for them. They experience water scarcity while their land (where the canal stands) is abundant in water. Meanwhile, al-gharaq becomes an example of excess and damaging water that destroys and delays farming. The technically designed canal and its waters becomes a desirable object, while the natural phenomenon becomes a source of inconvenience and hardship<sup>43</sup>. As Tesdell and Issa remind us, these wetlands have been increasingly considered as sites of waste, residual space and a limitation for urban and agriculture expansion in light of settler colonial policies of confinement and shrinking spaces of existence (Tesdell and Issa, 2017). In the colonial and settler

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symbolism of the fellah also confronted the Israeli systematic expropriation of land, and the disintegration of Palestinian identity especially during the military rule from 1948-1966.

<sup>43</sup> Growing crops in al-gharaq or Balu’ areas across Palestine also continue to acquire cultural and symbolic significance and contributes to the uniqueness of these sites as part and parcel of belonging and attachment to the landform and its multiple conditions of flooding and dryness. For example, the phenomenon of having a waterbody in the winter months in the Marj of Deir Balut or Sanour in the West Bank invokes emotions of happiness and excitement, as these waterbodies are seen as reclamation of rights to experiences of claiming water and being by a seafront which Palestinians in the West Bank are deprived of. Sites of simple canoe boats, pedal boats and beach chairs transform the area of al-gharaq there in spring and early summer to a site of recreation. However, the case of al-gharaq in al-Battuf is quite telling of a different experience.

colonial mind-set of the British and Zionists, these were areas to drain and utilise optimally with the introduction of drainage interventions, technological fixes and advancements for the benefit of the settler. Going beyond a deterministic categorisation of the imaginaries of settler vs. native, re-configuring gharraq and balu' sites should be considered here as part of a historical, economic and capitalist transformation imperative facing the Palestinians. In that light, we can view al-Battuf's gharraq area as more than just a distinct eco-system which requires preservation and consider that under emerging economic and capitalist motivations and the realities of a settler colonial state like Israel, re-configurations are omnipresent and inevitable, requiring alternative relations to land and water. Imaginaries of development and progress, therefore, intertwine and blend with sentiments of land protection and living within the limits of nature to produce a desire for the promise of infrastructure.

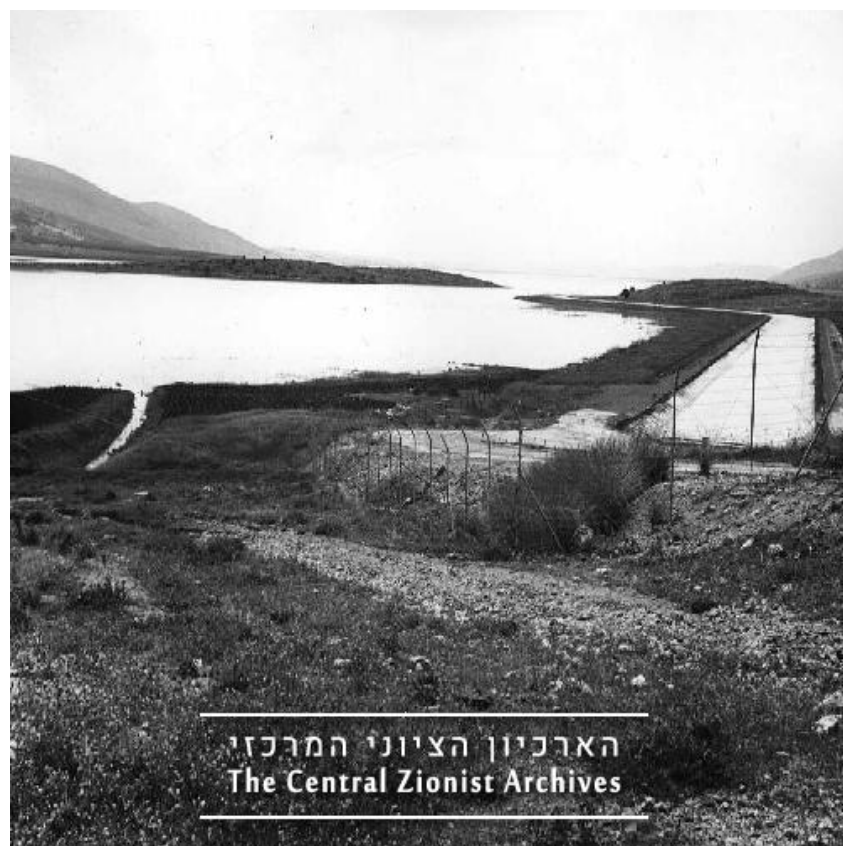
As early as the 1960s, farmers began working collectively to demand action to drain al-gharaq. Farmers with lands in these flooded plots had their winter crops destroyed and their summer crops planted later (until the water reduces), which put them in a less favourable condition and limited their crop productivity. Al-Battuf's agricultural potential has always been a catalyst for the farmers to carry out developmental projects in the valley and the promise of water for irrigation became an aspiration for them. In those years of the 1960s, farmers were benefitting from government interest and investment in their crops – the crop change to sugar beet, tomatoes, cotton and onion. These crops, however, remained rainfed with no significant investment in irrigated agriculture by the state. Farmers were aware of the conditions under which Jewish settlements operated; with efficient production, secured marketing and unlimited access to state-subsidised water and extension services. The fellahin, therefore, realised the potential of irrigated agriculture as an entry point to the Israeli markets and as a means to enhance the productivity of their crops.



*Figure 5.11 Al-gharaq in 1969 (personal archive of Nezar Nassar, Arrabeh) and 2003 showing the stagnation in efforts of drainage (Government Press Office, Amos Ben Gershom, 2003)*

Al-gharaq therefore embodied that dichotomy of aspiration and suffering from infrastructure and the ordering of land and water (see Figure 5.12). From as early as 1968, and during the first election for the village council in Arrabeh, the party “Workers and the Fellahin” put forward the project of draining al-gharaq to end the suffering of the fellahin whose lands are affected by the annual flooding. In his book, *Struggle over Land*, Ahmad Saleh Jarbouni (who served as Arrabeh’s head of the

village council in 1989) recalls how the following year, in 1969, the winter brought heavy rains and the flooding submerged 15,000 dunums (Jarbouni, 1998). The party was accused of causing al-Battuf to drown even more because of their unrealistic project. Part jokingly, it was argued that ‘if God created al-Battuf in this condition, how will you ever change it?’. This was a common reaction of the fellahin and villagers of al-Battuf, believing in the limitations of nature, and that any planned alterations would only bring along more suffering – this time a godly one in the form of heavy rainfall and flooding. The other suffering, which the fellahin also feared was that of land confiscation under the guise of development. After suffering from the confiscation of hundreds of thousands of dunums, Palestinian citizens were wary and mistrustful of any state interventions on their land and a large-scale drainage project would inevitably invite further state ordering of their last remaining lands.



*Figure 5.12 Al-gharaq parallel to the NWC canal, epitomising competing hydro-imaginaries and uneven waterscapes (Central Zionist Archives, Dafna'i Dav, 1971)*

### 5.3.1 Drainage plans of Tahal and the proposal by Al-Battuf Cooperative

Even though al-gharaq remained, its drainage was not outside the consideration of the state. This section focuses on the various plans to drain al-gharaq that were designed by Tahal but were never realised. In comparison, al-Battuf Cooperative, led by farmers, also began designing its own vision of drainage as an alternative infrastructure that the community envisioned for itself, rather than being imposed by the government. The section will document the struggles experienced and the promise of the drainage project.

Built in a critical time of state formation and formalisation of citizenship for Israel's non-Jewish citizens, the NWC's 17km wide open canal brought water to the forefront of the struggles of the farmers of Al-Battuf. Following the canal's construction, Tahal company was assigned the responsibility for planning the necessary system for draining al-gharaq. Tahal reports and local sources (Mbadda Ali, 2000) document different proposals put forward by Tahal company in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first drainage plan by Tahal was produced in September 1963 (ISA, 1963) under the title *The Drainage Plan for the Eastern Valley of Beit Netufa*. The plan builds on the Mandate 1946 plan and another plan prepared by the water department at the MoA in 1954, both of which were not realised due to claimed budget issues. However, the 1963 plan was more detailed as it followed the last stages of the NWC canal construction, therefore benefitting tremendously from all the hydrological work done for that project. The objective of this plan was to reduce the flooding area and its presence on the land through the design of a canal that would drain the water into Yiftachel stream (known in Arabic as Rummaneh, on the south western part of the valley, where Eshkol reservoir lies). While the report does not mention its ultimate use, it doesn't state the benefit this water could bring to the Arab farmers, as it assumes throughout the report that rainfed farming is dominant. The other concern of the plan was to design a canal that would eliminate any threat of flooding to the NWC, which was cutting through the whole valley and therefore also present in the eastern part where flooding occurs, as Figure 5.12 shows. Following this, another plan again contained only technical consideration of how the

flood water could be utilised outside the valley and not to the benefit of the Arab farmers (ISA, 1978).<sup>44</sup> Tahal plans were clearly designed to increase water availability for the Jewish settlements around al-Battuf and their agriculture. Proposals such as draining the waters of the gharaq to Yiftachel, where the Eshkol reservoir is located, or to inject it back into the NWC canal, emphasised the intentions to keep this water unattainable for the farmers. Eventually, these plans of Tahal, commissioned by the MoA were halted completely, since the government demanded the fellahin carry out land re-parcellation so that the land needed for the drainage project would be available for public use. This stirred concerns and fears of the infamous concentration law that was suppressed by the collective efforts of the Palestinian Arabs a decade before in 1961, and more recently the 1976 attempts of land confiscation in al-Mal area. The necessity of protecting the land therefore outweighed the necessity of irrigated farming. As mentioned before, the Palestinian sentiment and concern 'what's the use of water without land' echoes here as well. However, water struggles were not excluded from land struggles in al-Battuf as the farmers mobilised themselves to try to take matters into their own hands, through the re-configuration of al-battuf waterscape and the farming practices they have carried out for generations.

### 5.3.2 Al-Battuf agricultural cooperative and the demand for drainage

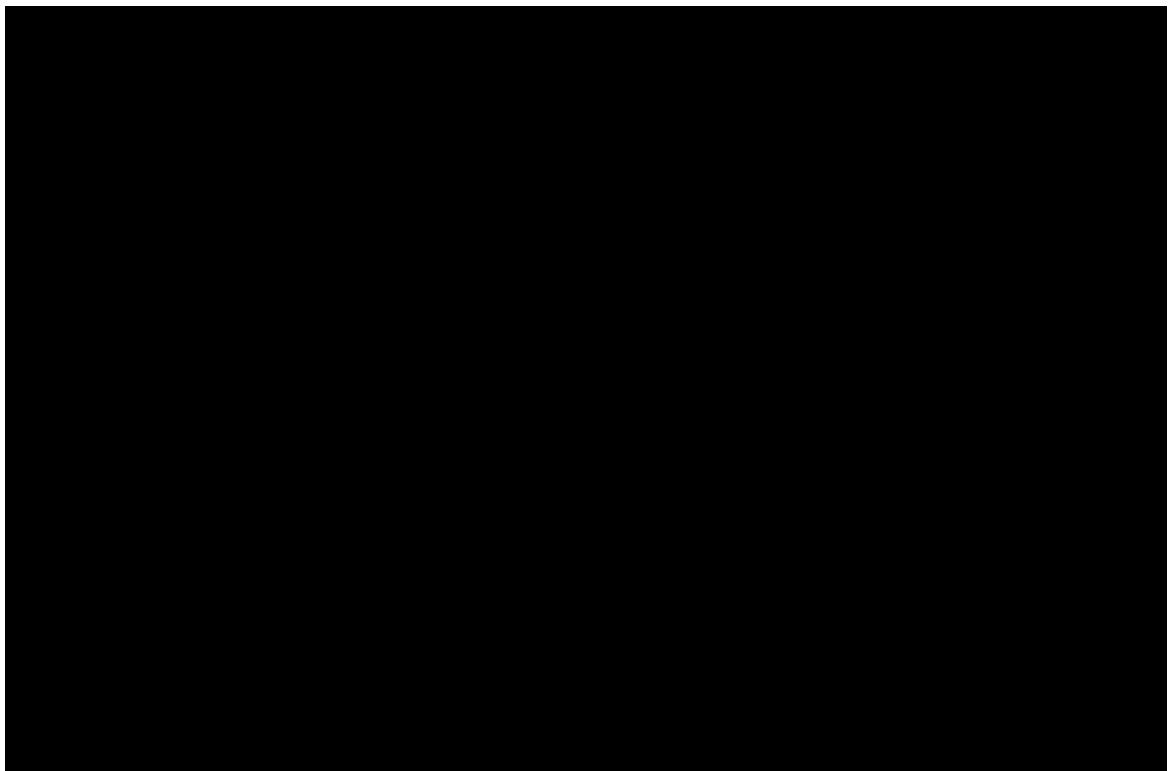
In the 1980s and under the continuous hardship faced in al-Battuf, Arrabeh farmers mobilised and established Al-Battuf Cooperative in 1988, with the aim of reviving agriculture in the Arab sector and empowering the sumud of the fellahin on their land by alleviating their hardships. In addition, it prioritised the drainage project as the approach to achieve those aims, where the water would be used for the irrigation of crops and hence increase the productivity and marketability of al-Battuf

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<sup>44</sup> The only mention of Arab farmers benefiting from water projects was in a study on drinking water provision plans in al-Battuf (ISA, 1964b, 1967), which made drilling wells conditional, requiring the farmers of Arrabeh and Sakhnin to cooperate with the Land Authority and carry out an extensive re-parcellation of land, a move most farmers rejected fearing a spur of land confiscation.



produce (Jarbouni, 1998). The proposal (Figure 5.13, 5.14) prepared by the cooperative intended to drain al-gharaq but use all the water locally for the benefit of the farmers. The design envisioned the construction of two main reservoirs (first and second pond) in the eastern and central part of the valley and a third one for additional overflow and storage (third pond). It was proposed that the reservoirs be constructed in a way to reduce land confiscation. The first pond, for example, would be on lands which were controlled by the Israeli Land Authority, while the second pond would be on Sakhnin's land. This ensured that the area of land confiscated is limited and with the consent of the farmers whose land was to be used as they would benefit from irrigation of their nearby plots. The reservoirs were designed to hold around 6.2 mcm which was sufficient to meet the needs of the farmers in the dry summer months (Mbadda Ali, 2000).



*Figure 5.13 Map drawn of Al-Battuf Cooperative drainage proposal (Mbadda Ali, 2000) above, and on the next page its translation and geographical representation*

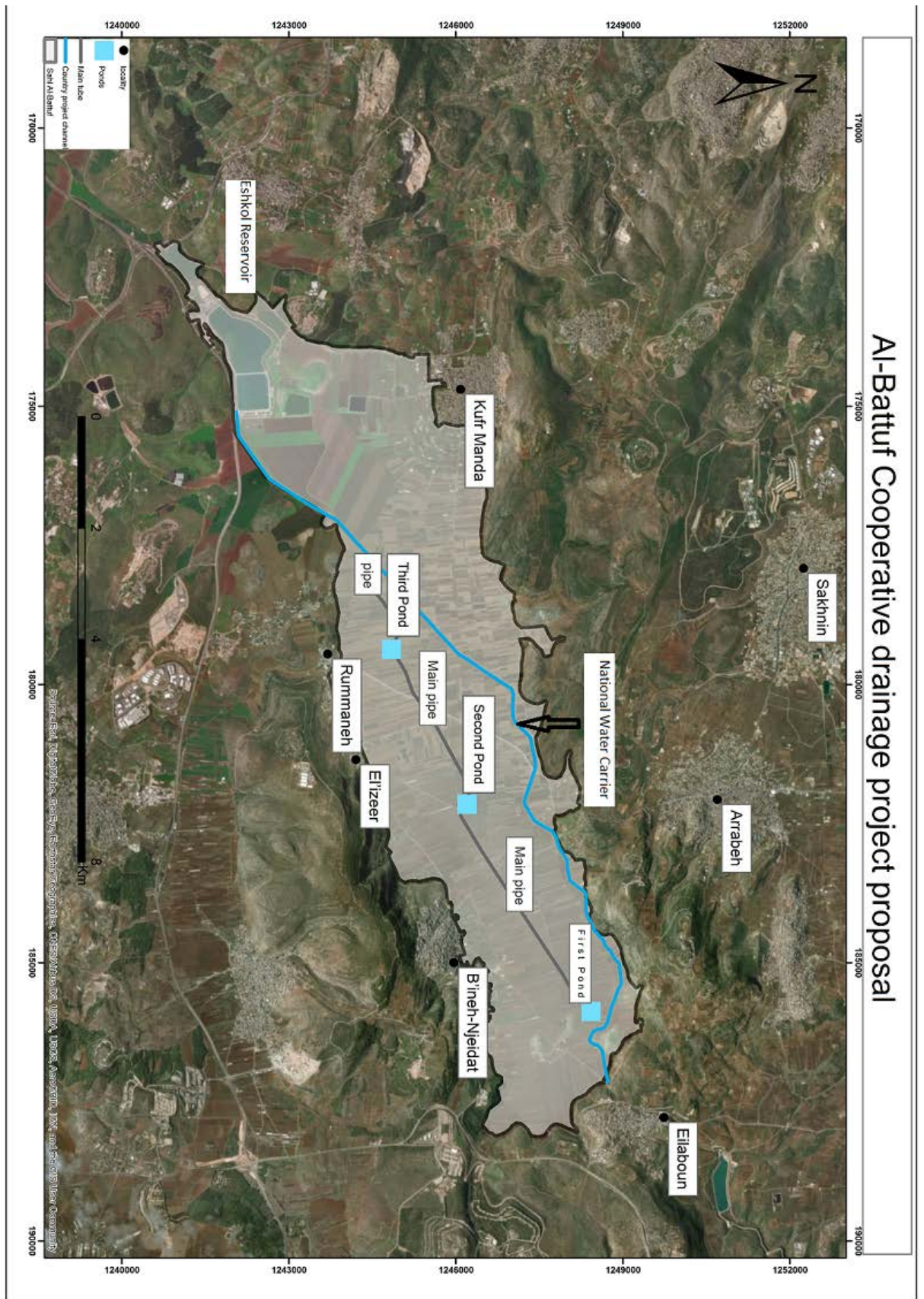


Figure 5.14 Infrastructural aspirations of drainage paralleling NWC canal (developed for this thesis by Yousra Othman for this thesis, 2018)

Al-Battuf cooperative lobbied for the drainage proposal with the MoA, which was not responding to the farmers' demands but was the only channel to receive the necessary permits. Meanwhile, the cooperative continued carrying out collective projects, like the development of agricultural roads and general support for the farmers. Fraught with local politics and competition between political parties, the cooperative became less and less effective in its advocacy for the drainage project, confronted by the disinterest of the MoA. Similar cooperatives and organisations dealing with farmers rights inside Israel also emerged and adopted the case of al-Battuf<sup>45</sup>. Following these internal tensions, another cooperative, Al-Battuf Rehabilitation Cooperative, was established in the early 1990s. This cooperative began lobbying with donor agencies of the United States, European Union and others to support and fund the drainage project. What was observed in those decades was how the promise of infrastructure became articulated by marginalised subjects themselves (Ferguson, 1999; Boelens et al., 2014) and was evident in their claims and demands for modernity and access to technological advances (Anand et al., 2018; Boelens, 2014; Von Schnitzler, 2014).

Walid Sadeq, a Palestinian citizen who was the Deputy Minister of Agriculture at the Israeli MoA<sup>46</sup> also supported the project and began pushing for the realisation of the drainage project. Taking advantage of his position in the ministry, efforts were heightened to bring the drainage project on the agenda. In August 1993, he presented a budget for the development of the agriculture for the Arab citizens of Israel to the Minister of Finance (ISA, 1993) and 53 Million Israeli Shekels were allocated to realise the drainage project (Kul Al Arab, 1995). This external and internal pressure resulted in Tahal company commencing planning for the drainage project and reaching a similar design to the original Al-Battuf Cooperative (without the third pond/reservoir) (see Figure 5.15).

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<sup>45</sup> Examples of such organisations was Al Ahali Center for Community Development, established in 1999 to a role to support Palestinian citizens to retain their rights to land and in claiming rights to water infrastructure in al-Battuf. In 2002, they established two cooperatives in Arrabeh and Sakhnin to represent the farmers' needs (Al Ahali, n.d). Another regional one was the Arab Farmers Union, whose aim was to achieve equality between Arab and Jewish farmers

<sup>46</sup> Under the Israeli left-wing government of Peres, efforts were made to enhance the situation of Palestinian citizens by including them in government roles and assigning budget for the development of their towns and villages. This was a common strategy of securing their votes.

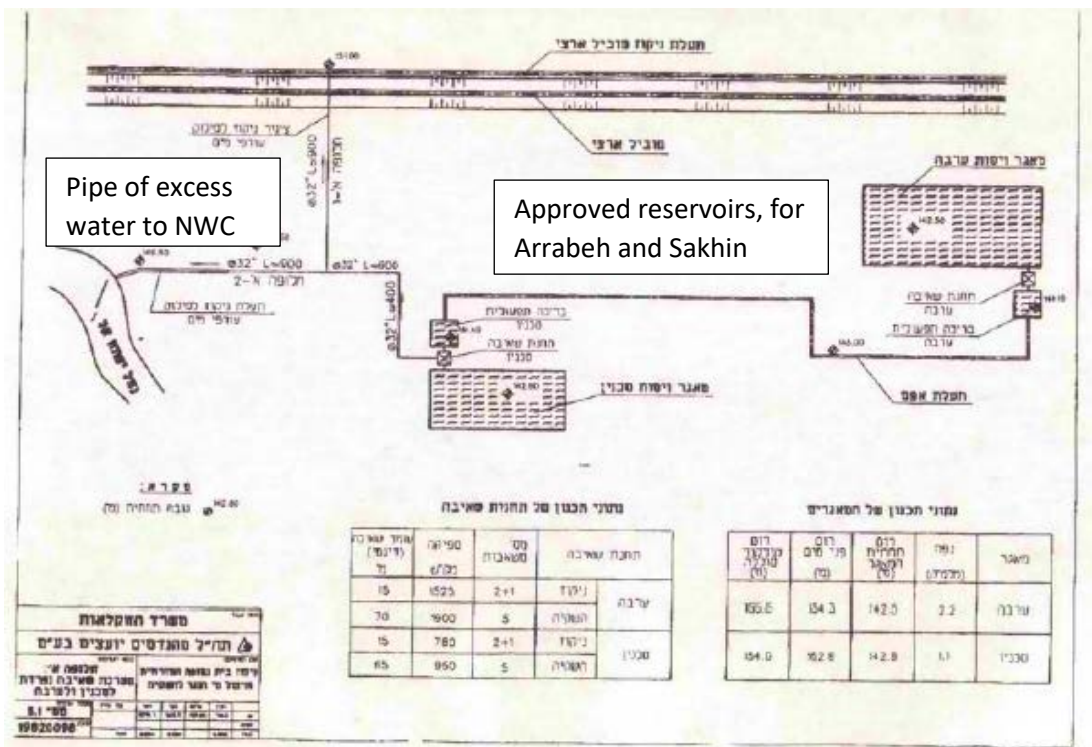
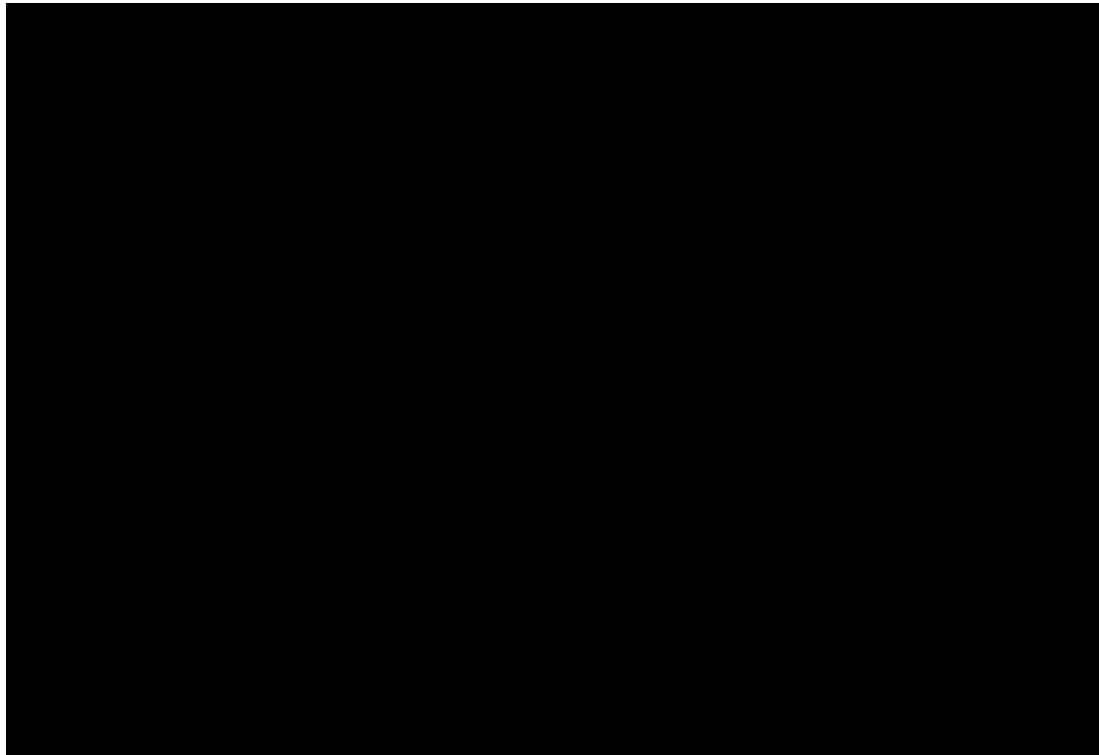


Figure 5.15 Approved drainage project design under Walid Sadeq's time (ISA, 1996)

Eventually, a bid was announced to carry out the construction work, which was won by the KKL-JNF. The JNF began its work by excavating a 5-km canal, which

became known as the zero canal as the first step of the project. However, following the commencement of the work, the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995 and the work was put on hold. Following that, the election of a right-wing government halted all agricultural (and other projects) intended for the Palestinian citizens of Israel, leaving an incomplete half-dug canal as another source of suffering and hardship experienced by the farmers (see Figure 5.16 and 5.17).

As explained by Ali, the drainage claims were scaled up as a tactic which took advantage of wider political opportunities:

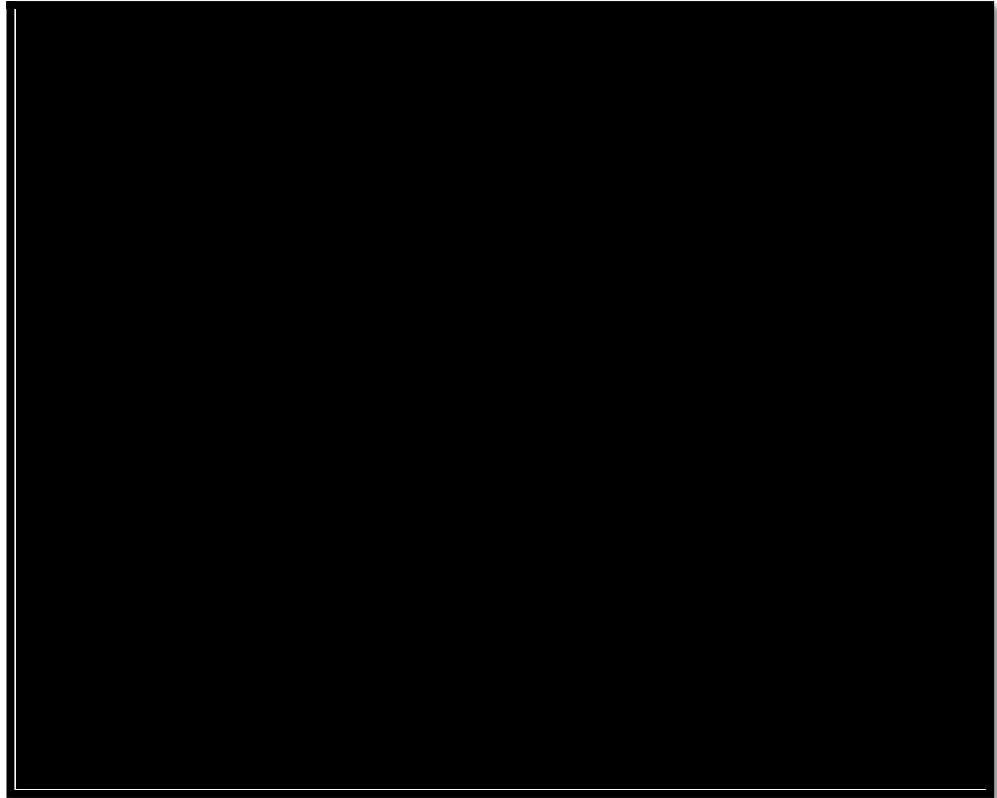
*This state sometimes faces regional tensions and they use the Arabs as a tool, they sedate them - or give them a painkiller. It was the time of the war on Iraq and other Palestinian issues. Rabin was pushing for peace and all that and we jumped on that bandwagon. Let us have equality or balance of opportunity with the Jews. The fellahin were pushing for a support through Walid Sadeq and this peace leaning government. Rabin at that time approved this plan and budget. This was in 1994. This canal is located at the lowest point of al-Battuf, it will be a bridge/canal to transport all the flood water to artificial lakes or ponds. the scale of such a project was so good and beneficial that all the farmers agreed. However, they killed Rabin because he wanted peace and they killed the project because it will revive al-Battuf. It's politically denied for us. (Ali Antar, farmer, Arrabeh, 26 August 2017)*

However, multiple conversations with Ali and other farmers reiterated their conviction that abandonment by the state is a systematic policy of the state to keep them off the land. When the state shows interest in the farmers plight over land and farming, it does it in a way to inflict more harm, and politically deny their right to infrastructure. Ali, Abu Saleh and other farmers made sure to drive me to the zero canal ditch left unfinished in the middle of al-gharaq, which became a site of suffering due to it being used as a dump, or the fact that it further limited access to farmers land (Figure 5.16 and 5.17). However, farmers of al-Battuf continually engage with the state even under such overt abandonment strategy, carrying out performative participation, that is, contesting domination, and negotiating an imposed land and water ontology, through multiple claims, identities, relations and emotions (Sultana

2011, 166). Re-configuration and re-organisation of place is necessary in their defense of their lived geography (Escobar, 2008), pushing farmers to see the drainage project as their ultimate defense strategy.



*Figure 5.16 part of the zero canal or ditch as it looks in dry season (Author's picture, September 2017)*



*Figure 5.17 Map in Hebrew showing the zero canal as it looks in 2017 (Drainage Authority Report, 2017)*

The promise of infrastructure and the relief of the suffering from al-gharaq, nevertheless, has ramifications beyond its face value. Under highly inequitable planning regimes, al-Battuf lands fall under the jurisdiction of the Misgav regional council and Kfar Tavor council, and not under the jurisdiction of any of the Arab village councils (Hussein and Adeeb, 1997). As Sheikh Ghanayem, a well-known farmer from Sakhnin, explains “Kfar Tabur/Tavor is now responsible for our land, it’s a moshav and became a regional council. Our local councils have no authority outside of the built-up area. Al-Battuf is divided between Misgav and Kfar Tabur regional councils. The moshav itself has no land owned here but they decide on land development” (Interview, al-Battuf valley, 13 September 2017). The true intention of the state, according to farmers, is to confiscate their lands and impose its own regulations on the last remaining Arab-owned private land, through re-parcellation mentioned above.

Evidently, the farmers of al-battuf are not a monolithic and unified group. Tensions are rife within the community on how to tackle the neglected productive status of the valley – some push for the revival of the drainage project as the panacea to the agricultural stagnation the valley is facing, while others seek state incorporation and recognition by seeking alliance with the different state bodies pushing for a conservation narrative. Others have lost faith entirely in the revival of the valley and have abandoned agricultural activities all together. As is often the case in settler colonial states, when efforts of erasure fall short, a divide and rule approach dominates the state's policies towards indigenous communities and their livelihood practices. Collective action is thus weakened, and efforts of concerned individuals are dissipated, like the unrealised drainage project.

The imperative of land protection eventually necessitated the abandonment of the drainage project for many, as keeping al-Battuf with no jurisdiction or clear land survey but ensures that al-gharaq remains as a deterrent to land confiscation and false promises of development and infrastructural advancement (Schwartz in Hussein and Adeeb, 1997). This has also created tensions between the farmers who are proponents of the drainage project, and those who prefer less state intervention and encroachment on their land. However, the active farmers were persistent in framing the drainage project as their ultimate hope to stay on the land. They continued to be present on the land and lobby for access to permits to develop infrastructure such as cowsheds, storage areas, electricity and water pipes. These efforts were met with stagnation, state neglect and refusal.

Therefore, al-gharaq was conceptualised as a means of protecting land from confiscation and maintaining a status quo of suffering from water while at the same time suffering for water. Many farmers have expressed the view that continuing the baali (rainfed) crops was the only alternative, far less risky and costly than irrigated farming, reiterating that water had become political, not *an end but a means to an end*:



*At first water was important because at that time in the 1960s and 70s, there was channels to market the product directly to the factories. Today, there isn't. If Arrabeh decides today to switch to irrigated crops and receives water, what will we grow and where will you market it? (Qasem Jarbouni, farmer, 12 September 2017)*

This excerpt further highlights that water *became* political in al-Battuf, and that demands for the drainage project are also demands for recognition and the relinquishing of control over ethno-geographic communities' sources of identity and belonging. Rather than a quest for water as-a-resource, the water struggle in al-Battuf exposes water as an object through which claims are made, and its adoption as a means not an end of farmers' struggles and perseverance (Boelens 2014; Boelens and Gelles 2005; Budds and Sultana 2013).

#### 5.4 Farming with and without: suffering for land and water as a means of sumud

As Abu Saleh, the previous head of Arrabeh local council, tells me while we stand overlooking al-Battuf (Figure 5.18), "The NWC pumps everyday hundreds of thousands of cubic meters to the Naqab and we are not allowed to drink from it at all. Whoever goes into the canal and fills up a tank of water will be taken to court. The famous proverb is an example of what we go through:

"كالعيس في البيداء يقتلها الظمأ..والماء فوق ظهورها محمول"

[translation: "like camels in the desert dying of thirst, while on its back water is being carried".<sup>47</sup> (Interview with Abu Saleh, and farmer, 18 July 2016).

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<sup>47</sup> Proverb of Turfa Ibn El Abed, a 6<sup>th</sup> century Arabian poet



*Figure 5.18 A panoramic view of the NWC as it cuts through al-Battuf, while farmers rely on rain to carry out their farming activities (Author's picture, August 2017)*

The consistent and varying tactics deployed by the farmers in al-Battuf, from demonstrations, to legal battles and lobbying efforts, highlight multiple tactics of opposition and resistance to a hegemonic ordering of land and water by the settler state. These tactics were continuously being re-configured and altered to engage and negotiate rights of recognition and belonging as an ethno-geographic community. These subtle acts of resistance, even if not documented as such in comparison to larger protests and resistance efforts, can thus illuminate varying elements of a resisting and remaining Palestinian consciousness, interlinked closely with awareness of local hydropolitics and hydro-hegemony (Lemire 2011; Wessels 2015a). While the Israeli state consolidated water as a strategic object of national security and Jewish development, the farmers of al-Battuf also constructed water as a means to claim rights to belong and be recognised as deserving citizens. As Falah (1989, p.248) claims, the Palestinians inside Israel have been forced into becoming a partner to intrastate territorial conflict, where the “only option for struggle, however limited, remains the legal machinery of the state”. The scaling up of methods of resistance and protest altered the struggle to one that required closer relationships with the

state, political figures and government officials, imbricating al-Battuf farmers in unequal power dynamics to claim their rights. The NWC snaking its way through the valley remains as an emblem of uneven waterscapes signalling state exclusivity and dominance over the landscape. Conditions of state 'abandonment' are also reflected in the lack of infrastructure familiar to other farming areas. Yet this is juxtaposed with farmers' collective efforts to construct dirt agricultural roads, their reliance on rustic water tankers to provide enough water for young saplings of their crops to grow, and their presence on the land, which is evident in its continuous tending and weeding.

The realities observed in al-Battuf today are the result of hybrid tactics which involved this inevitable engagement with the state and its apparatus, yet a total detachment from it at the same time. With farmers losing hope of turning their drainage proposals into a reality, individual acts of land reclamation and experiments in farming remain. Attempts to bring water in mobile tankers closely resemble landscapes in Area C in the Jordan Valley, where water infrastructure is heavily restricted. Rustic water tankers, make-shift drip irrigation systems and pesticide sprayers are dominant features, used by farmers to enhance the productivity of their crops with their own means and measures (see Figure 5.19).



*Figure 5.19 A typical scene across al-Battuf: Failed attempts of irrigated watermelon fields, water tankers and a make-shift tents (Author's picture, September 2017)*

Al-Battuf, in its idle condition, anticipating the promise of infrastructure, has become a space of multi-faceted economic and social activities. While it still belongs to private owners and is used primarily as an agricultural space, many families have

also used it as a site of recreation and escape from the suffocating conditions of the villages and towns they live in. “Al-Battuf is our lung, the open space we can claim as our own amongst the concrete jungle that is engulfing us”, exclaims Qasem Jarbouni, a veteran farmer and elder who is one of the few who resides on his land in al-Battuf. Indeed, al-Battuf is a space of recreation, productivity and celebration. In the breezy afternoons of the weekend, many locals can be seen jogging on the dirt roads separating the agricultural plots or using the land for family and friends’ gathering.

Being on the land takes on many forms. On summer evenings, al-Battuf is humming with the chattering sounds of families and friends gathered around makeshift tents, enjoying tea and coffee and catching up on the latest village news. Scattered rusting machinery lies mostly idle: combine harvesters, tractors, water tankers, and ploughs. It gives a feeling that agriculture has become secondary, if not completely abandoned. A handful of farmers keep producing a beautiful mosaic of multiple crops; wheat, seasonal vegetables, watermelon, melon and sesame, while also maintaining social ties and supporting the local economy.

As Ali Antar exclaims:

*Land, apart from being a source of income, it's the source of our existence here. It's a complex manifestation of our existence and perseverance. Without land, what are you doing in a certain area? Our entity, existence, Ardna [our land], attachment to our homes and land is what al-Battuf is about.*

While in the past, subsistence agriculture created conditions where the village depended on the land, under settler colonial conditions, the land depends on the farmers’ rootedness and sumud on it. In this way, farming does acquire political subjectivity as it is framed as a fundamental act to protect the land. The land becomes a responsibility, and even a burden, requiring the Palestinian subject to re-configure his/her livelihood practices to maintain it. No longer a source of income and a means of production, the act of farming acquires a politicised dimension, rooted in struggles to protect the land through claims to develop it and stay on it. Therefore, claims for water are embedded in this political subjectivity as the farmers devise tactics to

secure more stable and economically sound approaches to enhance the productivity of their land. Through such actions, sumud acquires a practical and pragmatic character, where continuous negotiation and recognition efforts are put forward to convince the settler state of farmers' intentions of inclusivity and social justice. Ali further discusses highlights how farming is political and an act of sumud:

*There are no farmers, there are people who grow crops on their land out of persistence and being on the land. They respect the land and don't want it to remain barren. From the 50,000 dunums, you rarely see land that is barren. This deserves respect as people still make sure their land is cultivated, even if they cultivate while losing money. (Ali Antar)*

Of those handful farmers, female farmers remain underappreciated in their role in maintaining farming activities in al-Battuf. During one meeting with two of my women interlocutors, Jamila and Almaza Al Shathli, both very powerful and independent women farmers who have continued working on their land growing *ba'ali* crops for decades, the conversations revolved around the changes experienced in the valley, and in carrying out farming in particular. Women pioneered the return to the land, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, when men of the village began their exodus seeking waged labour in the Israeli towns and cities. While men abandoned agriculture, women stepped up and continued their agricultural activities (since they were usually important actors in the subsistence agriculture, anyways). Rainfed farming and livestock rearing were their trademarks, and their interest was in cultivating the traditional crops and maintaining the land. After meeting on their land and talking about their work in al-Battuf, they invited me to join them on a 'visit' to other farmers in the valley. This is relevant to the traditional practices of *Ta'zeeb*, where families used to set up tents and remain in the valley during the harvest period, when farmers used to meet at night and socialise. Today, the farmers who remained (men and women of an older age) maintain these visits and meet in the valley to socialise, talking about local news, land and farming, and general gossip. While women remained on the land alongside men and practiced farming, their

visibility in the different plans and proposals, and even the cooperatives themselves, remain minimal.

The gendered construction of who remains as farmers and who is considered as an active agent in the drainage project placed men as the main beneficiaries of agricultural and water projects. Women's role remained that of a complementing actor and was highlighted in social events, like festivals, where they were incorporated into the tactics of remaining on the land. Their presence was highlighted again by state agencies, such as the Town Association for Environmental Quality – Al-Battuf Basin (TAEQ) which became an important actor in re-configuring farmers operations on the land through liaising with the state through their environmental planning role. *Battufna* (our Battuf) festival, is one of those events (see Figure 5.20). As a state-supported project, run closely by the village council, local governmental organisations and even the JNF, it reflects how such organisations are pushing for an agenda of recreation to replace irrigated farming aspiration (and even any form of extensive farming and herding) and control the area as a nature reserve for all residents (including settlements and the wider Israeli population). An environmental agenda and narrative became a dominant approach of the state in dealing with al-Battuf in the past two decades, which promotes maintaining the status-quo to protect the unique ecosystem of the valley and limit any developmental work, such as that to which the drainage project aspires.

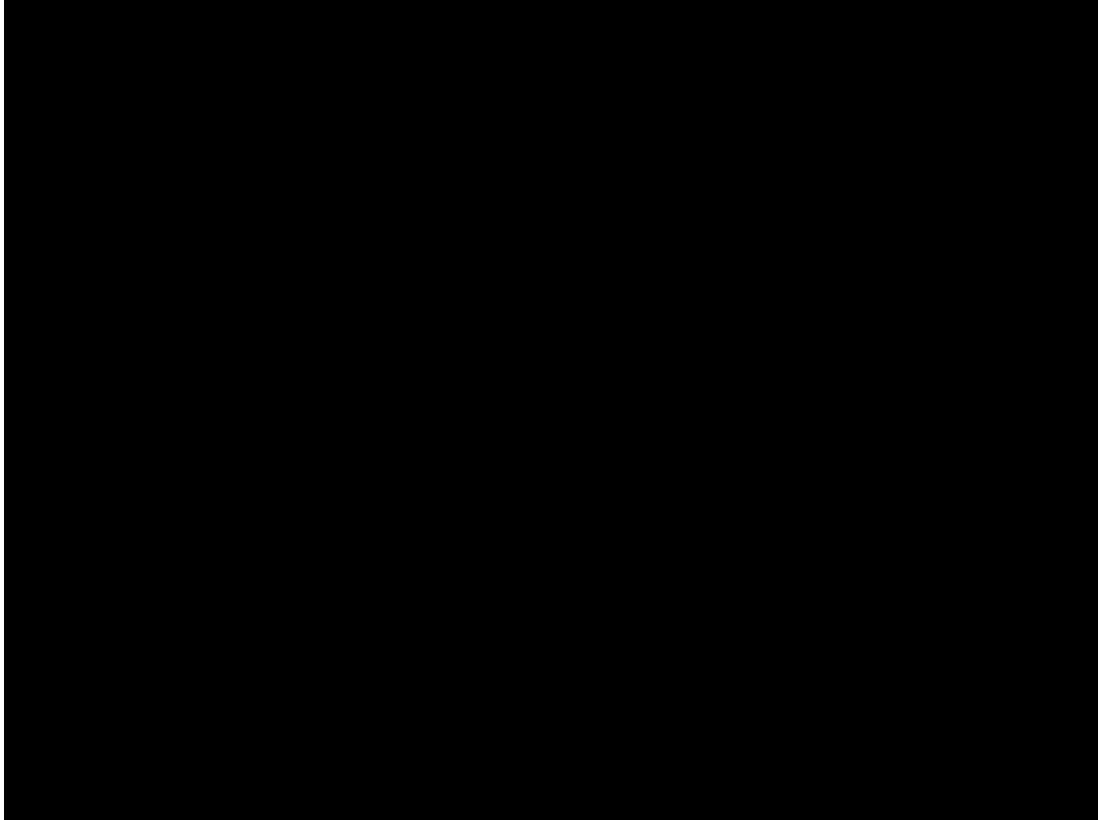


Figure 5.20 A sign at the entrance to al-Battuf valley in Arabic and Hebrew stating “Al-Battuf is ours”, advertising a project of sustainable agriculture, preservation of biodiversity and supporting local economy (Author’s picture, August 2016)

The rise of an environmental protection narrative commenced with TAMA 35, a national masterplan approved in 2005, which aims to maintain a balance between Israel's development needs and the wish to preserve open spaces. TAMA 35 designated al-Battuf as a scenic zone for recreation and landscape preservation, igniting the fury of the local councils, municipalities and political activists in and around al-Battuf. In a large community meeting, representatives of Arab Knesset members, civil society, popular resistance committees, farmers representatives of al-Battuf and municipal and local village councils (Ashams website, 2015) discussed the implications of such a strategy on the transformation of al-battuf from a privately-owned agricultural valley into a state-controlled landscape preservation site (see Figure 5.21). During the meeting, different spokespersons emphasised the centrality of farming as an act of *sumud*, which the farmers have been exercising not only in al-battuf but also in al-Mal lands and their centrality to Land Day 1976 struggles. Such struggles were expressed as being re-lived again with the new policies of the state, such as “TAMA 35”. “TAMA 35” and what followed (with the latest River and Drainage Authority’s plan of 2017), conceptualised al-Battuf as a site of protection and preservation, clashing with the farmers’ decades long struggle and aspiration for



draining al-gharaq and constructing al-Battuf as a site of agricultural production and development. Within such a clash lies not only contesting imaginaries but also what is perceived by the Palestinian communities around al-Battuf as an imposing presence of the state through law making on the last remaining valleys of semi-autonomous Palestinian citizens' presence and control of the land.



*Figure 5.21 Large community meeting in Sakhnin to discuss recent Tama35 ramifications on al-Battuf (source: Arab48 website, 2015)*

Interestingly, the landscape is telling of a larger reality of contradiction between the state's aspirations for its Jewish subjects, and what it prohibits for its Palestinian citizens. The juxtaposition of the largest infrastructure project in the history of the Israeli state, the NWC, with recent proposals for sustainable agriculture and biodiversity protection is stark, and indicative of the differentiated sanctioning of settler colonial geographies and imaginaries by the state. The latest imagination of sahl al-Battuf has become that of a biodiverse oasis, with multiple plans opposing the realisation of the development of intensive farming, excluding Palestinian land owners from articulating their imagination of the place and stripping away any

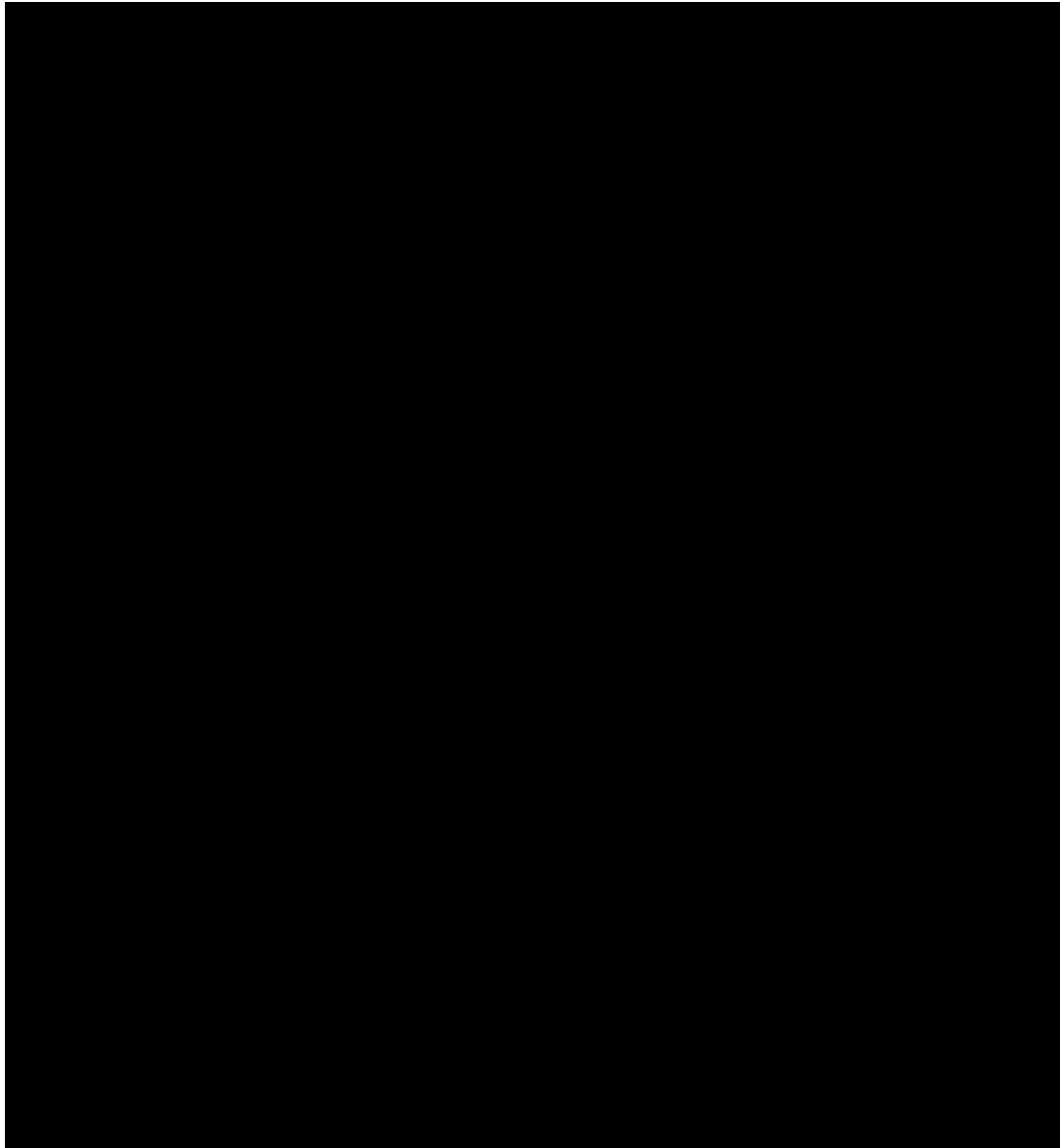
agency over their lands. As the only remaining valley with dominantly Arab ownership and a signifier of an Arab agricultural past and heritage, recent imaginaries of al-Battuf as a nature reserve leave the farmers in a state of hopelessness and disenfranchisement. After decades of adopting the narrative of infrastructural development, through lobbying for the drainage project, the farmers are faced with new state actors, such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection, who are advocating for state intervention in al-Battuf to preserve it as a nature reserve with sustainable agricultural practices and ecotourism activities (Gutkowski, 2018). The environmental and green actors came into the picture and began doubting the justification for the drainage canal and highlighting the aesthetic aspect of the flooding and the small plot mosaic aesthetics. As Abu Saleh exclaims “The new actors against this project are the green party and the environmentalists who claimed that certain species (worms, plants and birds) will go extinct if the drainage project goes ahead. Who is more important the worms or us?”.

This environmental narrative was officially adopted in a study produced by the River and Drainage Authority in 2017 (see Figure 5.22), setting a precedent in the state’s interaction with the Palestinian farmers and their agricultural lands in al-Battuf. Following decades of dismissal and a number of unkept promises of agricultural development, leaving farmers in limbo ‘with and without’ water and infrastructure, the government’s latest renewed interest is in maintaining the status-quo of the farmer and furthering state control and ordering of the valley. The authority proposed a plan for the rehabilitation and development of al-Battuf as a nature reserve and a hub for alternative agriculture, walking trails and local ecotourism (River and Drainage Authority, 2017), labeling those efforts as empowering and strengthening ‘sustainable’ agricultural methods. The plan is a joint collaboration between the Drainage Authority, the Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Protection, the Open Spaces Fund of the Israel Land Administration and representatives of the local authorities in the area (Haaretz, 2018).<sup>48</sup> Aimed at reviving al-Battuf in a manner that allows the ‘co-existence of

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<sup>48</sup> The project has been approved by the Northern District Planning and Building Committee, which as an authority is responsible for all development projects in al-Battuf on 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2017.

agriculture and nature', the plan renewed interest in al-Battuf unique landscape. State and non-state actors (like TAEQ) have highlighted how the modes of traditional agriculture which were carried out by the Palestinians for generations have enabled conditions for the protection and thriving of species of wild plants that don't exist anywhere else in Palestine/Israel. The phenomena of al-gharaq, coupled with rain-fed agriculture that relies on natural fertilizer and minimal interventions on the land have allowed for this biodiversity to thrive (Gutkowski, 2018). Such statements coming from official Israeli authorities seem incomprehensible and contradictory to decades of a Zionist modernity narrative based specifically on hegemony over nature and a technopolitical approach to agricultural development (Alatout, 2009; Anton, 2008). Heavily framed as primitive and irrational by state, the Palestinian agricultural methods and forms of working the land have now become embraced and celebrated by the same state ostracizing them and their practices as incompatible to the modern Zionist and Israeli aspirations.



*Figure 5.22 The cover of the Drainage Authority 2017 report in Arabic and Hebrew*

Framed as the last remaining biodiversity hotspot in the country, al-Battuf therefore embodied an interesting shift in Israeli water and environmental narratives which took place in the 1990s. This shift was from a territorial and sovereignty framing of natural resource management to that of quality of life (Alatout, 2006). While the farmers of al-Battuf employ narratives of “identity in which national belonging is expressed, almost exclusively, in territorial terms” (Alatout, 2006, p. 616), the recent Israeli-Jewish narrative evokes priorities of quality of life and environmental protection. While Alatout focuses on Palestinians inside the West

Bank and Gaza Strip and their environmental narratives, the same approach can be used to analyse the contemporary dynamics which faced both Palestinians inside Israel and the oGH when claiming rights to resources. The scarcity justification, used by the state to explain Arab exclusion from water development policy, is now further remoulded by new actors, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, into a concern for quality of life, biodiversity and aesthetics protection. The Palestinian citizens' lack of sovereignty or control over resources and even their own lands leads to a solidification of territorial claim making over land and water. This clashes with the state's narratives of environmental protection and biodiversity preservation, causing an irreconcilable situation. The contestation between state imaginaries of sahl al-Battuf as a site of environmental protection and the Palestinian citizens' imaginaries of al-Battuf as a site of resistance and sumud (through the drainage project and development of farming) is therefore heightened<sup>49</sup>. The state plans to transform al-battuf to a site of control and monitoring have significantly reduced the efforts of the farmers to remain steadfast on the land and have imposed on them yet again alternative imaginaries than their own. The denial of the right to infrastructure and development of their agricultural land and the imposition of a nature reserve is seen not only as an encroachment of the state on privately owned land, but part of a persisting effort to uproot the remaining farming communities from the land, turning it into a public space controlled by the state. Under the drainage Authority project, work commenced in June 2018 on excavation and expansion of the zero canal as first step towards alleviating the flooding of al-gharaq areas, with promises of providing water for agriculture along the canal, and the construction of agricultural roads (See Figure 5.23).

These environmental imaginaries of the reality of al-Battuf reflect a story of how water *was made* political (Alatout 2009) by multiple actors, including the

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<sup>49</sup> This is further complicated with competing Palestinian narratives and imaginaries of the area. While farmers insist on maintaining its agricultural character, Palestinian civil society ((like the Arab Alternative Planning Centre) focus their advocacy in general on more land for housing and urban development, and aim to extend and expand plans, such as TAMA35 to urban development. While they realise the importance of agricultural development for al-Battuf, their work is to liaise

advocates for the drainage project, as Hanadi Hijris from TAEQ explains (Interview, Sakhnin, 28 August 2017):

*The politicians and those who are outspoken about the issues of al Battuf had one concern which was water but when we conducted that survey with the farmers we discovered something else. When we talked to the farmers, the story was different. From the politicians' point of view and the ones who speak up for the cooperative, they raise and flag the issue of water as existential – often citing the metaphor of al-Battuf being like a camel that holds so much water, but always remains thirsty, specifically citing the NWC and the zero canal. The big voices blame the NWC, the state, and the occupation. But look at other Arab Palestinian farmers in Marj Ibn Amer, or those in Qalansweh.<sup>50</sup> who are practicing agriculture with no issues. Even in al-Battuf itself, B'ineh Njeidar, Il'izeer etc are also content. Why not you as well [Arrabeh and Sakhnin]? Politics play a very important role influencing how al-battuf situation has reached this point.*



Figure 5.23 Resumed work on the zero Canal by the River Drainage Authority (Al Jalel, 2018)

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<sup>50</sup> Both agricultural areas inside Israel where Palestinian citizens practice farming.

Evidently, TAEQ, being an environmental governmentally sponsored entity is also involved in the Drainage Authority's plan, advocating for traditional farming to remain with an increased support from the state and through normalising environmental narratives and ideas to 'preserve a traditional and equilibrium agroecology which has been destroyed elsewhere in the country'.

However, uneven waterscapes are further exposed today as the NWC, the epitome of Zionist waterscapes and hydro-imaginaries, is being re-configured after 54 years of its imposition in al-Battuf land. In March 2018, the farmers of al-Battuf found out about a number of bulldozers and trucks operating in the valley, dislodging large pipelines and placing them in the fenced area of the NWC canal (see Figure 5.24). Without any prior notification to the village councils of Sakhnin and Arrabeh or to the farmers themselves, Mekorot carried out the transportation of these pipes without any further clarification. Evidently, Mekorot is embarking on a large-scale project to transport desalinated water from the Mediterranean Sea through a series of pipelines to Lake Tiberias (Jerusalem Post, 2017), an assemblage which reverses that of the NWC, which has itself been only partly operational in recent years. To combat the continuous drop in the level of Lake Tiberias, the latest technological fix is the reversal of the NWC and the pumping of desalinated water back to Lake Tiberias (see Figure 5.25). The drop in Lake Tiberias has reached alarming levels with the legacy of the NWC pumping water to the Naqab. While the NWC hasn't been 'flowing' as strong as previous years, the average pumping from Lake Tiberias has been 286 MCM/ year and is continuously dropping, as farmers observed throughout the years. This was due to a drop in the water level of Lake Tiberias in the last couple of years, reaching 214 meters below sea level (Water Authority, 2018).



*Figure 5.24 the pipes laid down by Mekorot in Al-Battuf, inside the fenced area of the NWC canal (Alarab news agency, 2018)*

The sight of Mekorot employees and pipes instantly caused anxiety amongst the farmers due to their fear of a new confiscation row. While the plans for the pipelines are still not clear, the TAEQ confirms that it will be part of an underground pipeline by the Water Authority and Mekorot that will transfer desalinated water to increase the water levels of the lake. The scarcity narrative is resurfacing and resituating al-Battuf as a site of national water transfer, 54 years after the construction of the NWC and the confiscation of 1,500 dunums of the farmers land. Again, the farmers were not made aware of these developments and, similar to the 1950s and 60s struggles discussed in chapter 4, the state is handling a crisis in water availability with the same logic as before: technological solutions to save the day. This development will undoubtedly resituate Al-Battuf within the national hydro-imaginary of previous decades and these scarcity-driven policies and ‘fixes’ will again impact the lived realities of Al-Battuf farmers, re-configuring the struggle over land and water and reinstating it at the forefront of their struggles. This is particularly the case with other developments on the ground after years of stagnation, with the River Drainage Authority taking its first concrete steps in its project to develop Al-Battuf.





*Figure 5.25 the expanding island in the Lake Tiberias (above), and Mekorot's pipelines being installed to alleviate the water drop (Ynetnews, 2018)*

## 5.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter narrated the struggle of al-Battuf farmers from 1954, when the NWC was imposed on their lived geographies until the present day. It focuses on how water came to al-Battuf and was made an object of political and territorial struggle. It argues that al-Battuf presents a case of an uneven waterscape, fraught with dichotomies of carrying out farming with and without water and infrastructure, and how such dynamics construct water as a tool of claiming recognition, visibility and continuous presence on the land. the uneven waterscape materialises in the

sanctioning of state-led water development, while prohibiting such development for the farmers which remain active on the land, placing them as actors in confronting the state, devising tactics which enact sumud against all odds. The efforts of farmers to claim water-as-a-resource, mainly rainwater/precipitation through infrastructure (the drainage project) are also claims of political recognition, land-based identity and belonging.

## **Chapter 6: The lived geographies of the oGH villages and their re-configuration under Israeli settler colonial rule**

In this chapter, the first research question of the thesis is addressed, exploring how water and land policies and practices of the settler colonial state impact the lives and livelihood practices of farming communities in the occupied Golan Heights (oGH). The analysis focuses on how the relationship with the Israeli state was negotiated, following important years of rupture and dispossession, namely 1967 and 1982. It also explores farmers' ideas and norms around their daily practices of farming, which have been changing dramatically under the Israeli occupation and later annexation.

The chapter is divided into four sections and offers a historical overview of the abrupt transformation experienced by this community and the re-configuration of their lives under settler colonial rule, with the political effects and responses addressed in Chapter 7. The first section explores the lived experiences of the Jawlani villages before the 1967 Israeli occupation, to provide a glimpse of established water norms, specifically in the village of Majdal Shams. The section shows how the farmers of the oGH, with a high dependence on agriculture and marketing of their products already had a prosperous farming sector focused on fruit trees, notably apple orchards. While their water infrastructure was only locally developed, farming cooperatives were beginning to be established to negotiate farming issues with the Syrian government in Damascus, and a local water management arrangement was developed.

The second and third sections of the chapter examine two distinct periods, 1967-1981 and post-1981 respectively, describing the ontological manifestations of settler colonial rule on the ground, through the Israeli imposition of military laws and settlement development plans, and the effects of this on the livelihoods of those residing in the remaining Syrian villages. In the second section, I show how the occupation achieved an almost complete control over the physical means of production, land and water, and therefore transformed and re-configured agriculture in the remaining villages of the oGH, while constructing a settler-focused water

infrastructure and developing agriculture over the land formerly belonging to Syrian villages (most of the area of the oGH). The Israeli state's narratives of water scarcity and its ambitious attempts to judaise the Golan have created spatial confinement and exclusion for the remaining villages, restricting them from carrying out their agricultural practices and limiting them to farming only. The third section examines how, through a series of military orders, settlement development plans and agricultural investments, the remaining agricultural activities in the Syrian villages of the oGH were transformed into a field of contestation, transforming farming and with it the landscapes and lived experiences of farmers in the oGH. The chapter concludes that settler colonial local hydro-hegemony played a significant role in altering the lives and livelihoods of the indigenous Arab population, uprooting and re-configuring their land and water ontologies. The settler colonial state policies extended to all aspects of life, including issues of citizenship and identification, which as this thesis argues, became imbricated with land and water struggles and politicised farming practices as acts of collective resistance, as will be seen in Chapter 7.

## 6.1 Local ontologies of Land and water pre-1967

The geographical location of the Syrian villages at an elevation between 600 and 1200 meters above sea level, in addition to their position at the headwaters of the Upper Jordan Basin, necessitates agro-development that conforms to these environmental conditions. Such conditions dictate the planting of certain crops, with experience since the 1950s favouring fruit trees, in particular apple orchards, as the most suitable and lucrative crop for these farming communities. Prior to 1967, the Golan Heights villages belonged to the Syrian province of Quneitra, and were populated by predominantly subsistence farmers, who even then enjoyed a large degree of autonomy from the state (Batatu, 1999).

Under the Syrian government, land was divided into three categories of ownership according to the Agricultural Reform Law No. 161 of 1958, followed by Law No. 134 to manage and organise the agricultural operations (Al-Marsad, 2009).

This agricultural reform law essentially cancelled the Ottoman-era land categorisation, especially the Miri (as explained in Chapter 4). This resulted in the distribution of land to the fellahin who had been cultivating and working on the land. The Syrian state maintained its control over what was considered state land, estimated at around 5000 dunums in the Quneitra and Feeq (south of the Golan) districts (Bagh, 1983). Notably, the Syrian government (and the French colonial power beforehand) was not as meticulous regarding land parcellation and surveying as British mandate Palestine. Therefore, in Syria land was mainly privately owned but while some land was parcelled and distributed to individual owners, other lands were collectively owned as a 'future reservoir for the village and its residents' (ASD, 1994).<sup>51</sup>

Majdal Shams, amongst other villages in the Golan, carried out land parcellation in the early 1930s, which included a fair distribution of land to each family (mostly Druze and Christian families), according to their needs and the productivity of the land. This was later driven by the Syrian government land reforms mentioned above and resulted in a situation where most lands in the villages studied were parcelled and ownership was given to local residents. These progressive steps, compared to the feudal system limiting ownership to elite large landholders common in Palestine, secured land ownership to all families within the community and limited state encroachment on their lands. More importantly, the parcellation of the land also developed, according to Jawlanis, a sense of belonging and attachment to the land (Interview with Salman Fakherliddin, political activist, January 2017):

The distribution of land had a very huge impact on how people viewed the land and means of production and it was done in a fair and equal manner.

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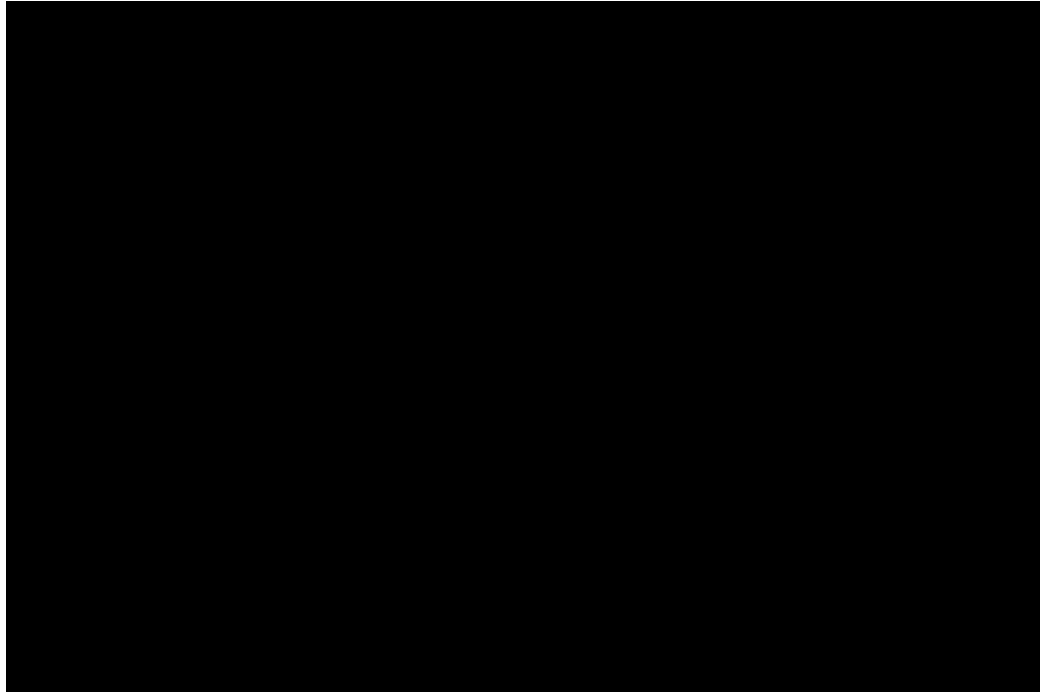
<sup>51</sup> The Syrian government's pro-agriculture policies encouraged villagers to reclaim land and expand the agricultural base (Barnes, 2009). In Majdal Shams specifically, the villagers who established the village more than 400 years ago bought the lands from the Ottoman Emir and other local owners. There were distinctions between two types of land bought: the fertile lands which were bought by individual families, and the mountainous lands, which were on a rugged terrain and, were less fertile. These were bought collectively under the Waq (religious endowment) which controlled them until there was a need for land expansion (for housing or agriculture) when these lands would be re-parceled and granted to those in need. In Syria, there was no Mashaa' land as there was in Palestine therefore all land had either private ownership or was state land (ASD, 1994).

While in feudal systems peasants feel a sense of alienation from the produce and the source of labour (land), the small landholder who owns the land does not experience this feeling but a stronger feeling of attachment to his land.

This early identification with land ownership therefore allowed the farmers in the oGH to think strategically about land use, management and productivity, allowing a better utilisation of the land with the support of the Syrian state.<sup>52</sup> With land being secured and more equally distributed amongst the Jawlani, the potential increased to grow perennial crops, like fruit trees and grape trees, in addition to the traditional seasonal vegetables and grain. While the Golan Heights is a fertile agricultural region, the villages predominantly relied on water sources available in their vicinity and according to their needs. According to the Syrian statistics of 1966 regarding agricultural activities in the Quneitra region, most of the crops were rain-fed, with dry or rain-fed farming constituting 370,000 out of 390,000 dunums (cited in Davis, 1983, 284). Wheat was the dominant crop (see Figure 6.1), with a production of 18,000 tons in Quneitra (Al-Marsad, 2009) and other crops like barley, corn, grapes, and fruit trees all relied on rain-water and were not irrigated. Davis (1983) also provides details regarding agriculture production in the Quneitra region, where dry or rain-fed farming constitutes 370,000 out of 390,000 dunums (figures from Syrian Arab Republic, 1966, p.284). Vegetables on the other hand, like cauliflower and other seasonal varieties were usually planted around fresh water sources, notably local springs. This was the case in and around *Marj al Ya'fouri* but also in other locations in the Golan Heights, like *Al Bteeha* in the south, which was known for growing vegetables due to the suitable climate and water abundance.

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<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, a similar rootedness pattern can be observed in the Galilee (inside 1948 Israel), and North-central West Bank where land ownership was private and olive cultivation is intensive, and where Palestinians continue to inhabit these regions without being displaced (Reger, 2017). These lands are owned by small farmers and landholders.



*Figure 6.1 Majdal Shams village and the Bayader (a space where tilling and separating the grains took place (Government Press Office, Milner Moshe 1967)*

The location of al-Bteeha and surrounding villages, on the shores of Lake Tiberias, also facilitated the development of fisheries. Al-Marsad (2009) documents how a fish market took place once a week to sell and transport fish to Damascus. Moreover, livestock rearing was also as a significant and complementary agricultural activity in the Golan Heights. Thus, agriculture was the main economic activity of the Golan Heights pre-1967, where 64% of the labour force was employed in farming and fishing (Davis, 1983). As cited by Davis, the Syrian statistics of 1966 attest to a flourishing agricultural region on the eve of the Israeli occupation.<sup>53</sup> Thousands of tons of grain, vegetables, milk, wool, honey, meat and eggs were recorded. As for orchards, an area of 40,400 dunums with 2.7 million fruit trees with an annual production of 22,000 tons of various fruits was planted in the Golan Heights (Davis, 1983, p.5).

The 1960s were also decades of economic prosperity in the region as there was an increasing commercialisation of agriculture, evident in the abandonment of

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<sup>53</sup> livestock numbers were 3,700 cows, 1 or 2 million sheep and goats, 1,300 horses, 7,000 beasts of burden, 200,000 poultry, and 7,000 beehives

growing wheat and a greater reliance on grape vineyards. While the transformation was taking place from wheat to fruit trees, vegetables and other perennial crops were still grown for subsistence purposes. In 1966, the Golan Heights as part of the Quneitra province was producing a variety of crops. In the case of fruit trees, apples made up 7,970 dunums of land, constituting 18.5% of total land used, with vineyards dominant at 40% of the land covered by fruit trees. Social infrastructure was also established, with cooperatives and farmers' associations working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture in Damascus to enhance agricultural productivity and marketing (Mara'i and Halabi, 1992).

The Syrian laws of land redistribution and ownership, therefore, had clearly established landowners in the Golan Heights who had control over their agricultural activities and livelihoods. With a strong attachment to the land, Majdal Shams farmers were also the first to adopt apple tree planting and begin replacing pulses and seasonal vegetable growing as early as 1946. Apple trees, from Lebanese saplings, were first planted as a fruit crop under flood irrigation in Al Ya'four, therefore being an irrigated crop to which spring water sources were diverted locally. Within ten years, the Jawlani apples (known until today as *Tufah Al Jawlan* – apples of the Golan) were being exported to Egypt. Al Marj area was endowed with spring water from *Ras El Nabi'* (translated as Head of the Spring) and therefore was the ideal location for the first orchards. Hayel Abu Jabal, a political activist and veteran farmer narrates:

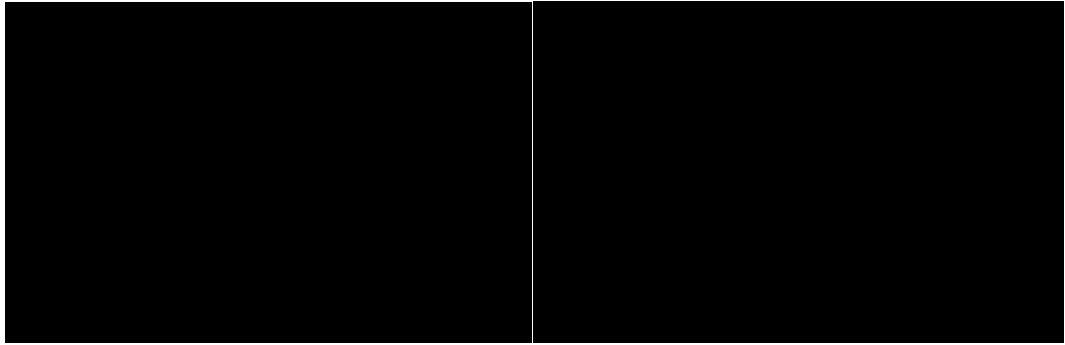
*The apples have an interesting history in our area. One of the Sheikhs from our region has relatives in Lebanon. On one of his visits, he was introduced to the apple tree and saw how productive it was. He came back and explained to people about the economic value of this crop. People didn't accept this at first...but he was a well-known and respected sheikh, so a couple of farmers agreed to go into this venture. They travelled to Lebanon and brought back a few saplings. That was in 1946, before the creation of the Israeli state. A couple of years later in 1950, the apple produce was ready. When people saw the production and the economic value of growing apples, there was a Hajmeh (Arabic for attack or rush) on the land. They planted a large area of land in the Marj. Everybody*



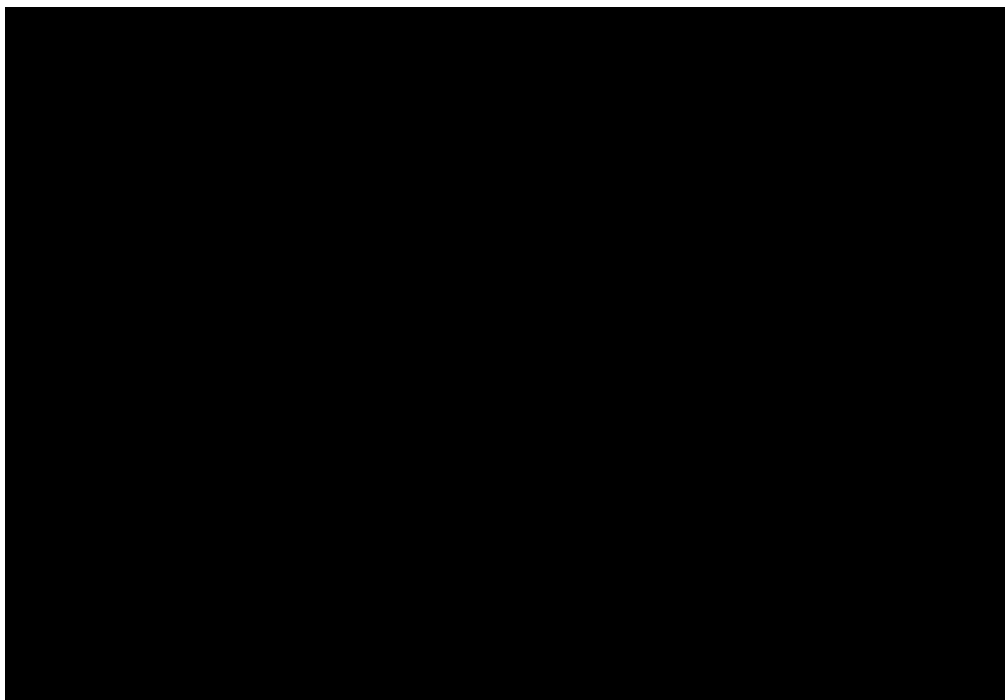
*began planting the apples. I remember clearly in 1953 another Hajmeh, and by then half of the Marj's area was planted. By the end of the 1950s, there were more than 4000 dunums planted with apple trees. In 1967, the area of apple orchards was 6,400 dunum, and people began considering expanding to rain-fed land (Interview with Hayel Abu Jabal, farmer and political figure, Majdal Shams, 17 December 2016).*

This account shows how apple growing was already developed and expanding before the Israeli occupation began in 1967 through a *Hajmeh*, a rush to the land. This mostly relied on springs, but well drilling and pumping of groundwater also supplied the orchards on a limited scale. As Davis (1983) notes, only 12 small-scale pumping licenses were issued in Quneitra province in 1966 (Syrian Arab Republic, 1967, cited in Davis, 1983, p.6). Therefore, while large-scale water infrastructure was not developed by the Syrian state, the villages relied on water resources available to them and managed to develop pockets of irrigated agriculture throughout the Golan Heights.

While no extensive water abstraction was taking place in the Golan Heights, there were local efforts to utilise spring water in an efficient manner. Reliance on springs and collective efforts to bring water to the fields further enhanced local knowledge of the springs, the Sa'ar river and Mt. Hermon as a water source, which the local inhabitants were using as a source of ice for domestic use, in addition to the yearlong flows of the springs due to the melting ice. Birket Ram, or Lake Ram, a unique volcanic pool of 5 million cubic metres (mcm) capacity, was used for the local irrigation of nearby orchards, as a source of water for livestock, and for small-scale fishing (see Figure 6.2 and 6.3).



*Figure 6.2 Birket Ram and surrounding orchards after the 1967 occupation (picture by David Haftzilit, 1968 acquired from Jawlani website)*



*Figure 6.3 Abu Yasser Mohammad Sha'ar, known as the most skilled fisherman in the region, taken in 1969 (Jawlani website)*

The Jawlani farmers testify to the historical success of their communal planning and funding of water resources, predating Syrian rule. *Ein El Tufaha* (the apple spring) project in 1945 was one example of that, where water was transferred from a natural spring (now inside the Syrian-controlled Golan) to connect 410 houses to running water in Majdal Shams. Similarly, the area of Al Marj, the location for the earliest planting of apple trees in Majdal Shams in the 1940s, was also supplied by water from Ras il Nabi' (translates as 'the source of the spring'), thereafter the main

site for agricultural activities during the following two decades and symbolically pivotal to the current Jawlani ethno-geographic community. Al Marj lands are situated in the valley of the Ya'four, where the apple orchards were irrigated by a basic network of cement channels constructed by the community in the 1940s, diverting waters from Sa'ar River. Current Jawlani farmers express pride in this tradition of communal action and utilisation of their natural resources and highlight how their autonomy over land and water use has consolidated their belonging to the land.

This section showed how water distribution in the Syrian Golan Heights, similar to patterns of water distribution in the Galilee and the wider region of the Levant, involved a network of decentralised arrangements to capture water for irrigation and agricultural production. In the case of Majdal Shams, decentralised collective efforts were carried out to secure water for agricultural development from the nearby springs, and Birket Ram was used for fishing and as a source of drinking water for livestock. These collective efforts of water management were embedded in well-established practices of communal agriculture that pre-dated Syrian rule and were respected by the Syrian state.

## 6.2 The years of rupture (1967-1982)

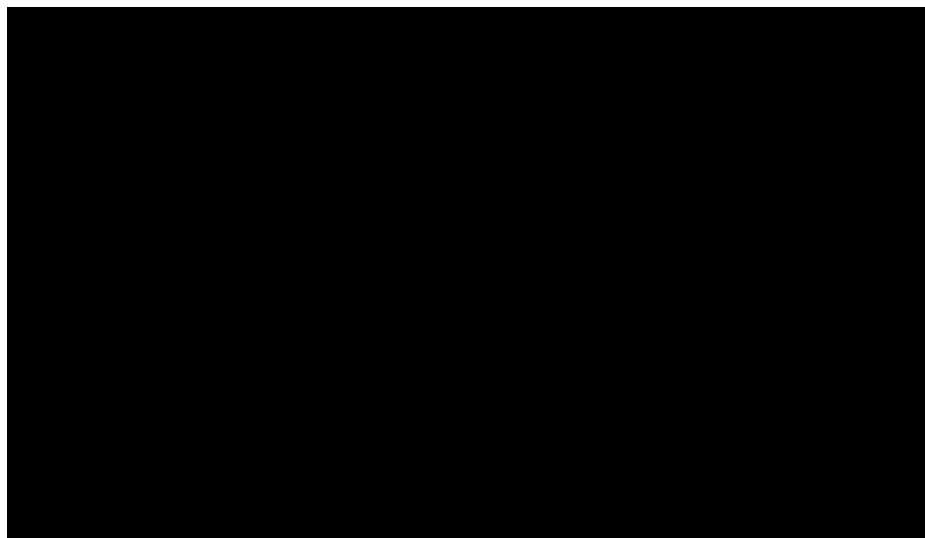
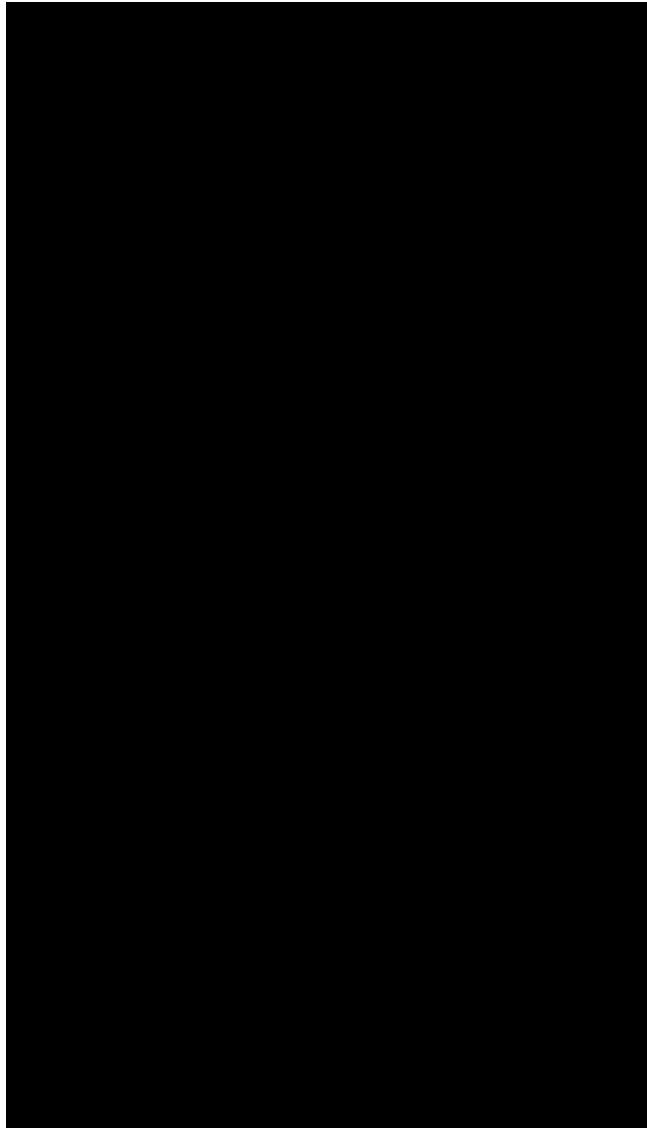
The 1948 war, followed by the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab countries, has placed the Golan Heights at the heart of the battles over the Jordan River Basin, especially within the Upper Jordan River. As highlighted earlier in Chapter 1, the 1967 war was critical in shaping the oGH as a hydro-strategic waterscape, when the control of the upper Jordan tributaries (Zeitoun et al., 2012) under the 'Israeli hegemony era' (Feitelson, 2000) was consolidated. As discussed in Chapter 1, the focus of the TWM literature has been on the upper tributaries of the Jordan and their hydrostrategic importance for the Israeli state. This section will zoom in on the disruptions and re-configuration of the lived geographies of the remaining Syrian villages after the 1967 war and how Israeli local hydro-hegemony was consolidated.

As the war ended on the Golan Heights front, the Druze villages remaining were disconnected from each other and the outside world. Jawlanis recall how during the first days and weeks of the occupation, they were not aware how many villages remained intact, who was controlling what area and the situation in the nearby city of Quneitra.<sup>54</sup> Slowly, with the presence of Israeli army in their villages and the imposition of military rule, it became evident to the Jawlanis the extent of the displacement, destruction and transformation of their local geography. The Israeli occupation caused a devastating physical and existential rupture, also disrupting the socio-economic and political lives and disconnecting the remaining inhabitants from their Syrian homeland. It was nonetheless considered by the remaining population as a 'temporary' phase of military rule that was to be tolerated until political interventions and negotiations rectified the situation. The 1967 occupation has always been framed as a case of 'subtle' or civilian occupation.<sup>55</sup> (Ó Cuinn, 2011; Weizman, 2007), that of a 'refined' settler colonial rule (Gordon and Ram, 2016), and a case where the oGH became a region under a 'forgotten' occupation (Al-Marsad, 2018). For the Jawlanis, the 1967 war and its aftermath are considered a point of rupture in their lived experience. Similar to the *Nakba* (catastrophe) experienced by Palestinians in 1948, the Jawlanis experienced an abrupt disintegration of their social and political everyday life: the forced displacement of more than 130,000 people, the destruction of cities, villages and farms, leaving behind a population of a mere 6,000 people distributed in 6 villages (See Figure 6.4 and 6.5). Five Druze villages, Majdal Shams, Buq'atha, Mas'ada, Ein Qinya and S'heeta, and the Alewite village of Al Ghajar remained (Mara'i and Halabi, 1992). However, S'heeta Village was depopulated soon after by the Israeli army in 1970 and its population relocated to Mas'ada village. The village was completely demolished and turned into a military zone (Al-Marsad, 2018).

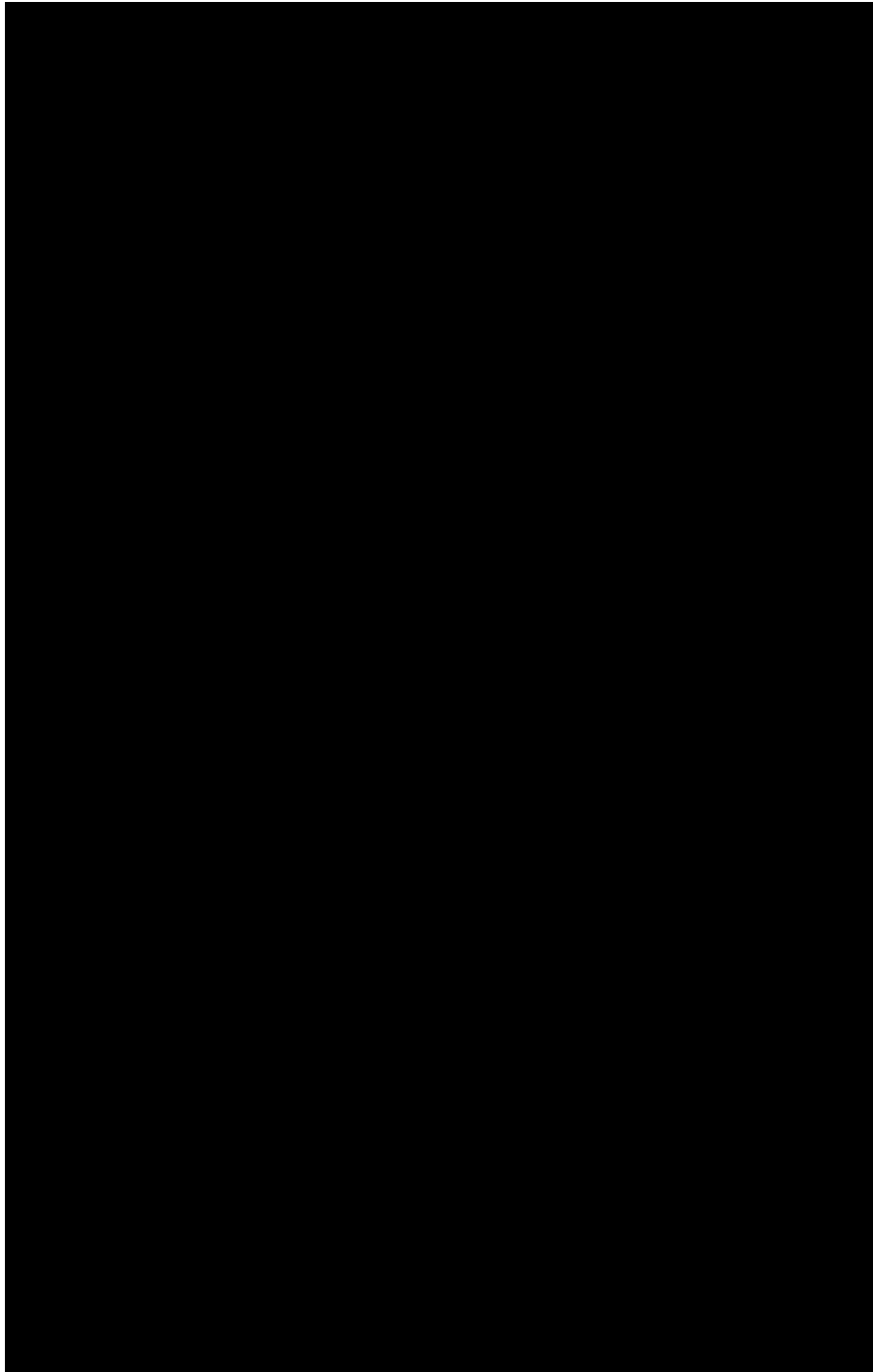
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<sup>54</sup> In 1973, another Arab-Israeli War, known as Youm Kippur War took place and Syria reclaimed 50km<sup>2</sup> of the oGH. The city of Qunietra was completely destroyed by the Israeli army before withdrawing and returning the city to Syria (Al-Marsad, 2018)

<sup>55</sup> For example, from the start of occupation the oGH had no military courts in order to further prove the emptiness of the Golan from a threatening population, justifying 'fresh' law making (Hajjar, 2005).



*Figure 6.4 Destroyed Syrian villages after the 1967 war highlighted in Green, while those remaining are highlighted in purple, and the Israeli settlements in red (Al-Marsad,2017)*



*Figure 6.5 A visual representation of remaining villages and Israeli settlements (Al-Marsad, 2018)*

With this abrupt transformation, Syrian territorial sovereignty was replaced by Israeli military control (Ram, 2013; 2015). Directly following the occupation, a series of military laws and orders issued by the Israeli occupation formally nullified Syrian sovereignty, introducing Israeli legal and administrative authority over the

oGH. The oGH was declared a closed military zone which tightened the military's control over land and declared all water resources and works the sole responsibility of the Israeli state, under the sole control of the military governor (Keary, 2013). The realities under occupation therefore limited the geographical and political existence of the remaining population and confined their civil and national rights. Herding and livestock rearing were two professions which were eliminated completely, and the backbone of self-subsistence which characterised the region pre-occupation was ultimately crushed by the uprooting experienced by the Jawlani populations and the loss of their access to land. Today, there are at least 23,000 Israeli-Jewish settlers in the Occupied Syrian Golan, living in 34 illegal settlements. Together with the Israeli military and authorities, they control 95% of the land. The forcible transfer of its Syrian inhabitants was followed by the systematic destruction of Arab villages and farms by the Israeli military, facilitating land appropriation, settlement building, and the transfer of Israeli settlers into the region – all breaches of international humanitarian law (Murphy and Gannon, 2010).

### 6.2.1 The Golan Heights in the Israeli hydro-imaginary

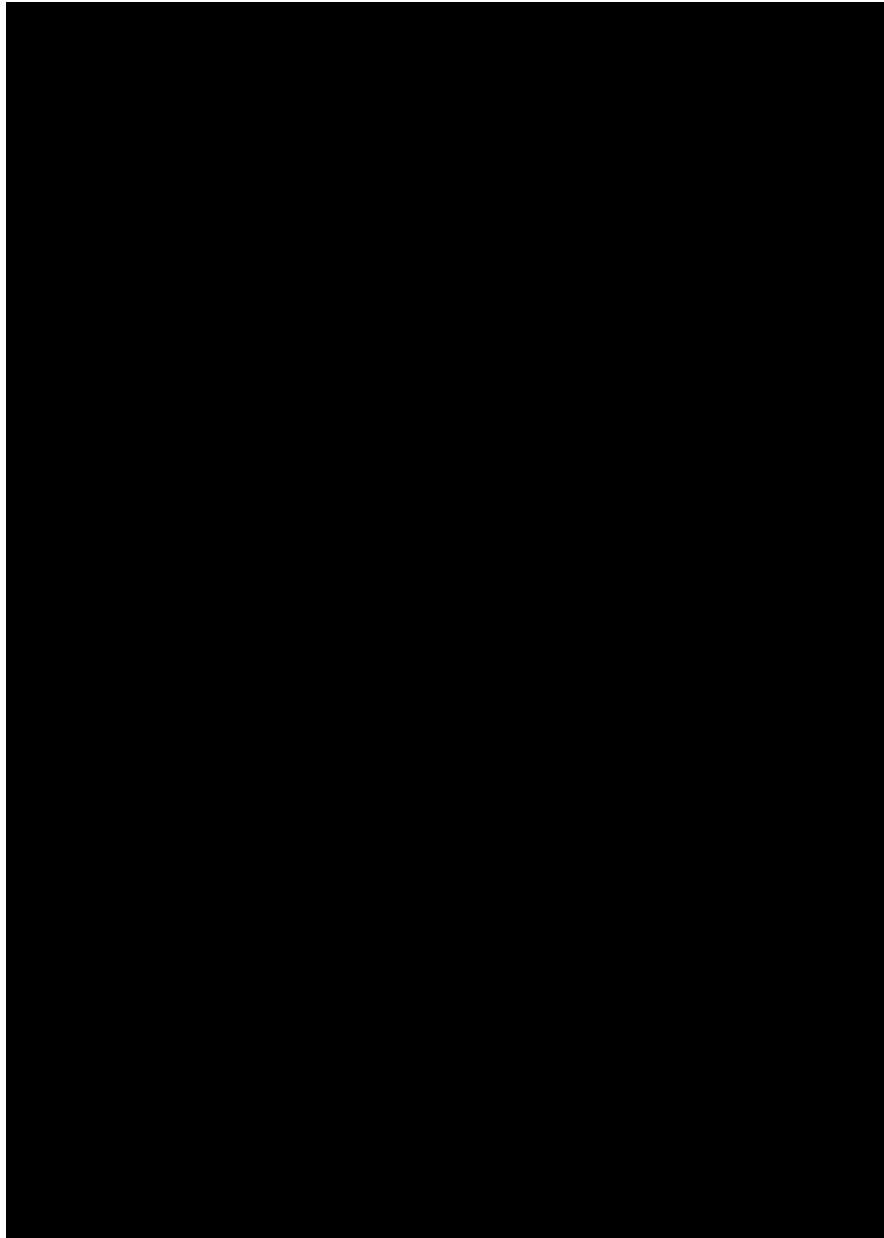
Following the aftermath of the 1973 war, the occupied Golan Heights became known, by Israeli defence ministers and security forces, as the *quiet front*. While it might be a quiet military front, the Golan Heights was perceived as a water exploration front. Israel's occupation of the Golan secured its control of the entire surface recharge areas of the Liddan and Banis rivers and therefore the quantity and quality of water reaching Lake Tiberias (Zeitoun et al., 2012, p.78). With its capture of the Golan (along with the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Sinai), Israel gained territorial expanse and enhanced its geostrategic position (see Figure 6.6). It also "greatly improved its hydro-strategic position, extensively limiting any water works and diversions by Arab countries whether individually or collectively" (Wolf, 1995, p.52). The Mukheibh dam in Syria is a case in point, which, after being destroyed by Israel in 1964, and together with Israel's strategic occupation of the Himmeh and control over 15 km of the Yarmouk Riverbed, meant no further unilateral water

infrastructure was built without Israel's consent. This hegemonic position also allowed Israel to carry out 'remote' control, beyond the territorial and physical control of land, where Israel could retain control over the transboundary flows with only its soft power to sanction any water use and development (Zeitoun et al., 2012).

Wolf (1995, p.55) also highlights the imbrication of water with strategic planning and territorial control by stating how, when Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Dayan was on a tour of the Heights just before the Yom Kippur War in 1973, he insisted on the acceleration of dam building in the oGH as an anti-tank barricade. Through what Newman (1989a, p.219) refers to as "a mixture of civilian and military presence", the Israeli state ensured its territorial control over all its occupied territories (and territories within the state, where its Jewish presence is overshadowed by an Arab majority, like the Galilee) through the civilian settlement development and control of resources, where agricultural settlements and resource control became mechanisms of defence and security of a settler colonial Jewish state. The defensive function of the oGH therefore acquired also a political dimension, within which control of water resources was of high domestic priority for the Israeli state. Thus, Wolf describes the settlements not only as agricultural communities but also as outposts, serving political and security means. Water's association with agriculture acquired it with ideological weight (Galnoor, 1978) and as Frey and Naff state (1985, p.76):

*Israeli agriculture is not merely an ordinary economic sector. It is linked to the crucial matter of settlements, and settlements are linked to defence and national security.*





*Figure 6.6 Map showing 'The strategic value of the Golan Heights' (source: PASSIA, n.d)*

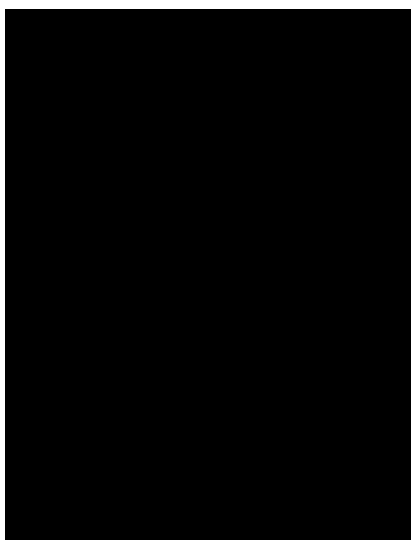
On seizing the Golan Heights, the emphasis of the Israeli water policymakers was on the fact that out of the 500 mcm of water available from the Upper Jordan River, 90% (around 440 mcm) was now under the control and use of the Israeli state. In addition to the rivers and springs, the runoff and floods were seen as a potential water source to divert and utilise. The groundwater potential of the Golan Heights (and other occupied territories like the West Bank) were also taken into consideration as important water sources (ISA, 1968):

*Even at the Yarmouk our situation has been improved and we are in control of part of its waters and we are situated along its banks for over 15 km...[the] control and presence on the sources of the Jordan and Yarmouk is sufficient to ensure that we are entitled to those sources and to maximise the utilisation of the water for the benefit of the residents of the countries of the region.*

Birket Ram was also constructed as a site within the Israeli hydro-imaginary, even before the Israeli invasion and occupation. In a 1956 news article, for example, the Golan Heights was associated with a prophecy of the first-century Romano-Jewish scholar, Yosef ben Matityahu, who describes Birket Ram as a mysterious water body of elliptical shape and ‘the source of the Jordan’ (La Mirhav, 1956). The article shows the Israeli ethno-geographic ambition in reclaiming the Golan Heights as a part of the biblical land of Israel, aspiring to return to the top of the Hermon ‘without fear’. A strictly technical hydrogeological report by Tahal construct Birket Ram as a site to conquer and claim, and further study (ISA, 1968):

*A very interesting hydrogeological phenomenon is the Ram pool which may have value in the development of the water resources of the North of the Golan. Opinions are divided between the geologists regarding its creation and permeability*

After the Israeli occupation, the tourism potential of the oGH was fully explored, and natural environments were utilised to render colonial space suitable for settler colonialist use and enjoyment, as Moriel Ram explores (2013, p.739). Appropriation of natural sites such as Birket Ram or Mt. Hermon as Israeli environmental scenery replicated the picturesque aesthetic of Western scenic landscapes and naturalised an occupied land which Israel sought to claim as its own (See Figure 6.7).



*Figure 6.7 Israeli Postal stamp depicting Birket Ram as part of 'Israeli landscapes' (Israeli Postal Services, 1972)*

#### 6.2.2 Military orders and the governing of lives and livelihoods

As Meehan asserts, “no object of Mexican statecraft has been more important to territorializing water than its laws”, where she considers law as part of infrastructures of power (Meehan, 2014, p.217). The same could be said about the law making that, from 1967, set in place the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights. A series of military ordinances were issued by the Israeli military commanders, covering all aspects of civilian life, including land ownership and use, freedom of movement and political expression, the right to demonstrate, and economic activities. Military orders were issued by the Military Governor on behalf of the Israeli state to govern people’s everyday lives and economic activities, from access to occupied areas, to movement, use of land and water, political mobilisation, education and many more. Military Order 39, for example, was issued on 27 August 1967 in order to control and prohibit access to abandoned villages which were declared closed zones to deter the remaining Syrian population from reaching these areas to claim rights to property or land there. This automatically disconnected the remaining Jawlanis from witnessing what happened to the other hundreds of villages and farms and claiming any rights to these areas, which were now declared as state

property. Hundreds of these villages were listed in the annex of the military order as destroyed.

Political protest and mobilisation were strictly prohibited by Military Order 49, on 6 September 1967. Military Order 70, issued on 10 November 1967 was created to protect nature areas, and declared these under state control and management. This military rule restricted access, criminalised any acts of vandalism and disruption in nature reserves, and prohibited the transport of any animals or plants from its borders. Interestingly, all the waterways were included in this categorisation: Banias River, Masada forests, the Jordan estuary into Lake Tiberias, Hermon mountain lowlands, *Wadi Al Fajar*, *Tal Abu Nada*, *Al Zaki and Musa'diyeh* (Bteeha valley), Birket Ram, *Wadi Daboura*, and *the forests between Jraba and Yahudiya* were all now under military state control. Interestingly for our case, Birket Ram, which lies between Majdal Shams and Mas'ada was placed under nature reserve categorisation, automatically restricting and limiting and later prohibiting local use of the lake as a source of drinking water for livestock, fishing, and use of water for irrigation of nearby apple orchards.

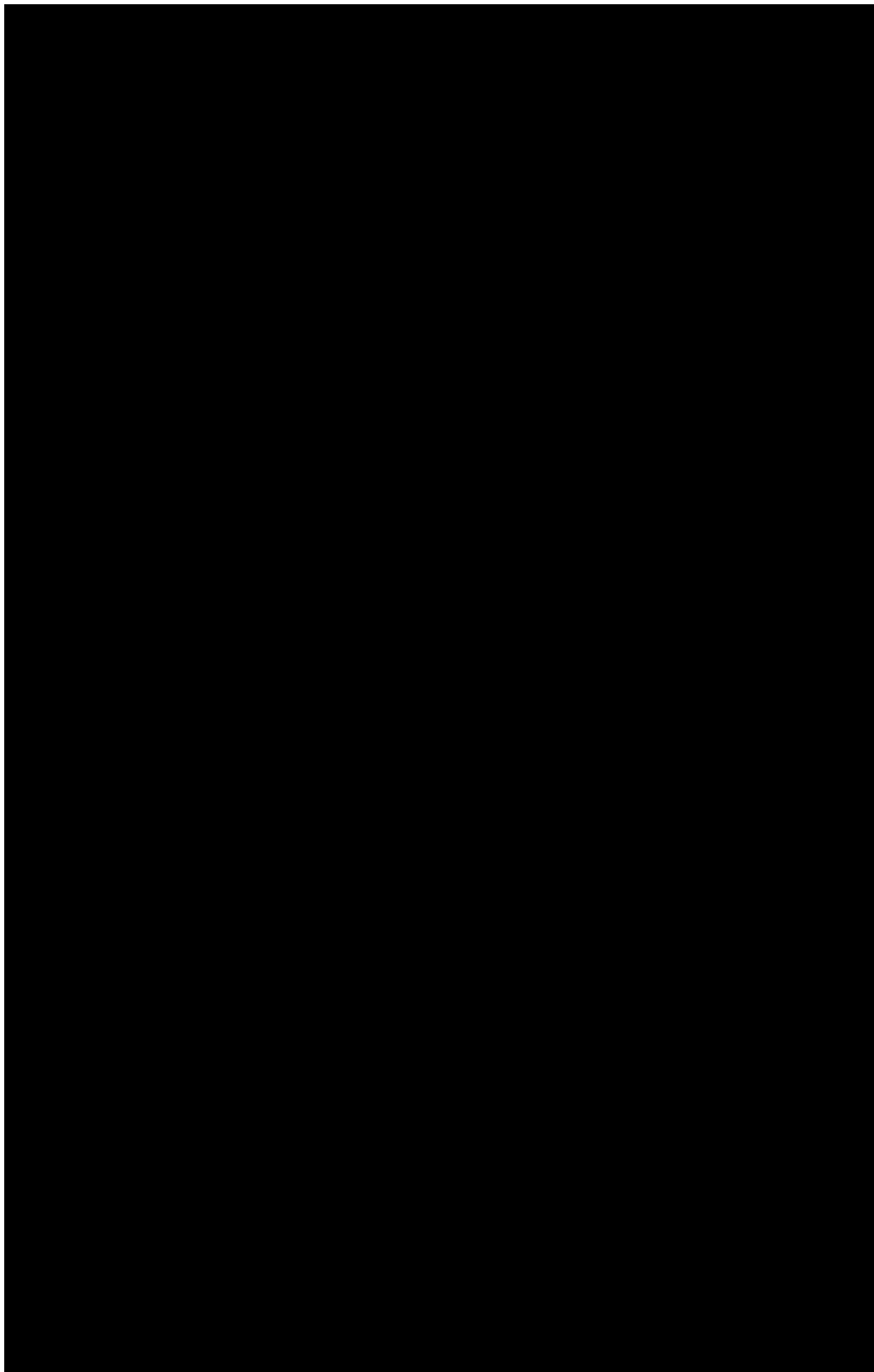
In regard to water sources, the Israeli military commander established a permit system for carrying out all water works, consolidating the power to access and use water in the hands of the military governor. Military Order 291, issued in 1968, declared all pre-1967 land and water-related arrangements as invalid (Amnesty International, 2009), deeply impacting and distorting communal and local customary law deployed for decades by the local Arab population. Military Order 120, issued in 1968, gave Israel the full rights to manage and oversee the water resources in the area, allowing military access to any area containing water works, even forcing the local population to fully cooperate with the military forces in identifying local water resources and sharing details regarding their quantity and quality (Keary, 2013). Military Order 120 of 1968 (see Figure 6.8) gave the Israeli state full rights to control and manage water resources in the Golan Heights, even compelling the local population to fully cooperate with the military forces in identifying and declaring any

local water resources, including wells (ibid).<sup>56</sup> Mekorot officials also attempted to impose the military orders on the use of the springs, justifying this as more efficient and developed, which the Jawlanis refused to accept (as discussed in section 7.1).

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<sup>56</sup> Following the annexation in 1981, Israeli civil law was enacted in the Heights, allowing the Israeli state to enforce its national water law of 1959 and declare any new Arab water infrastructure as illegal. Access and use of Ram Lake was therefore prohibited by law, and fell under the full control of Mekorot, the Israeli national water company from the late 1970s.





*Figure 6.8 Military order 120 in Arabic and Hebrew regarding water resources issued by Israeli 'Defence' Forces, prohibiting any water abstraction, transport or use without governor approval (IDF, 1968)*

As Ram (2013) describes, a surge of experts, from hydrologists, agronomists to archaeologists and civil engineers, were tasked by the government to assess and study the potential of the Golan as an open terrain for development and planning. The task of governing the scant population that remained made the occupation of the Golan Heights seem ‘subtle’ and less invasive – a task led by “apolitical, professional and scientific groups” (Ram, 2015, p.83) through a process Ram identifies as *domestication*.

The influx of hydrologists of Tahal and Mekorot into the Golan, studying the topography, hydrogeology, overground and underground water potential resulted in extensive surveys of the sources of the Golan and the potential for its utilisation and settlement development. Reports presenting geological and hydrological maps including those for precipitation, drainage basins, springs and location of pumping structures were being developed in an effort to plan a new territory of control, as seen below. In their survey of the use of water by the remaining local population after the occupation, Tahal frames local water use as primitive and negligible (ISA, 1969, translated from Hebrew),

*The first thing that is visible for the viewer is the fact that the water resources are hardly developed, neither by the residents of the towns and the villages nor by the Syrian government. The abundant springs were only partly diverted for irrigation and even that was done in a primitive way where the water infiltrates and evaporates. The irrigated plots on a large scale are found only in the Sa'ar river valley (near Majdal Shams) and Bteiha in the south-centre of the Kinneret.*

Due to the centrality of the Golan Heights to the state hydro-imaginary, water professionals approached the water sources gained after the occupation as a familiar resource, and a continuation of the region’s water sources which were now required to be fully utilised. The national framing of water articulated by the Israeli water professionals, resonated with earlier attempts in the 1950s (described in section 1.4), to frame water as a national resource, downplaying its regional and transboundary character. The Israeli water policy was therefore to maximise the utilisation of the water sources of the oGH and fully integrate it into the state’s centralised water



infrastructure. As a report published in March 1968 – titled *Water Resources in the New Territories* written by Yoav Harpaz from Tahal – shows, the hydrological and political significance of the occupation of strategic areas within the Jordan River Basin furthered the attainment of the Israeli vision of water utilisation and development of the JRB. This quest for resource control was therefore not a consequential product of a wider political and warfare gain, but part and parcel of it (ISA 1969, translated from Hebrew):

*The additional territories were not foreign to us, on the contrary, we knew a lot about the natural resources of the neighbouring region, even those that were in the not so distant past under a unified administration with Israel especially because they are the continuation of the hydrological environment of our land. In the previous years, we worked hard to study the geology, hydrology and climatology of our neighbours not because of scientific curiosity or because of political issues, but specifically to plan properly the development and utilisation of our water resources.*

*...From a hydrological point of view, it's not possible to divide the region like the borders were divided. The water resources in the new territories are interrelated and integrated to those in the state of Israel. The very existence of the sources and their renewal are the result of the physical structure and the climatic conditions prevailing in the wider country and beyond.*

As early as December 1969, the Hydrological Service of Israel (HSI) carried out an inventory of all springs in the Golan Heights and the wadis; 56 springs were identified, with their flow average (lt/sec) and capacity, in addition to identifying another 23 Wadis (ISA, 1980). These recordings were monitored from 1970 to 1980 on a monthly basis to estimate the hydrological potential of the springs and wadis and plan accordingly to ensure the development plans were realised.<sup>57</sup>

As for Birket Ram, Tahal and Mekorot companies carried out extensive studies, reports and assessments. The first was a hydrological survey in December 1969 (see ISA, 1973a). Birket Ram, the largest natural freshwater body, became the ideal site

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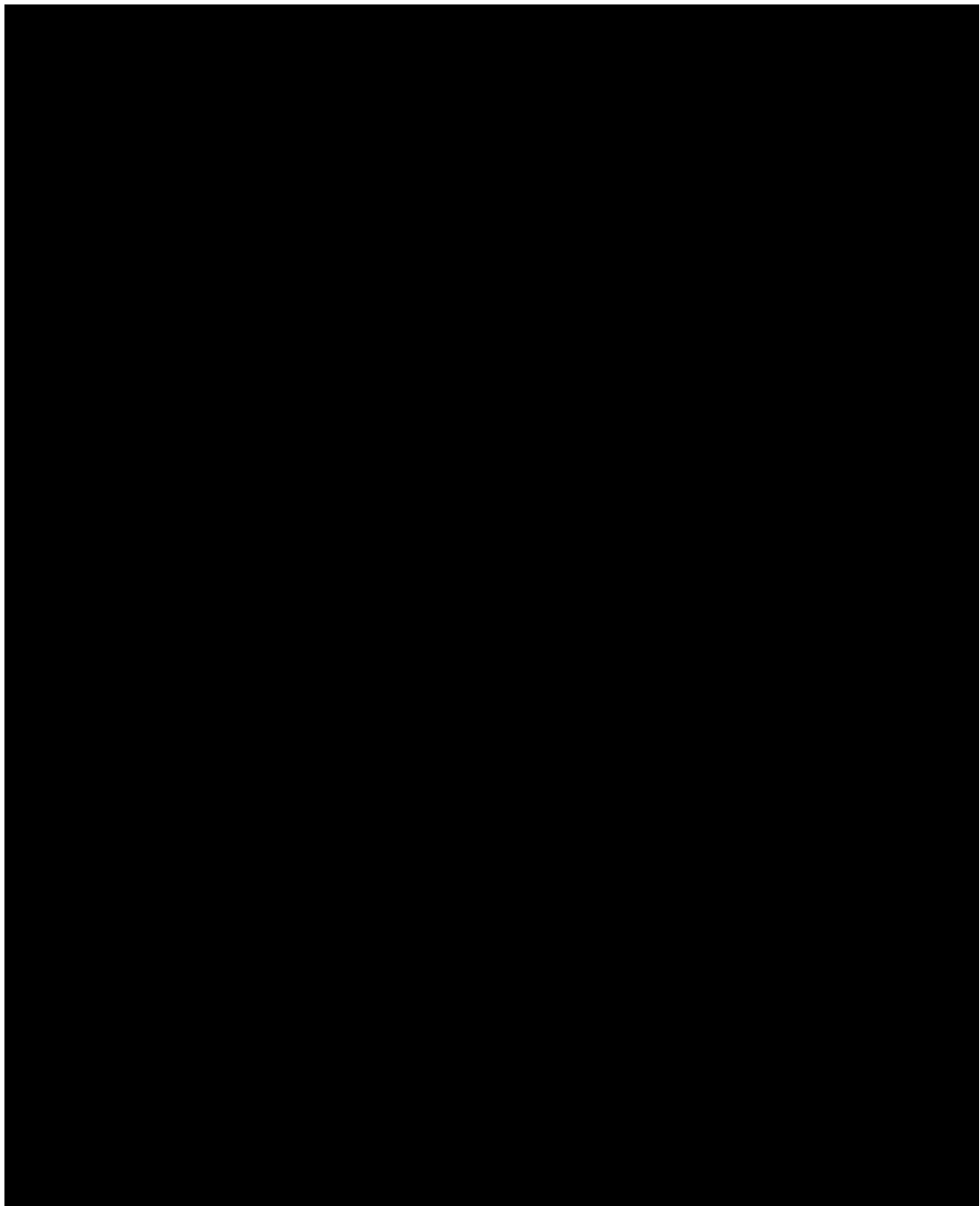
<sup>57</sup> As Dafny et al. (2003, p.142) show in their hydrological study of the Golan aquifer, there are over 200 springs (most small and seasonal).

of regulation and storage of water. Mekorot began planning the diversion of all wadis and springs, so that flood flows (which used to flow down Wadis into Lake Tiberias) could be captured and stored for the irrigated agriculture and development works in the settlements. In 1970, Tahal published a plan to construct a pumping station at Birket Ram, considered how much water could be pumped into the lake, and what pipelines and pumps would be required to take water southward towards central and south Golan settlements (see ISA, 1973b) (see Figure 6.9 below). In 1973, a plan was further developed to pump Birket Ram's water southward (see ISA, 1973c). Eventually, those plans intended to pump water from Birket Ram and store it in artificial lakes to be developed soon after in 1975 (ISA, 1975). To that extent, much of Tahal's work focused on the water provision for the south and central parts of the Golan, which was where many of the settlements were being constructed. However, the northern part of the Golan (where the Syrian villages remained) was also a site of water exploration and confiscation. The surveying of all water resources in the Golan was articulated in such a way to ensure the utilisation of that water on the ground for the benefit of the newly constructed and planned settlements.

As can be seen from Figure 6.10, the established water network was essentially carrying out two jobs: first, the diversion of the Sa'ar river flood water to Birket Ram, increasing its capacity; and second its construction as a site of water regulation and storage. The plan, mentioned above, has been realised and a water network (in blue) pumps water from Birket Ram towards the settlements in the centre of the Golan, like Merom Golan, Ein Zeivan, Al Rom and others. These, as seen on the map, established agricultural plots (highlighted in green borders) and were therefore in need for potable and irrigation water.



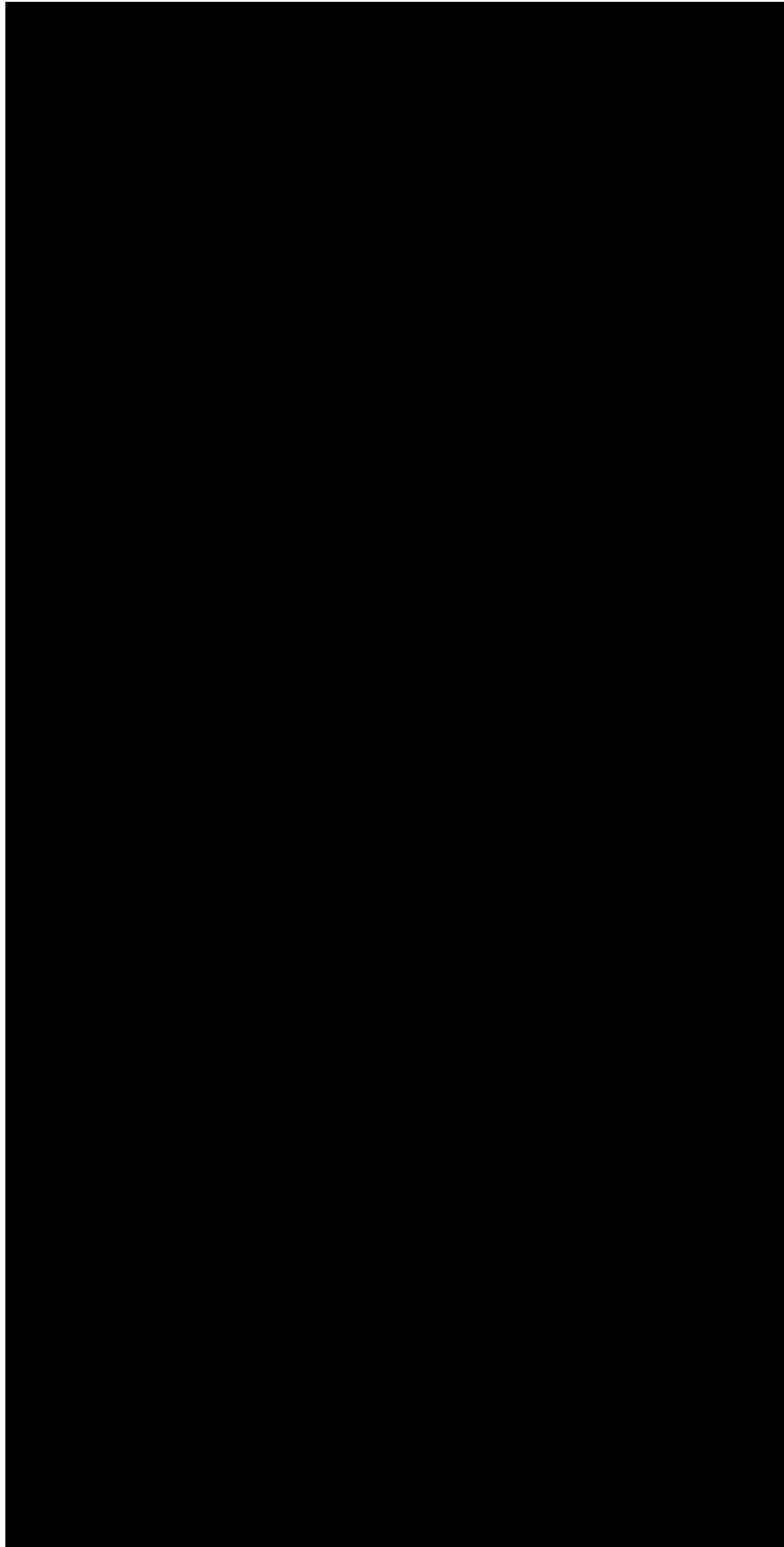
*Figure 6.9 proposed plan to pump water from Birket Ram to the settlements (Tahal Report 1970 from ISA,1973b)*



*Figure 6.10 Map showing the existing pipelines (In blue) transporting water away from Birket Ram towards the settlements in the centre of the Golan (ISA, 1975)*

Maps from these multiple reports are very indicative of the desire for a form of legibility and colonial re-configuration of territories and landscapes, as they were maps that “when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade” (Scott, 1998, p, 3). Maps of the hydrological and

hydrogeological potential of the oGH followed this pattern of enabling a settler colonial geography and reality, making invisible the existing indigenous arrangement. Instead they imagined a standardised and calculated spatial arrangement of constructed and planned reservoirs (Figure 6.11 and 6.12), and the established and planned water networks in the Golan showing existing agricultural lands (in green), mainly in the centre and south, and disregarded water and land use and needs in the north where the remaining Syrian villages are (ISA, 1975).



*Figure 6.11 Map of the basins of the oGH (ISA, 1975)*



*Figure 6.12 Map showing planned and constructed reservoirs (in black) capturing flood water for planned agricultural sites (in orange) (ISA, 1975)*

For the Jawlani agrarian communities, the state's control over their physical means of production (land and water) was devastating especially as accompanied by the extensive dispossession and destruction of their society. While the Jawlani communities were highly self-sufficient, they still relied economically on marketing their products regionally. Under the occupation, the marketing centres moved abruptly from Quneitra and Damascus to Tel Aviv and Haifa. While the Jawlanis remained under military rule that restricted their movement and their agricultural product marketing and transport was also placed under military control. Military Order 32, of 18 August 1967, stipulated regulations regarding movement of merchandise and stated clearly that any merchandise brought in and out of the closed area (the Golan Heights) required a permit from the Military Governor. Military Order 82, issued on the 5 December 1967, regarding the transport of agricultural products, also restricted any transport of agricultural products outside of the Golan Heights unless a permit was issued.

The Jawlani farmer found himself at the heart of the Israeli agricultural marketing mechanism and enslaved to its rules and regulations. Officially excluded from the means of production, land and natural resources through military orders and control, the region was forcibly integrated into a Jewish-Israeli economy. The main market was now a monopolistic Israeli one, but initially one open to Jawlani apples. At first, the Jawlani farmer economically benefited from an open and demand-hungry Israeli market for its unique product: the apples. By the 1960s, the apple trees which had been planted in the first Hajmeah in the 1950s were now fully mature and at the peak of productivity, especially as the farmers had acquired skills in maintaining and enhancing the productivity of the apple trees.

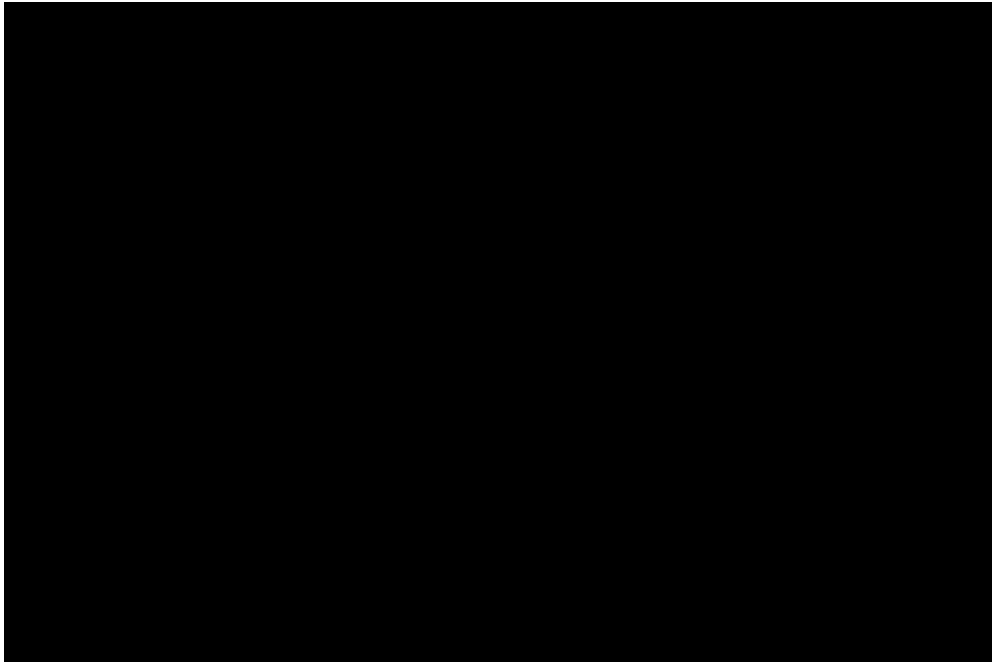
The Israeli state company, Tnuva was a monopoly company for agriculture (and later solely dairy) production and marketing. It became the sole marketing mechanism for the Jawlani products to the Israeli markets. Faced with the above-mentioned restrictive measures, Tnuva representatives entered the Golan without the needed permits (under Military Order 32, 1967), set the prices for the produce and were responsible for its transport and marketing in Israeli markets. While the price was set by this state monopoly, the Jawlanis were selling their produce at a very



competitive price, due to the uniqueness of their produce, the demand for it in the Israeli market, and because Israeli purchasing power was higher than that of Syrians. The farmers recall 'golden times' where they were economically prospering because of their apple produce:

*After 1967, we reached the peak of our apple production. The war happened in June and the first apple season under occupation was instantly taken over by Tnuva. It was the only company responsible for marketing. They entered al basateen (the orchards) and set a price for apples. People were still in shock and disbelief that in six days the Arabs lost without fight in the Golan Heights. We were totally disconnected from the Syrian state. Tnuva hired a few people who will be the direct contact with the farmers and appointed a director to oversee the basateen. They provided foldable wooden baskets joined by cables for us to fill the apples in. In the Galilee, the apples were not as popular yet. There was a huge deficit in apples at that time and that year [1967] the apples were sold with unbelievable prices. We picked, packaged and delivered then we got paid...in Israeli Liras. (Interview with Nazih Abu Jabal, Majdal Shams, 7 September 2017)*

One of the main open souks was the souk of Birket Ram (See Figure 6.13), in the vicinity of the lake. The souk existed before the occupation, where many of the neighbouring villages used to come to shop for wool, food staples, vegetables and fruits and exchange local products between the villagers, Bedouins and Palestinian refugees of 1948 (who settled in the Golan Heights before being expelled again in 1967). The souk survived until 1969-70, where it became a weekly market where the Israelis used to come to visit the Golan and buy fresh produce: apples, cheese, yoghurt and other staples from the Jawlanis.



*Figure 6.13 Jawlani farmers presenting their apple produce to Israeli settlers and buyers at Souk Birket Ram, 1968 (Government Press Office, Bruner Ilan, 01 November, 1967)*

These specific events were an emblem for a larger transformation of Jawlani agricultural practices. The military orders established a governing mechanism over all aspects of life, placing control and responsibility for resource management and the indigenous population in the hands of the state, as mentioned above. Concurrently, and due to the limited employment opportunities in the four villages, the Jawlanis sought jobs in the Israeli sector, mainly in construction and services, and as agricultural labour in the Israeli settlements and in Israel proper. However, facts on the ground were changing at a fast pace outside of the tranquil and quiet front of the Druze villages, where Israeli planners and government officials were examining the Jawlani agricultural livelihoods closely.

### 6.2.3 Exclusion through planning: WZO development plans and Mey Golan

With the settler-colonial conquest of the Golan Heights, the Israeli state and its subsidiary aides, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the Jewish Agency (AJ),

were establishing development plans to transform the region into a haven for development, technology and economic development.<sup>58</sup> This focus of the state was evident through the publishing of multiple plans to develop the Golan, named The WZO development plans, which were developed on a yearly basis. To understand how Jewish Israeli settlement planning materialises, it's important to highlight the role of the Israeli state and non-government organisations which funded and led decades of settlement activities even prior to the creation of the state of Israel. As Davis explains (1983, pp.21-22):

*Generally, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Jewish Agency are charged with the development of Israeli-Jewish settlements and colonisation projects in pre-1967 Israel territories, as well as territories annexed to Israel since 1967... The World Zionist Organisation Settlement Division, on the other hand, operates in the post-1967 Israeli occupied territories that have not been officially annexed, and are thus referred to in official Israeli terminology as the "administered territories".*

The development planners were preoccupied with three pillars to develop Jewish settlement in the region: agriculture, tourism and industry. Interestingly, plans were developed on a yearly or 2-yearly basis, re-evaluating their accomplishment and addressing any shortcomings of their previous plans (see Table 6.1 below). Population expansion, for example, was one of those issues and the WZO has failed to meet the population increase it envisioned in the Golan Heights, even to this day. The earliest plan in 1967, developed by Uzi Gador, envisioned 20 Israeli settlements in 15 years, with a population forecast of 55,000 to 60,000. However, as the development plans reveal in 1975, for example, the population of the Jewish settlements were a mere 2,000 (while the Druze population rose to 8,900). Even

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<sup>58</sup> WZO works in occupied territories while the Jewish Agency, for fear of losing its charitable status, does not operate in occupied territories but only in Israel proper and annexed areas. The WZO's settlement division serves as the government's construction arm in rural settlements. Sources of funding of the settlement investment are raised through fundraising from Jewish communities around the world. The WZO thus became the arm of the government in constructing settlements in the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

today, the estimated population of the oGH comprises 48,000 people, 25,000 of whom are Syrians and 23,000 Israeli settlers (Al-Marsad, 2017).

The settler colonial imaginary of the Golan Heights as a pristine and open plateau was evident in these plans. The framing of the Golan as pristine and uninhibited and ready for Jewish development and settlement was clearly expressed in those plans (WZO 1967, 3 in Davis, 1983, 23):

*We have before us a region that is cut to measure...and in which anything can be grown, but whose relative advantage is in the growing of crops that are not conventional in Israel, or whose cultivation in Israel is far from meeting needs.*

The 1975 WZO plan, referring to cultivable land, identifies (as is the case with the previous plans) 150,000 dunums with 50,000 dunums under the ownership of the Jawlanis. However, until 1975, the Jewish settlements were only able to cultivate 50,000 out of the remaining 100,000 dunums of cultivable land exclusively available to them. The cultivable area of the Jawlanis, however, was limited in its capability to expand and the plans framed development as exclusively Jewish, therefore excluding the Druze villages from plans of development and expansion of their land use beyond the villages' borders. The exclusion from land and agricultural expansion, in addition to water limitations, was evident in the comparative table presented in the WZO Plan of 1974, which lists settlements and Druze village agricultural activities and illuminates the stark differences in water quotas. Up until that year, the water 'provided' for the Druze villages was from already existing springs irrigating Al Marj, and a minor provision of water for Buq'atha (in compensation for land confiscation to pass the Birket Ram pipeline). For the Israeli-Jewish settlements, 7.59 mcm were provided for the irrigation of 16,740 dunums. While the Druze villages were left with no irrigated field crops and around 15,200 dunums of orchards receiving 2.1 MCM, as Table 6.1 shows below.

*Table 6.1 an overview of agricultural land use and water allocations in all Jewish settlements and Druze villages (WZO, 1974:19 in Davis, 1983)*

Settlement	Field crops (dry farming) (dunums)	Land allocation field cops (irrigated) (dunums)	Orchards	Water quotas 1973/74 (m <sup>3</sup> )
Mevoh Hamah	3,100	2,000	100	1,300,000
Kafar Haruv	1,400	1,200	200	200,000
Afiq	2,600	1,400	300	300,000
Gesher	1,400	100	-	80,000
Giv'at Yo'av	3,540	1,280	610	900,000
Ne'ot Golan	2,680	1,500	270	400,000
Alei Ad	2,400	850	-	60,000
Ramot	1,440	1,430	630	1,650,000
Ramot Magshimim	3,450	1,400	200	600,000
Nov	2,000	1,100	200	350,000
Merom Golan	2,375	2,320	325	800,000
Ein Zivan	3,400	1,350	320	540,000
El Rom	2,880	800	320	400,000
Neveh Ativ	-	-	200	10,000
Senir	-	-	270	-
<b>Total Jewish Settlements</b>	<b>32,665</b>	<b>16,740</b>	<b>3,945</b>	<b>7,590,000</b>
Buq'ata	10,000	-	4,700	300,000
Mas'ada	6,000	-	700	250,000
Ayn Qiniya	7,000	-	2,800	300,000
Majd al-Shams	12,000	-	7,000	1,250,000
<b>Total Druze Villages</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>15,200</b>	<b>2,100,000</b>

The demographic threat, which has been a consistent concern of Zionist planners and thinkers also manifested in the case of the Golan Heights. While the WZO 1975 report acknowledges that the state services (such as health, education, public transport, etc.) have raised the living standards of the Druze villages, the populations living there remained excluded from development plans. This resulted in what the report refers to as “the demographic factor” which prompted the attention of the Zionist planners. More Druze population without development plans in their villages on the one hand meant a supply of cheap seasonal labour for the agricultural and industrial economies in the settlement after being “trained and... properly guided and directed” (WZO, 1975, 20, cited in Davis, 1983, 38). On the other hand, “structural discrimination” – i.e. in the services and funds provided for the development of Jewish settlements (especially in the Northern region where the Druze villages are located) – was seen as a visible reality of ‘superiority’ of the settlement and the benefits given to its population. Therefore, the only recognition of the Jawlanis in this latest WZO plan was that the discriminatory effects of the development plans could create “open or veiled, active or passive hostility towards the Jewish settlement project” (ibid, 20). An approach for “Druze development for the Druze” thus has been suggested and later enforced to keep the native separate but highly dependent on the settler economy.

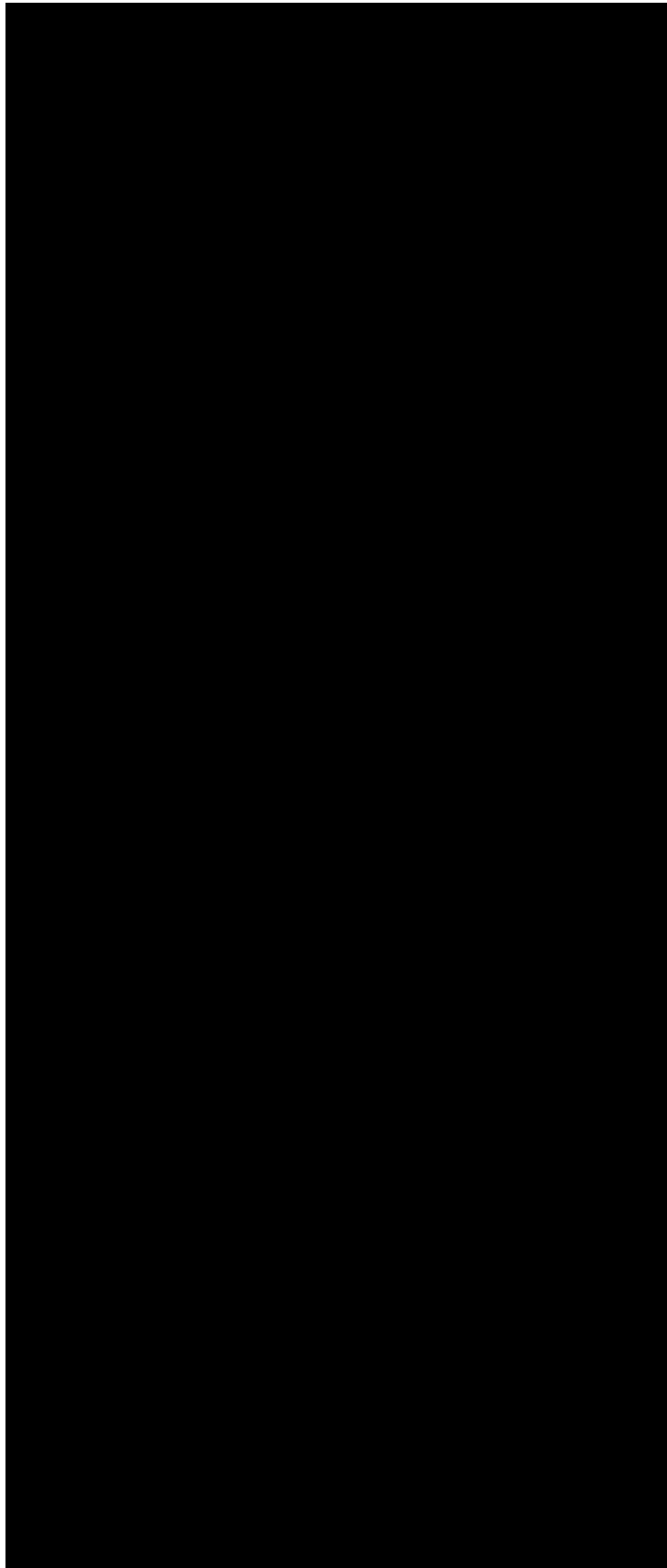
Concurrently with the exclusionary development plans, water management and development were also being constructed as an exclusionary field to be exploited by the Israeli settlements, which were increasing their demands for water from Mekorot. Since 1978, the water development and use operations were assigned to an Israeli water management cooperative company operating specifically in the oGH, called *Mey Golan* (Golan Water).<sup>59</sup> Funded by KKL-JNF, Mey Golan has played a pivotal role in re-configuring the territorial arrangements of water governance in the region, establishing themselves as water producers serving the political and economic interests of the Jewish settlements, including irrigation needs for the rapid expansion of agricultural production. One of the first of its kind, Mey

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<sup>59</sup> Mey Golan is also involved with wind turbine projects in the oGH, some with cooperation with an American energy company named AES (Keary, 2013)

Golan has broken the monopoly of Mekorot and the Israeli state over water resources development. A cooperative of 27 settlements in the oGH, the idea was to supply water for agriculture in the new settlements, especially around Lake Tiberias and Hamat Gader (Al-Himmeh). Lake Tiberias and Birket Ram were the main providers of water for the settlements in the 1970s, so Mekorot was still coordinating with the young cooperative, until those cooperatives began constructing their own floodwater reservoirs (dams). Mey Golan has developed these water infrastructures by building 16 stream reservoirs throughout the region, collecting floodwater flows, in addition to the drilling of several deep wells, capturing approximately 38 MCM every year (Mey Golan staff member, Author's interview, 30 December 2016).

Throughout the oGH, the re-configuration of landscapes, through state and companies' infrastructures, has transformed the region into a site of resource exploration and exploitation influencing the Jawlani lived experience within their remaining pockets of existence. While most of the exclusionary development was concentrated in the centre and south of the Golan, the biophysical and political drives of water expropriation were experienced mostly in the geographical locations of the Jawlani villages. As Figure 6.14 shows, the groundwater drillings were mainly carried out in the centre and north of the Golan. For the Jawlanis this has not only consolidated a reality of inequality in utilising the water resources of the region but has also constructed water as an object of contestation and struggle. Birket Ram and the wells drilled and utilised in the vicinity of the springs have become infrastructures of difference and exclusion, diverting water as a social and collective artefact and elevating it into a national resource and an object enacting the misrecognition of the Jawlanis. By controlling the local water sources that have shaped and were shaped by livelihood practices and communal actions, the Israeli state has exercised acts of misrecognition against the indigenous ethno-geographic community and its only livelihood practice left after the occupation: that of farming, and specifically apple trees.



*Figure 6.14 Map showing reservoirs and wells throughout the Golan (Dafny et al., 2003)*



The practices highlighted in this section illustrate the settler colonial expansion imperative, exercised through the control of land, water and labour. Not only do such ontological shifts transform landscapes into ones standardised and legible for the settler state, they also render the indigenous population and its remaining landscapes on the periphery, if not completely ignored and disregarded by the settler state. However, through the prism of ‘presence-absence’, Jawlanis are framed by these plans as invisible, justifying their absence from the plans. However, the state’s encroachment on the lived geographies of indigenous society also imposes a presence that, as will be seen in the next sections, confines and even comes in direct opposition to indigenous self-identification and livelihood practices. The state sees the Jawlanis and their practices as only relevant when required as labour, or when their products serve the economic aspiration of the state.

#### 6.2.4 Tightening the grip on Jawlani farming activities in the Golan

In the years immediately following the occupation, when the agriculture activities of the Jawlanis, mainly their apple orchards, were at a high level of productivity and marketability, Israeli government officials were extensively studying their agriculture. A 1974 report entitled “The Druze Agriculture in the Golan Heights” (ISA, 1974), surveys the agricultural activities of the Druze and outlines guidelines to incorporate and advance these activities in accordance with the limitations set by Jewish-Israeli colonisation goals for the region. The report identifies the main agricultural activities of the Jawlanis as apple growing and livestock rearing. This is elaborated in the introduction (ISA, 1974, translated from Hebrew):

*The technical difficulty that we will face is to plan agriculture in the scope and composition of such activities that will enable their existence and development on the basis of the water resources and land to be made available to the farmers on the one hand, and the relative advantages that the region will receive on the other hand*

While the report frames the 1967 war and 'capture' of the Golan as the commencement and 'expansion' of agriculture carried out by the Jawlanis, it also refers to an overburdening on the 'means of production', namely land and water (ibid):

*Since the six-day war, the residents of the Golan participated in the Israeli state economy outside of their villages. At the same time, an expansion in the agricultural activities was witnessed and utilised by the residents, which led to the exploitation of the means of production that have been available for the farmers of the region. The objective of this study is to offer a plan of effective utilisation of the means of production while considering the relative advantages of the region.*

The population of the Druze villages in 1974 was at 10,000 people. The agricultural land belonging to the farmers was estimated by the ministry to be 95,700 dunum, 27,200 of which was suitable lands for cultivation while the rest included the built-up area of the villages, public parks and Mar'a (pasture) land. The report identifies Marj Al Ya'four as the main orchard area of the villages of Mas'ada and Majdal Shams and estimates the cultivated area at 2,000 dunums. The water sources, which were a main concern of the study, were identified as the springs of Sa'ar and Musheirfeh which were channelled through earth and cement structures to the fields. The report identifies water cisterns, which were developed by the local farmers, as another (minimal) source of water for irrigation.

Ein Sa'ar is considered as an important source of irrigation in the Marj, where there are excess flows to orchards in Ein Qeinya, which are desperately needed in the summer (May-October) for irrigation of the apples. The report estimates that the flow during these months of Sa'ar is around 1.8 mcm. Sa'ar river (see Figure 6.15 and 6.16) flow increases tenfold in the winter, where Mekorot channels all the flood flow into Birket Ram. The summer flows are also shared with Ein Qinya, especially in the early summer months when the flow is highest. In Al Ya'four, 1800 dunums are identified as being irrigated by Sa'ar river. Musheirfeh spring irrigates around 200 dunums, and its summer flow was 500,000 cubic meters. The report also identifies

1000 water cisterns with a depth of 6m holding around 70 cubic meters each, amounting to 30,000 cubic meters per year.

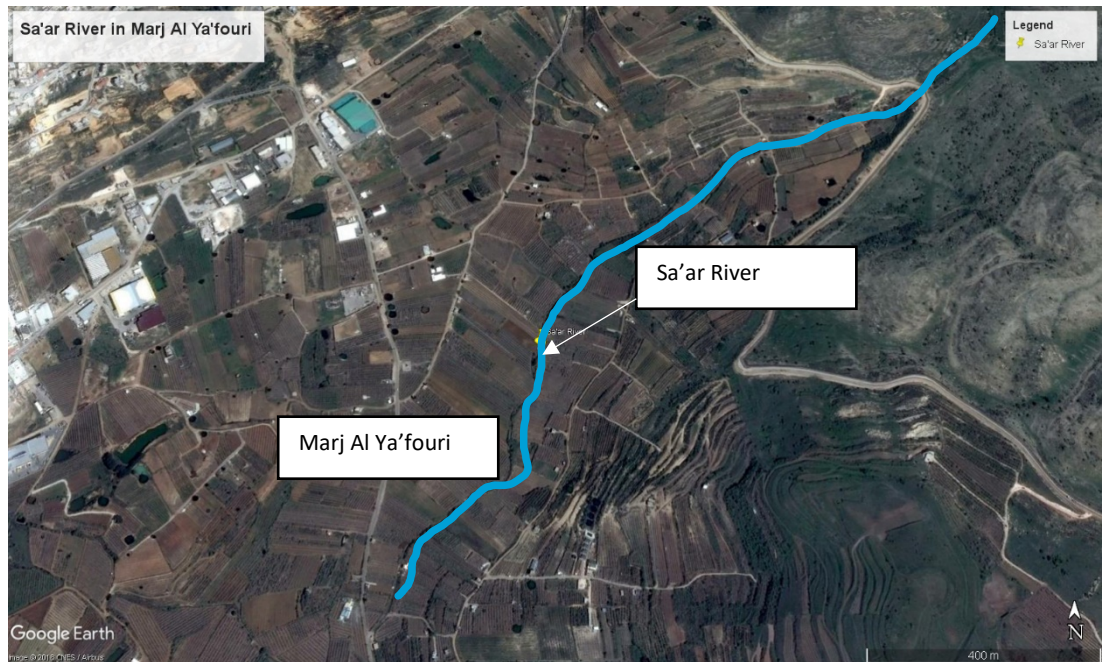
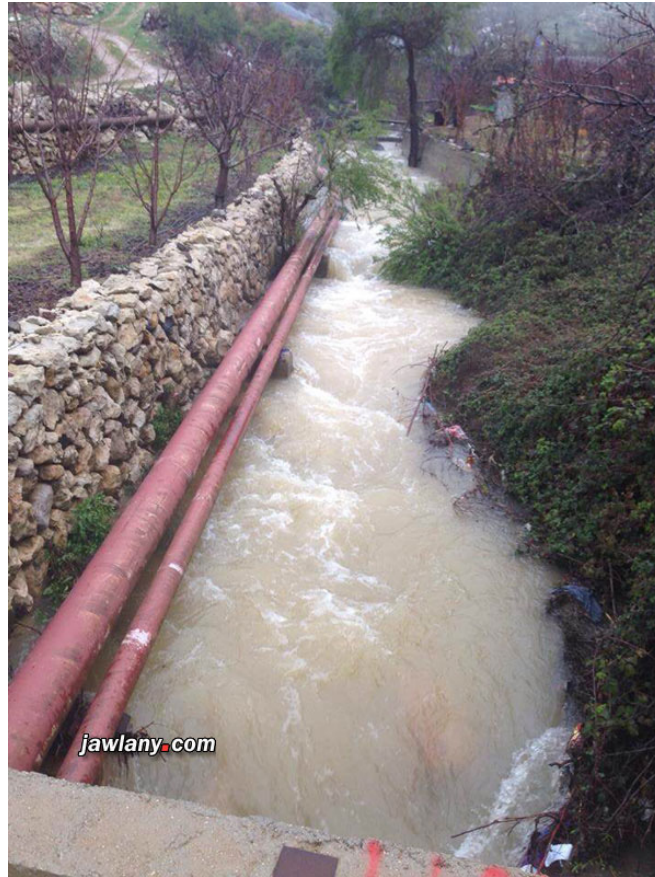


Figure 6.15 Map showing Ras il Nabi' (spring headwaters) that form Sa'ar River (source: Google Earth, 2018)



*Figure 6.16 Sa'ar river as it flows in the winter nearby apple orchards, which flows to Birket Ram. Farmers utilise the spring water in the dry months using pipelines (Jawlany website, 2014)*

Water scarcity, as is evident from this report, was being framed by the government as a reality to be dealt with in the Golan Heights. The timing of this framing is indicative of a more systematic approach to limit the agricultural development of the Druze while boosting settlement enterprises. According to the report, a simple demand and availability chart was presented to justify the government's approach towards agriculture in the Druze area. In these simple diagrams (Tables 6.2 and 6.3), which focus on a sub-regional water availability and demand, it was deemed that since no additional water sources were available, agricultural activities in the apple orchards belonging to the Druze have little possibility of being provided with any additional water. While the existing sources of water provided 8 mcm annually and the existing demand for water was estimated at 8 mcm, the report deduced that the water was already scarce in the northern Golan,

and any additional water extraction would produce a condition of heightened scarcity, justifying therefore the ministry's decision to introduce water saving measures, and to prohibit any additional water 'allocations' to the Druze. However, the Ministry was not allocating the 2 mcm already utilised by the Jawlani, as these were locally used before the occupation. This framing of water supply was part of the state's logic of controlling and allocating water as the sole water provider. Identifying the Jawlanis' efforts of land reclamation and the planting of apple orchards in rain-fed lands, 'where the water of the springs do not reach', the lack of any unexploited water resources justified the refusal to consider providing more water to the Druze farmers.

*Table 6.2 Sources of water in the Northern Golan (adapted from MoA data in ISA, 1974)*

Source of water	Availability of water for Northern Golan sub-region
Quneitra dam (including Birket Ram plant)	2.0 mcm/year
Birket Ram	3.0 mcm/year
Wells (still under investigation)	1.0 mcm/year
Ya'four springs	2.0 mcm/year

*Table 6.3 Demand vs. Water availability in the Northern Golan sub-region (ISA, 1974)*

Users	Water Demand for Northern Golan
Merom Golan, Al Rom, Ein Zeivan (Israeli settlements)	4.5 mcm/year
Ramat Shalom, Army and other uses	1.0 mcm/year
Druze water use from the Israeli water system (drinking water for the villages and irrigation water for Buq'atha)	0.5 mcm/year

Druze in Ya'four Valley	2.0 mcm/year
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While the report highlights the superior quality of the Druze apple produce and its efficient processing in Al Ya'four, in addition to the economic advantage to the Druze farmers, it finds the Al Marj irrigation scheme "primitive" by consuming excess water that could otherwise be saved either for irrigating new plots or to be part of the Birket Ram plant and storage (which at that time all went to the settlements). The possibilities for agriculture were therefore framed in terms of enhancing efficiency of water use, with demonstration sites proposed for a number of selected Druze farmers to encourage them and others to change their irrigation methods.

Considering all of those conditions, especially that there is no water surplus in the oGH, the policy that the ministry recommended was the following (ISA, 1974):

*Since the apples of the Druze in the Golan Heights are marketed in Israel, it seems that at this stage there is no place to encourage new apple orchards for the Druze farmers. Until today, there is no administrative prohibition/control over apple orchards and it is proposed at this stage to prevent any financial support in the form of loans, grants and water provision (except for training) especially for new orchards. Providing water to the young orchards (now grown as rainfed) will double the yield of these orchards and provide incentive for the farmers to continue growing orchards in rain-fed lands and it is assumed that in the future water will be provided to these lands as well.*

The state survey of the Druze agriculture was an attempt to include all agricultural works carried out in the Druze villages within its centralised Fruit Council Law of 1973, to be monitored, managed and controlled by the state, as with apple orchards and other fruit products inside Israel. While the report concludes with proposals to "develop" the agricultural sector in the Druze villages by introducing new crops (such as cherry, grapes) and water saving techniques, the inclusion of Druze agriculture under the Israeli Fruit Council Law enacts a legal-symbolic colonization and dependence: it establishes "administrative prohibition" and other

state controls over the production of apples by Druze farmers, making space for World Zionist Organization plans to expand apple orchards, and other crops, in the newly established Jewish settlements of the Golan Heights.

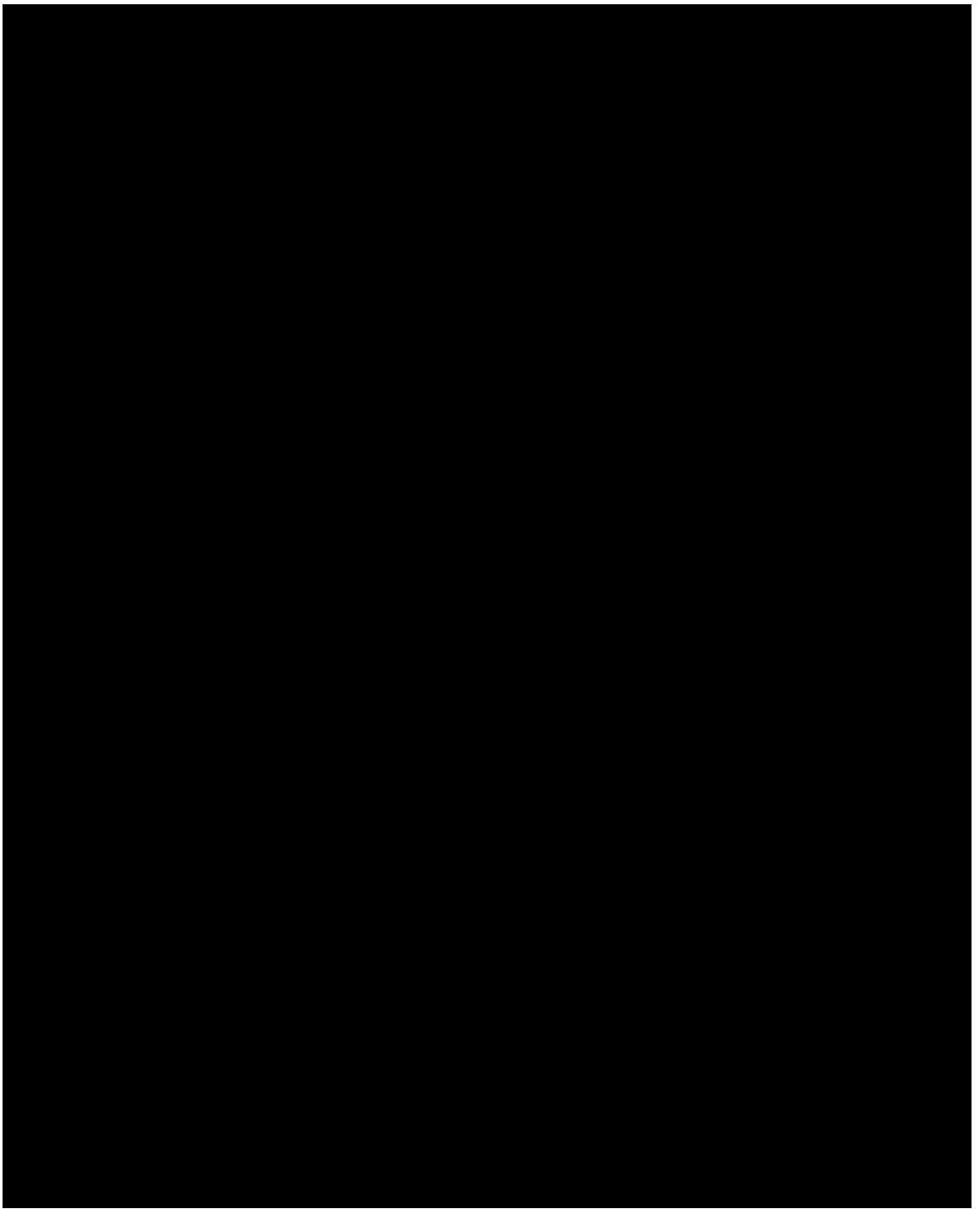
A quick glance at WZO 1975 in parallel with the Ministry of Agriculture plan also clearly exposes why such measures of control over the apple growing were considered a priority by the Israeli state. Apple produce until the early 1970s was still considered a unique product which the Jawlanis produced and which was in demand in the Israeli market. However, the Israeli settlements were undergoing intensive investments to develop agricultural and industrial economies. As seen in Table 6.1, in 1975, the land planted with orchards in all Israeli Jewish settlements amounted to 3,945 dunums. In the Druze villages, on the other hand, the apple orchards covered 15,200 dunums. The competition over production of apples and other fruit trees was therefore at its peak during those years, as Druze farmers were increasing the orchards on reclaimed land, while the settlement orchards were also establishing themselves as producers of this lucrative crop. Predicting a surplus in apple production in Israel (in the settlements of the Golan in addition to those in the Galilee and Hula Valley), and considering that the apple orchards there already fall under the Fruit Council Law of 1973, the report recommends imposing that law on the Druze farmers in order to control and maintain the status quo in terms of area of apple orchards and to facilitate and guide the production of other types of crops and trees.

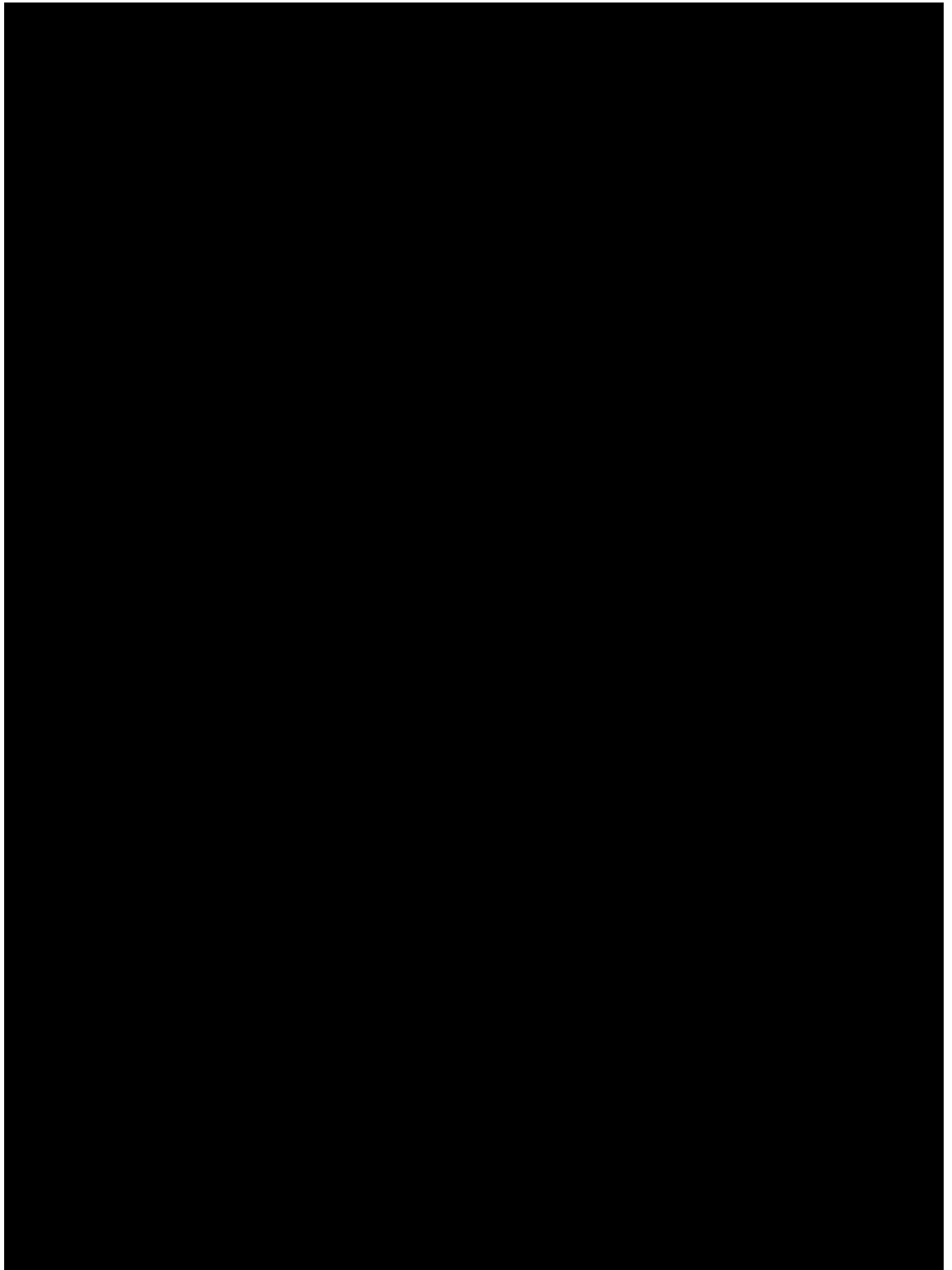
To further enhance its grip on apple growing and to take advantage of the military rule that was still imposed on the Druze villages, the Israeli army issued a military order No. 316 in 1976 highlighting regulations regarding apple tree saplings (see Figure 6.17). The military order stipulates that any new apple tree requires a permit. This was published in a rather 'late' military order in 1976, 9 years after the occupation. The articles prohibited the planting of more than 5 apple trees in the vicinity of individual homes for household consumption. A permit application has to be submitted in Hebrew in five copies to different government offices with relevant documentation. The military order prohibits the planting of any new apple sapling without this permit being issued by the military governor after the approval of the five different bodies. The permit was also valid for twelve months and would require

renewing. However, this military order specifically was a failed attempt to control the reclamation of land by the Jawlanis and the planting of these lands with apples. According to testimonies from the farmers who witnessed those times, this military order failed completely as farmers continued their efforts in land reclamation and were devising plans to provide water sources to irrigate their new fields. The timing of the military order, just two years after the report on Druze agriculture is indicative of a strict push to control, limit and 'de-develop' the agricultural activities of apple farming.

The military-civilian mixture (Newman, 1989b) of Israeli presence in the lived geographies of the Jawlanis maintained a grip over land, water and agricultural use through military orders and rules while simultaneously implementing civilian processes to normalise the Israeli occupation there. This presence clearly re-configured the lived practices and livelihoods of the Jawlanis and placed them as minority subjects against a resourceful and powerful settlement enterprise which not only exists separately but has created dependencies which the Jawlanis could not detach themselves from.







*Figure 6.17 Military order 316 regarding organising fruit tree growing (IDF, 1976)*

The need to curb water use in the Jawlani villages was driven by a state-sanctioned narrative of regional water scarcity. The justification presented in the Ministry of Agriculture report, that “there isn’t enough water for everybody”, mirrors

the debate in the early years of Israel's creation between the proponents and opponents of the development of a water sector based on a scarcity/abundance logic. Here in the Golan Heights, this is no longer a debate but an imposition of a narrative that separates and excludes non-Jews from water and land development. This narrative was projected onto the Jawlani farmers in order to curb their efforts to claim rights to land and water. As Davis and co-authors state, local water scarcity was rectified through expensive transfers of water through pipes and pumps. By 1978, most of the water needed for the judaisation of the Golan was being 'imported' from Lake Tiberias (Davis et al., 1980, p.27). While the state's focus on local-scale availability was imposed on the Jawlanis, the water from Birket Ram was being channelled and pumped to the central and southern Golan Heights, and therefore exempted from limitations on water use due to 'local availability' and 'scarcity'. While it focused on that narrative in the Northern sub-region of the Golan, its infrastructure and assemblages of pipelines, pumps and conduits refute these claims of working within the limits of nature, so to speak (see Figure 6.18 and 6.19). The act of channelling water and transporting it from the North to the South of the Golan, or from Lake Tiberias to its settlements there are clear examples of double standards. Arab farmers need to work within the limits of nature (in addition to the control over resources of the state) while Jewish farmers receive their water needs through both material and social infrastructure that overcomes economic and biophysical conditions. Rather than economic rationality, the Israeli settlements of the Golan Heights represented what Wolf (1995, p.113) refers to as a "striking example of water "diseconomy"". The settlements' water was coming mostly (80% of 50 mcm) from Lake Tiberias, which required pumping and extensive energy costs. In an economic rationality sense, internalising the cost of energy to pump water to their locations meant that their crops were highly overpriced and therefore not competitive in the market. Here is where Wolf describes the settlements not only as agricultural communities but rather as outposts, serving political and security means beyond their agricultural viability.



*Figure 6.18 Mekorot's pumping station on Birket Ram (Author's picture, December 2016)*



*Figure 6.19 Mekorot's pipelines pumping water from the Lake to Israeli settlements (Al-Marsad, n.d.)*

Therefore, the Jawlanis were engaged in a highly contested and securitised endeavour, which situated their agricultural practices and need for water against state objectives of security and defence. However, as will be seen in Chapter 7, there

were opportunities to counter these dominant narratives of (scarcity for non-Jews/abundance for Jews), as exemplified in the struggles the Jawlanis undertook. The following section will examine how Israeli rule attempted to erase the Syrian identity of the Jawlanis.

#### 6.2.5 Forced citizenship and the annexation of the oGH (1981-1990)

The Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights was an inevitable move, as the official discourse maintained the region as an inseparable part of the country, due to its security importance and justified by biblical claims over the territory (Harris, 1978; Yishai, 1985). While such claims were made for Labour and Likud (the right-wing party), it wasn't until the late 1970s, when the Likud party came to power that such aspiration began being put forward in the Knesset as bill proposals. Within the oGH, the experience of the 'tightening of the grip' on the remaining populations was already being felt, as shown in the preceding section. The right-wing government was slowly infiltrating into the everyday lives and practices of the Jawlani communities, imposing not only the settler colonial geographies on them, but extending that to the imposition of citizenship and identities (Mara'i and Halabi, 1992). On December 14 1981, the Israeli government decided to extend Israeli law to the oGH, as a de-facto annexation (similar to that which took place in East Jerusalem). The misrecognition characterising the annexation law involved the imposition of Israeli citizenship on the remaining Jawlani populations, which sparked outrage and protest (discussed in Chapter 7). The Israeli army distributed leaflets on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1982 in the Jawlani villages, announcing the end of the military occupation and the enforcement of civilian law through annexation. It stipulated that the military identity cards would expire by the end of March and that individuals were required to have a civilian Israeli ID, to be distributed by the army during a curfew on the villages (see Figure 6.20).



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جيش الدفاع الإسرائيلي

قانون الدفاع الحاق الطوارىء ١٩٤٠

- بنا\* على ملاحقاتي المحولة لي كقائد عسكري في المنطقة الشمالية اعلن سكان منطقة جنبة الجولان كما يلي :
- ١ الهوية التي وزعت في حينه من قبل الحكم العسكري سينتهي بوقتها وستلغى في نهاية شهر اذار ١٩٨٢ .
  - اعتباراً من ١ نيسان ١٩٨٢ ستكون الهوية الاسرائيلية المدنية سارية المفعول وستعتبر هوية قانونية وحيدة في المنطقة .
  - ٢ - لقد توشى رئيس الحكومة ان ابلغكم كما يلي .
  - ٣ - قانون التجنيد الالزامي لجيش الدفاع الإسرائيلي لا يطبق على ذوي سكان جنبة الجولان
  - أ - حتى اذا كانت في حوزتهم الجنسية الاسرائيلية .
  - ب - لا تفرض الجنسية الاسرائيلية على أى شخص - دوى من سكان جنبة الجولان توجد بحوزته هوية اسرائيلية الا اذا رغب في ذلك بوقت السلطات على طلبه .
  - ٤ - ستبقى جميع المناطق في شمال جنبة الجولان مغلقة ما دام الوضع يتطلب ذلك .
  - ٥ - على كل من يرغب بتوسيعات اقليمية - جوسم الهوية ان يتوجه الى تباطذ الارتباط العظم في المجلس المحلي .

امير دورى التوت

قائد المنطقة الشمالية

وقائد عسكري في المنطقة الشمالية

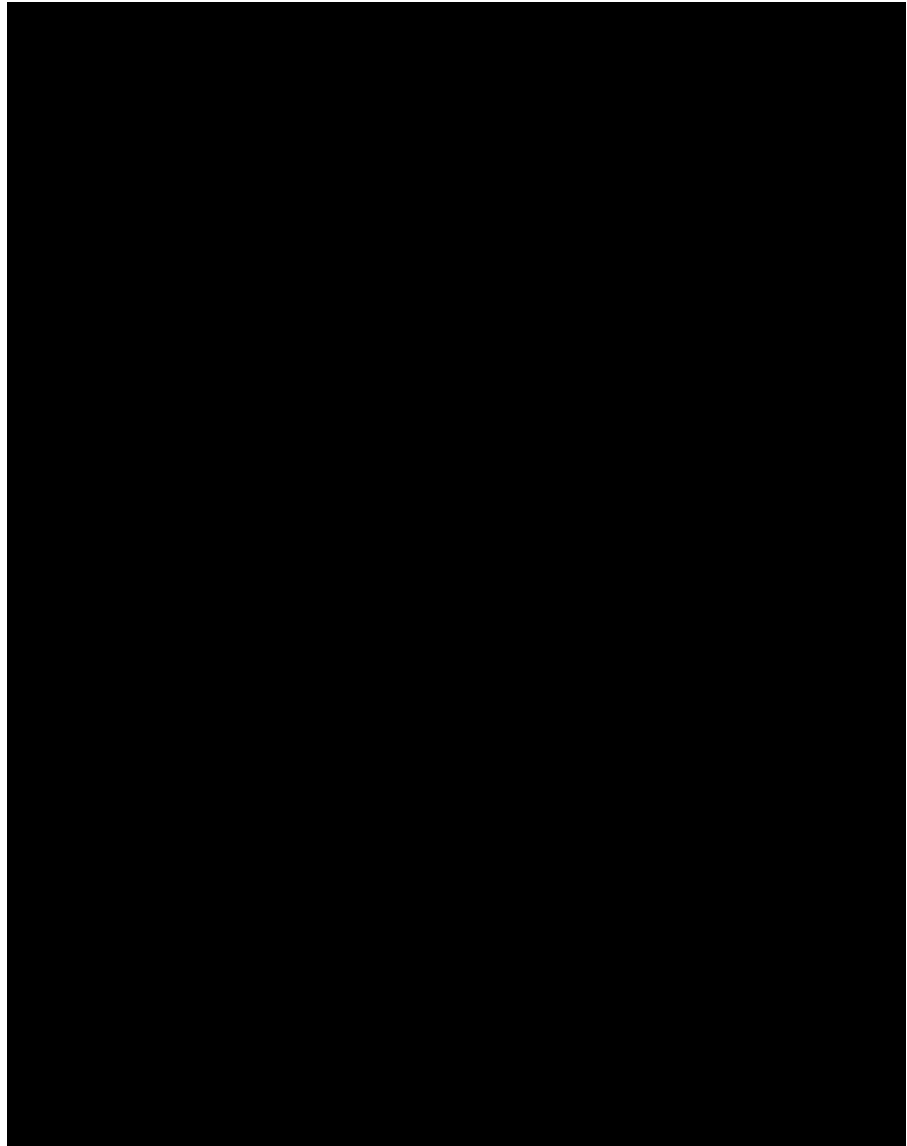
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Figure 6.20 Israeli army announcement of the expiry of the identification cards given after 1967 and its replacement with a civil Israeli identity card (ISA, 1982)

With the unilateral decision of Israel to annex the Golan Heights in 1981, including its Syrian Arab communities, Israeli policymakers envisioned citizenship as a tool to normalise the status of the territory and its inhabitants. With the remaining Syrian population in the occupied Golan Heights being predominantly Druze, Israel systematically pushed for the recognition of this ethno-geographic community as non-Arab, forcing the same policy of “Druzeness” that it has employed for the Druze who lived in Palestine until 1948, who have become Israeli citizens (Hajjar, 1996; Kaufman, 2016; Ram, 2015; Wessels, 2015). From the start of statehood, Israel promulgated a distinctive Druze identity as a non-Jewish minority; for example, designing tailored educational curricula and enforcing army conscription for the Israeli Druze. These moves mirrored, albeit more successfully, the political efforts employed by the French in their Syrian mandate (1923-1943) to separate the Druze from the wider Arab population; though Druze historiography, even in Israel, has challenged the notion that the Druze are non-Arab (Provence, 2005, 15-17). Furthermore, the Druze citizens of Israel retain socio-ethnic ties with fellow Druze in Lebanon and Syria: all face citizenship duties and other domestic obligations which sometimes clash with their ethno-communal loyalties and practices, e.g. restrictions on cross-border travel and the customary usage of natural resources (Kaufman, 2016; Mason and Khawlie, 2016).

The annexation law and the enforcement of Israeli citizenship came in a critical time following the arrest of the political activists, community leaders and religious figures who were working for the Syrian government and protesting the Israeli occupation. This political repression included the expulsion of teachers from schools because of their anti-Israel sentiment and support for Syria (Mara’i and Halabi, 1992, Qasem, 1984, Majalli, 1982). On the 2 September 1981, and following these arrests and the annexation law announcement, a general strike was organised by the Jawlanis to include 3,500 students, and a refusal to attend the Israeli-run schools. This prompted the military governor to send a letter (Figure 6.21) urging the parents not to succumb to external pressure and jeopardise the future of the education of their children (ISA, 1982).



*Figure 6.21 Military government pamphlet urging Jawlani to send their children to schools, following a boycott of military government institutions in protest to the annexation law (ISA, 1982)*

### 6.3 Concluding remarks

The deracination of the Jawlani ethno-geography has been a continuous military-bureaucratic process, punctuated by episodes of violent dispossession. Israel quickly moved to affect the physical appropriation of the land and prevent the return of any Syrians forcibly moved by the conflict. Through the military orders reviewed in section 6.2, these orders shrank the land base of the Arab agricultural economy, as



Israel created extensive zones for Jewish settlement and rural investment – a state-led strategy of accumulation by dispossession replicating that in the West Bank. During the first years of the occupation of the Golan Heights, Arab farmers responded by moving agriculture to hilly and mountainous areas still under their control, and actually profited from sales to the Israeli domestic market, but by the 1970s state subsidies and other support mechanisms for settlers and their rural cooperatives had established the growing dominance, and global competitiveness, of these agricultural businesses. With further encroachment on land and water, the remaining Syrian populations endured multi-layered processes of misrecognition through exclusion and uprooting. Not surprisingly, in the context of this enduring ethno-geographic community, the systemic misrecognition of Jawlani agriculture as the sole remaining livelihood practice is central to the symbolic violence against the Druze executed by the occupying power.

## **Chapter 7: Water struggles, apple orchards and everyday acts of protest and recognition in the occupied Golan Heights**

In the wake of the 1967 occupation and the effective de-territorialisation of the indigenous population of the Golan Heights, the five remaining Arab villages faced enormous pressure to keep their communities intact while also adapting to the new order of the occupation, which included immediate military control over their land and water resources. As this thesis seeks to move beyond the narratives of victimhood dominating settler colonial literature (as discussed in Chapter 2), this chapter will examine modes of resistance and protest carried out by the Jawlanis facing systematic misrecognition of their ethno-geographic existence in the oGH.

To examine forms of collective action carried out by the farming communities, and their political effects on farming practices and land relations (my second research question), this chapter is divided into three main sections, detailing water struggles through the periods of Israeli occupation (1967-1981) and annexation (1981). The first section will examine how farming communities have responded to and protested Israeli policies during the years of military occupation and explore the political effects of such actions, which have re-configured the lived geographies of the remaining Syrian villages. The second section concerns the critical event of annexation in 1982 and its aftermath, which resulted in mass mobilisation and intensified struggles for recognition, which included an up-scaling of water struggles through claims to water infrastructure. The third section includes a reflection on those events and their implications on the lived geographies today, as farmers struggle to maintain their presence on the land and also the economic viability and marketability of their produce. With ongoing political instability in Syria, issues of identity and belonging re-surface again, highlighting for the Jawlani ethno-geographic community its nationalistic dilemma of being outsiders and insiders at the same time.

## 7.1 Acts of resistance and protest (1967-1982)

### 7.1.1 Water sources: military orders, protection of springs under threat

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the post-1967 contestation over water was heightened around the springs of Musheirfeh and Ras il Nabi', both lying physically in the middle of the apple orchards of the Jawlani farmers. The Israeli military-civilian enforcement of its colonial geography necessitated the enforcement of the military law governing water. Both local waterbodies tell a story where the Jawlani resistance to state encroachment on water required both confrontation and negotiation with the state. While the two springs, in the context of the total water resources in the oGH, do not produce a significant yield (around 2 mcm per year), they became the site of Israeli attempts at control.

The spring of Ras il Nabi' was the source of water for irrigation for the farmers of Al Marj. This spring is located 300-400m from the ceasefire line of 1967, and converges into Sa'ar River (Figure 7.1), which has strong seasonal variation in flows. Before the occupation, the farmers began installing pipelines in their orchards as part of a plan to connect it to the spring source, Ras il Nabi', and therefore ensure a controlled supply of water, especially in the dry months. After the 1967 war, the project was halted and eventually the spring was located in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) zone.



Figure 7.1 Sa'ar River and its source, Ras il Nabi' inside the UNFDO (source: Google Earth, 2018)

After continuous pressure on the Israeli military governor, the Jawlanis finally managed to receive a permit to access the area and finalised the installation of the pipelines in 1984, constructing a reservoir and basic pipework infrastructure to divert the spring to the orchards. This arrangement is still valid today, where a group of Jawlani representatives are given access to the zone where the spring originates and carry out the maintenance needed (Interview with Nazih Abu Jabal, 7 September 2017):

*There is natural gravity of the springs and no need for pumps. The spring therefore will generate the flow of water through the pipes. This spring originates in an area that became known as the demilitarised zone. After many rounds of negotiations with the military governor we were allowed to access the area to develop our irrigation system from the spring to our lands, just a simple dam to control the spring flow. This was in 1977-80. We had to apply for permits in advance to go there annually and carry out any maintenance needed. We still go every year until today.*

As shown earlier in chapter 6, Israeli groundwater drilling and exploration was concentrated in the centre and north of the oGH (Dafny et al., 2003): one in an area known as Sukarra, two in the Musheirfeh area and one near Al Ya'fourı shrine and one near Birket Ram. These boreholes were the only ones developed which penetrated the regional aquifer until the late 1970s, drilled at depths of more than 200 meters. The wells were drilled in the Jawlanis' lands, usually confiscated by force, and rarely offered access to the water. The first one to be drilled was near al Musheirfeh area, and the two springs of Musheirfeh and Ras il Nabi' were transformed by the drilling of the wells nearby. Both springs dwindled. As the spring water was critical to the irrigation of a large area of orchards, the farmers raised their concerns to Mekorot, through legal means. The claim of the Jawlanis was that in case of drying of the springs, Mekorot was obliged to provide water to compensate for the farmers' loss. Eventually, an agreement was reached in the 1970s with Mekorot, obliging it to provide any quantity which is lost due to the abstractions from the wells.<sup>60</sup> Ironically, the Ministry of Agriculture report of 1974 (ISA, 1974) refers to this allocation but frames it as providing water to compensate for years of drought:

*In the previous year of drought, water was pumped from the well to Ein Musheirfeh to assist the farmers with their irrigation since due to the drought the flow of the springs reduced.*

One of the wells, Ram 1 in the Ya'fourı valley, was referred to in the report as necessary for pumping water to the Birket Ram plant, and according to the Ministry's information 'this drilling did not reduce the flow of the nearby springs' (ISA, 1974).

These early attempts by Mekorot to lay claim over the springs were vehemently rejected by the farmers who have relied on the springs for generations.

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<sup>60</sup> According to an interview with Nazih Abu Jabal, this agreement has been used as a legal tool to claim water rights until this day. As he's one of the farmers of Al Musheirfeh area, he claims that in 2018., with the spring drying in the summer, farmers in the area began mobilising, meeting with Mekorot and sending complaints. They retrieved the old document signed by Mekorot as a proof that it will have to provide the water needed.

The developed systems of irrigation were considered part of the collective ownership of the springs by the farmers, who distributed the water according to their needs. Just like the symbolism attached to spring water in the Palestinian context (Kan'an, 1922; Lemire, 2011; Qleibo, 2014), any denial of access to or control of the flows was received with indignation. The springs of Sa'ar and Musheirfeh, in addition to waterbodies like Birket Ram, also held similar cultural significance and importance for the Jawlanis. However, the Israeli hydro-hegemony at its localised scale managed through its infrastructures to penetrate and weaken the flows of the Jawlani springs, provoking confrontations over water access and demands for compensation for denial of access to local springs.

#### 7.1.2 'Reunion' with fellow Palestinian and Druze – sharing the experience of living under occupation and military rule

With the Israeli occupation in 1967, reunification of Arab families displaced was partially made possible as Palestinians inside Israel could communicate and visit Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Moreover, they could meet the Syrians of the oGH and also be reunited with communities they had been in close proximity to (cultural, political, economic, religious, family) before 1948. This 'opening' of the borders, or rather controlled access under Israel occupation, encouraged solidarity and collective mobilisation for those under military rule. The remaining population in the oGH could be in touch with their extended families and Druze spiritual leaders inside Israel, in Rameh and other Druze villages. Apart from the emotional and human-level bonding this produced, the Druze began sharing their concerns about how to deal with Israeli military rule, laws and regulations. This is when collective community meetings used to take place between Palestinians inside Israel and their close friends in the oGH (Mara'i and Halabi, 1992). As one veteran farmer recalls (Interview with Nazih Abu Jabal, 7 September 2017):

*Their first advice was: take care and protect your land. Any land left barren and uncultivated is going to be confiscated by the state. Water, springs, wells are going to be state property. You have to be*

*strong and protect your land and water to preserve your existence. They shared with us that the Israeli state left them with no land and water. Be careful!, they said.*

With continued legal and practical advice from Palestinian citizens in Israel, the Jawlanis gained increased knowledge of how to deal with and tackle Israeli policies concerning land and water. Part of the advice given was regarding state forested land, which was under the threat of immediate confiscation. The Syrian government has forested certain areas in the north of the Golan, which therefore was not cultivated until 1967. One of these areas was known as *al-Ballan* – an area between Majdal Shams and Masada, near the Marj Lands. Being warned that this land, without the Jawlanis' intervention, would be turned into settlements, the Palestinians inside Israel advised the Jawlanis to bring bulldozers and claim any state land or collectively owned lands and plant apple trees. While such action was expected to trigger state punishment and legal battles, they assured them that their consecutive use of the land for two years grants them legal rights as owners of that land and will ensure that they keep those lands in their private ownership.

The concern over the little land still controlled by the Jawlanis prompted them to seek immediate action to reclaim any land which was abandoned or forested. As the Israeli government had already appropriated 95% of the land, the Jawlanis began their collective work to reclaim as much as possible of what remained. Another *hajmeh* ensued, as Nazih Abu Jabal recalls:

*Between 1968 and 1970, there was a hajmeh to reclaim land outside Marj al Ya'four: the area of al Khawareet, Al Ballan, Al Qate', Al Hawakeer, the pomegranate orchards, Al Masna' (the factory). It was an extraordinary effort of land reclamation...a strong hajmeh. The same year that land was reclaimed it was planted with apples and peaches.*

Interestingly, the Jawlani collective efforts of land protection and reclamation intersected with the economic conditions and realities of the times. In order to carry out such extensive land reclamation (which was economically costly and technically

challenging), machinery, funds, labour and plans were required. All these factors were available because of the economic engagements of the Jawlani with the Israeli economy – which was heavily in need of a workforce in the construction and agricultural sectors. To reclaim lands on hilly slopes, bulldozers were needed and Jawlanis involved in construction work inside Israel volunteered their machinery and time and people also began buying tractors for their personal use. Apple saplings, which were needed for proving continuous use of the land, were also brought in from nurseries in Israeli settlements where Jawlanis worked, especially around the drained and ‘reclaimed’ Huleh Valley, and from Palestinian merchants and farmers in the Galilee. The heavy reliance on apple production as an income generating crop before and after 1967 obliged the Jawlanis to plant apple varieties that were profitable and in demand by the Israeli market. Starking (Starking Delicious) apple variety was one such crop that was heavily planted, as its selling point is that it’s small and red, requiring less water than the larger Golden Delicious.

The Israeli tolerance of such acts of land reclamation was due to the strategy of containing the Druze population and ensuring their loyalty to the Israeli state. Israel at that time was interested in the ‘druzification’ and ‘de-arabisation’ of the oGH Druze, similar to its strategy and tactics in dealing with the Druze of Israel, who have been considered historical allies of the Israeli state since 1948. They attempted to replicate what they had done with the Druze of Palestine, which was to create a distinct Druze culture and nationality, even imposing religious festivities on them that are separate from their Arab heritage (Hajjar, 2000; Kaufman, 2016; Kaufman, 2004; Nisan, 2010). The Israeli state treated all Druze as alike, as a non-Arab minority, and thus approached the oGH Druze with a carrot and stick policy to normalise their relationship with the state and ensure their loyalty to it. At the same time, Israeli policy making was focused on establishing settlements in the Golan Heights, particularly in the central and southern parts of the Golan. As a veteran Jawlani farmer recounts:

*At that time the Israeli state was preoccupied with other priorities: constructing roads, settlements, military posts. We were not in their radar... the colonial mind-set also prevailed that they were superior and that the locals would not do anything to develop*



*themselves. (Interview with Nazih Abu Jabal, Majdal Shams, 7 September 2017).*

The settler colonial imperative of developing the Golan Heights, like the WZO development plans, can be seen as a reason for Israel not paying greater attention to these small acts of Arab land reclamation, in comparison to the Israeli state's quest to develop settlements, farms, roads, water systems, and even a city in the oGH. However, the acts of reclamation, especially in Al Ballan, did not go unnoticed. These acts made visible the local and active existence of the indigenous population, which clashed with the Israeli policy of spatial confinement. After 1,000 dunums of land were reclaimed in al-Ballan, the Jawlanis began receiving warnings and eviction notices demanding they vacate the land or incur fines and penalties, as they were considered trespassers on state land. Eventually, the reclaimed lands were maintained under Jawlani control and ownership, managing to increase and expand their agricultural land as a singular case of success in land reclamation under Israeli occupation, which aimed to uproot and eliminate the indigenous ethno-geographic community. What the Jawlanis achieved through their tactics of resistance was to re-root themselves in their colonised landscapes and waterscapes, making their ethno-geographic connections visible and enduring. As Figure 7.2 and 7.3 shows<sup>61</sup> the transformations and re-configurations of livelihoods were not only impacting the Jawlanis themselves but also their practices on the ground, expanding apple growing as an act of resistance to settler colonial rule.

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<sup>61</sup> Year 1962 was chosen as a baseline year due to lack of satellite images available for 1967.



Figure 7.2 Landscapes of reclaimed land near Marj Al Ya'four (Author's picture, August 2017)

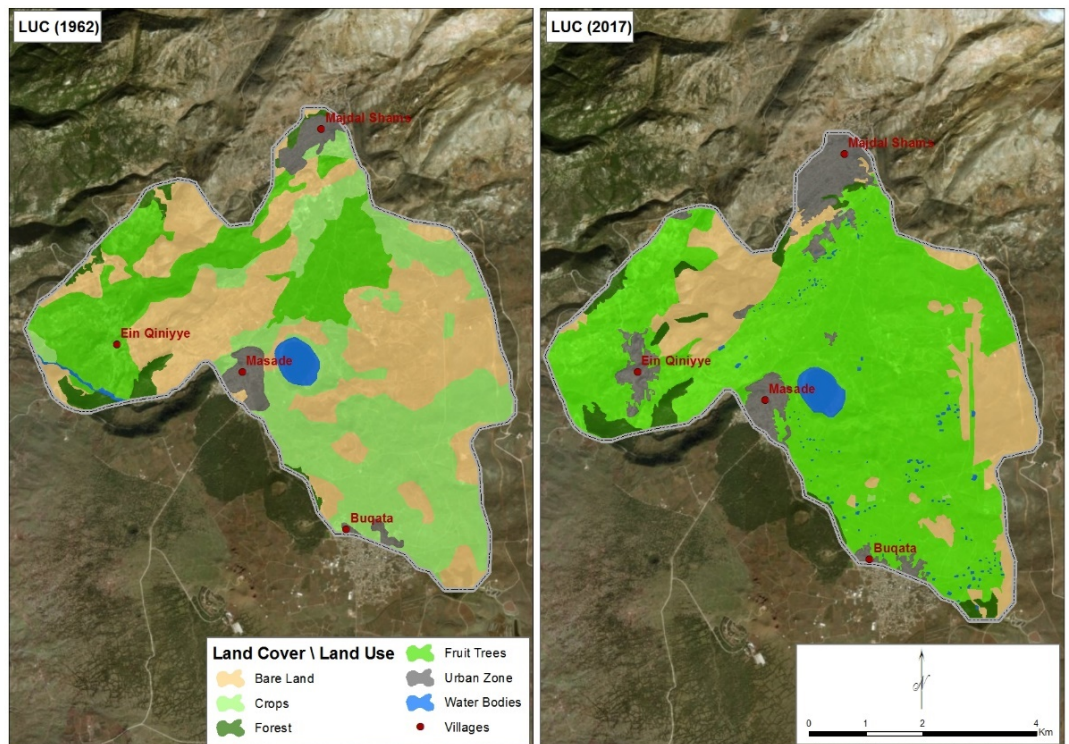


Figure 7.3 The Land Use Change in satellite images in 1962 and 2017, showing the expansion of Arab fruit crops (developed for the author by CNRS team, 2018)

## 7.2 Acts of resistance and protest (1982-1990s)

### 7.2.1 Annexation, resistance and the general strike

The annexation of the Golan Heights in 1982 was followed by a series of Israeli sanctions on the Druze population, including income tax rises, house arrests, water supply cuts, and restrictions on trade (of which apples were the main crop) and on freedom of movement (Al Batheesh,, 1986; Davis 1983; Qasem,, 1984). All of these sanctions would be eased, it was declared, if the Druze agreed to adopt Israeli identity cards and citizenship. Israeli attempts to delineate or isolate Druze identity as non-Syrian and non-Arab faced fierce opposition; but one neither representing a stable imagined community nor simply reproducing the secular narrative of Syrian nationhood. The call collectively to resist Israeli citizenship was first issued in November 1980 from the Druze spiritual leadership, after a mass meeting in the Majdal Shams khalwe (house of worship): this declaration threatened religious excommunication for any Druze taking Israeli citizenship, thereby explicitly redefining Druze identity as spiritually incompatible with Israeli citizenship (Kirrish 1992, 130).

Following the mass meeting, a National Statement was issued in March 1981 signed by *Abna' Al Jawlan Al Muhtal* [The sons/people of the occupied Golan]. It proclaimed that the Israeli occupation's continuous quest to encroach on the Druze "national characteristics and Syrian Arab nationality" will not be tolerated, highlighting the ancestral heritage of this nationality coupled with a pride in Arabic as a national language inseparable from their existence on the land. The statement also asserted that Syrian Arab nationality does not vanish, being transmitted from generation to generation: "Those who replace their nationality with an Israeli one are offending our collective dignity (*Karameh*), national honour (*Sharaf*), nationalistic belonging (*Intima'*) and our traditions" (Abna' Al Jawlan Al Muhtal,, 1981, 1).

The disintegration of a mixed society of villages, towns and farms, with multiple ethnicities and professions, and with different land use professions (herding, farming, dairy farms) impacted the remaining Jawlani population drastically. Confined spatially and deprived of formal self-identification as Syrian Arab, the

Jawlani found themselves alienated and increasingly identified as “Druze” (Firro, 1988; Kirrish, 1992). The Jawlanis’ lived experience of non-violent opposition, including explicit embrace of the Palestinian idea of *sumud*, generated multiple, if sometimes competing, loyalties in which attachment or rootedness to land was the dominant marker. The practical experience of farming nurtures land-based attachments, and enacts *sumud* as a strategy of political resistance, constituted in part as a defensive reaction to systemic misrecognition. As Nazih Braik, an academic from Majdal Shams proclaimed (Skype, 30 December, 2016):

*We are a small community that remained. The liberation of land in the national sense is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to protect our land, our belonging and our existence and to remain steadfast. When the annexation took place, we had to reconsider what can be done to persevere and remain. We established the cooperatives and started demanding water allocation within the legal framework of Israeli law. We did this to preserve and protect our existence and our livelihood.*

In light of this reconfiguration of belonging, the Jawlanis embarked on communal resistance to the forced citizenship campaign that Israel began in the early 1980s. It initially took the form of six months of strikes and direct clashes with Israeli security forces (Hajjar, 1996, p.3). This resulted in the issuing of Israeli travel documents to the inhabitants of the occupied Golan Heights, stating “undefined” under nationality as a punishment for refusing Israeli citizenship (Wessels, 2015a,b), and leaving the Jawlanis isolated in dealing with this denial of recognition. As one farmer explained:

*Our identity today is our steadfastness on the land. More so than our belonging to Syria, I feel this is what unifies us and brings us together. We, outside of our land and of the Golan, we have no identity. Even in our travel document, we are listed as undefined. (Focus group discussion, Majdal Shams, 2013)*

The events that led up to and followed the annexation, from refusal of Israeli citizenship, to the general strike were also followed by another Hajmeh on the land

to carry out land development and reclamation of rain-fed and rocky land, fearing land confiscation by the Israeli state of any undeveloped land. Since apples trees were the Jawlanis' priority crop, the need for additional water sources also pushed Jawlani farmers to consider small-scale infrastructure construction, such as that of rainwater tanks to irrigate this water-intensive crop. This attests that the Jawlani, now territorially confined, articulated their indigeneity as a separate ethno-geographic community. Central to the formation of this distinct identity was the material and symbolic creation of a worked agricultural landscape as inseparable from its inhabitants' identification with the Golan Heights.

Land-based identification compensates being "the remainder of a society forcible displaced" under conditions of systemic misrecognition, as interlocuters met shared. While some of this coercive normalisation has been successfully institutionalized, as shall be seen further in this chapter, remaining on, and cultivating, the land is seen as effectively resisting the territorial uprooting of the Jawlani.

In another National Statement issued in 1981 by the Druze leadership in the Golan Heights, the threatened "loss of our national citizenship" caused by the Israeli annexation was linked to escalating water appropriation through occupation, notably the "rape of our groundwater" by seizure of spring water (from Al Ya'four, Al Mushirfeh, and Ras Abu Sa'eed springs) and "theft" of water from Birket Ram to supply Jewish settlements in the Golan (Al Batheesh, 1987, p.39). As noted above, before the occupation, the lake was used by the local population for fishing, to irrigate crops and as drinking water for livestock. Infrastructural violence was also referred to in this National Statement, highlighting how Israeli military rule had halted a community water project to transport water to newly reclaimed agricultural land (National Statement, in Al Batheesh, 1987, p.39). The Druze National Statement treats the denial of indigenous water rights as misrecognition – as the state declares illegal the community-managed water systems, it undermines Jawlani identity and autonomy.

Water became imbricated in larger re-configurations of the lived geographies in the oGH under the Israeli occupation in 1967, which confined and limited land and water access, established new rules of water use, and limited the agricultural practices of the remaining villages, in addition to consolidating settlements over more than 90% of the total area of the Golan. As the previous section shows, the 'activist stance' (Mara'i and Halabi, 1992a, p.82) and resistance of the Jawlani to encroachment on their lived geographies solidified later in the 1970s, when annexation was looming as a serious consideration by the far-right Israeli government at the time. The Israeli occupation concentrated in the first decade on land use development and investment in settlement expansion while 'neglecting' or disregarding what happened in the Jawlani villages, as long as they remained passive. Therefore, the 'presence-absence' of the occupying power was a dynamic of settler colonial rule which influenced the realities and actions of the Jawlanis on the ground. While the state was present in its encroachment on the villages, confiscating land and planting minefields around the ceasefire line in Majdal Shams, in addition to its ordering of social, political and economic life through military orders, the Jawlanis nevertheless managed to maintain a sense of autonomy in their daily practices and internal affairs, considering themselves subjects of a temporary occupation which they were forced to deal with.

Following the proposal of the annexation law by the right-wing government, the Jawlanis embarked on political mobilisations aimed at opposing acts of misrecognition embodied in the annexation law. The encroachment on everyday life was evident in the occupation's linkage between granting Israeli citizenship and permits to travel, driving a car, accessing the apple orchards, obtaining basic services like water and electricity, and favouring those who cooperated with the state, by providing them with water quotas and low taxation. The military governor also began threatening the livelihoods of the Jawlanis by restricting their access to pasture land, destroying the constructed pools and filling them with rubble (Qasem, 1987).

The six months strike that commenced on 15 February 1982 was a monumental event that impacted the lived geographies of the Jawlanis and re-configured their relations with land and water. On 17 April 1982, at the height of the

strike, the Jawlanis went out to the streets to commemorate the 36th anniversary of the Evacuation Day,<sup>62</sup> known as *Youm Al Jalaa'*, and 6,000 of them marched towards the cease-fire fence. On that day, the Jawlanis also declared their commitment to *sumud*, to protecting their land and agricultural livelihoods. In a statement published that week they announced (Al-Ittihad, 1982):

*Land is the symbol of our sumud and our principal foundation to strengthen our existence and to continue our struggle to reach our human and national aspirations. The decision is to work in a collective and organised manner so that the production can be for the public good. This way we can continue with the strike.*

In response to the settler colonial strategy of accumulation by dispossession, the Jawlani intensified communal agricultural activities to counter expropriation of their land and water resources. As well as challenging material dispossession, this collective project generated a land-based resistance identity countering the symbolic violence of misrecognition. Realising the imminent threat to the hilly grazing lands used for herding, the Jawlani moved substantial amounts of soil to these areas, producing a new agricultural terrain. The construction of cylindrical metal tanks to catch rainwater was employed by the Jawlani as a low-cost, practical option to increase the availability of water for irrigation. Hundreds of such tanks, holding from 300 to 1,000 cubic meters of water, were built mainly in the mid-1980s in defiance of Israeli water regulations. For one veteran farmer, this “reservoir and agricultural boom” was motivated above all by the conviction “that this land is ours, and we will not abandon it. If it needs water, we will provide it and quench its thirst” (Interview with Abu Naser, Majdal Shams, 15 August 2016).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Evacuation Day is a Syrian national day commemorating the evacuation of the last French soldier and the declaration of Syrian independence and the end of the French mandate on 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1946.

<sup>63</sup> According to a local report on agriculture, by 1987, there were 450 rainwater harvesting tanks and ponds, collecting between 400-500,000 m<sup>3</sup> (Abu Jabal, 1993)

## 7.2.2 Water counter-infrastructure and the re-configuration of the Jawlani lived geography

*We have ambitions to reclaim our water, since Mekorot does not own it but rather has possessed it. Gradually we will reduce Mekorot's use of the water and reclaim it for our own use. (Interview with Hayel Abu Jabal, 17 December 2016)*

The tactics which led to the development of counter-infrastructure for irrigation water by the Jawlanis arose firstly from their particular biophysical setting, as mentioned in Chapter 6 (see section 6.1). The communities had historically carried out decentralised collective efforts to secure water for agricultural development from the nearby springs. Druze farmers testify to the historical success of their communal planning and funding of water resources, predating Syrian rule. Channelling the spring water of *Ein El Tufaha* through basic dirt channels, the farmers began flood irrigation to the central agricultural valley of Al Marj to irrigate newly planted apple trees, while Birket Ram was utilised for fishing and as a source of drinking water for livestock. The significance of this collective infrastructure, built in the 1940s, during the French mandate and prior to the creation of the Syrian state, lies in its formative structuring of hydrosocial relations and territory, where Arab livelihood practices intertwined with national, religious and geographic identities, forging an enduring ethno-geographic community. These practices of local governance, both social and material, created a distinct lived geography and ethno-geographic community, deepening an ontological identity under occupation. The infrastructures it produced are of interest in this section, as they serve as tools for the empowerment of land-based claims of belonging and recognition. This section will trace the progressive scaling-up of counter-infrastructure: pools, rainwater harvesting tanks, piped networks and apple coolers (Dajani and Mason, 2018).



### 7.2.2.1 Pools and rainwater harvesting tanks (1980s)

As part of the efforts to reclaim land and work collectively, water also took a central role in the overall struggle for opposing misrecognition. The 1980s witnessed a splurge in the construction of small reservoirs to catch rainwater, part of the collective efforts to increase the area under agricultural cultivation in order to protect the land from confiscation and increase the planting of apple trees to establish facts on the ground. Farmers began devising tactics to increase the water availability and ensure the success of these plans to increase the land devoted to apple orchards. As discussed earlier, the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture was devising ways to reduce water availability for 'Druze' agriculture, and all the efforts made by the farmers to demand increased water from Mekorot fell on deaf ears. Faced with the occupation's neglect of their needs, farmers from Mas'ada village, close to Birket Ram, pumped water in the middle of the night to mobile tankers and used the water from the lake to irrigate their crops planted a few hundred metres away. This became riskier after annexation (Interview with Shihadeh Nasrallah, Agronomist, Majdal Shams, 8 September 2017):

*After the confiscation of Birket Ram, it is a known story here that the farmers used to pump water from the lake at night. Only after the annexation would the border control (Israeli army) go around in night patrols to arrest these farmers and confiscate their pumps. This is not because the military occupation was less brutal, they are the same. However, after the annexation the attack was more severe and targeted*

To secure sufficient water sources to irrigate the apple orchards, the Jawlanis began digging small pools/ponds to capture rainwater (Figure 7.4), in addition to other small-scale efforts to provide water for their newly reclaimed lands (ibid):

*Interestingly, between 1975 and 1985, the region witnessed the largest expansion in land development. In addition to increasing the agricultural lands, there was increased activity in creating ponds, and fabricating metal tanks. These ponds were also dug but they reached a depth of 5-6m only and were 5-6m in diameter. Other*

*shallow wells were there but as you know many failed because they were not based on a geological or hydrological survey. It was also a very expensive action but the challenge to develop the land was instrumental.*



*Figure 7.4 A rainwater pond built by the Jawlani population (without Mekorot approval or financial assistance) in the middle of an apple orchard in Majdal Shams (Author's picture, 2012)*

As means of addressing the water scarcity imposed on the Jawlani farmers, the rainwater ponds proved insufficient to meet the demand and required a lot of manual work in addition to being extremely costly. Other mechanisms had to be devised to capture more rainwater to keep the orchards alive and thriving. Hundreds of circular metal tanks, with a volume between 300 and 1,000 cubic metres were built and erected on agricultural land to collect rainwater. These metal tanks started dotting the Jawlani landscape, in defiance of the Israeli water law which prohibited the harvesting of rainwater for private use, as the Water Law of 1959 treated all water as state property. The building of tanks was a trial and error effort by individual farmers, as one recalls (Interview with Nazih Abu Jabal, 07 September 2017, Majdal Shams):

*The first one to consider building a reservoir designed it as a cube. The consideration was to collect rainwater or bring water from Sa'ar River. However, it was not strong enough and the water seeped. Others began designing it in a circular shape and made 4 of them... and just like mushrooms the reservoir tanks spread all over. 400 cubic metres to 800 cubic metres. From Majdal Shams, to Masada and Buq'atha it spread. The Israeli state at first didn't pay attention but later on, it began testing us by issuing demolition orders and imposing fines. People reacted by saying: we don't oppose demolition if you provide us with water.*

The building of the tanks and their impressive expansion to 450 units happened with little intervention from the state (see Figure 7.5). As Hayel Abu Jabal recalls, the peak of the tank action was during the years of 1986 and 1987, and it was “a very special time”. However, the presence of the settler colonial state was considered a logistical obstacle still, as the Israeli police patrols prevented any fast construction during the day. However, the Jawlanis had access to heavy machinery, good blacksmiths and construction material.

*People worked at night, since the committee of planning and construction in cooperation with the police were the main actors monitoring our villages in the morning, at night the staff goes home. This is when the welders begin working, and by the next day, the tank will be set up and ready. (Interview with Hayel Abu Jabal, Majdal Shams, 30 December 2016).*

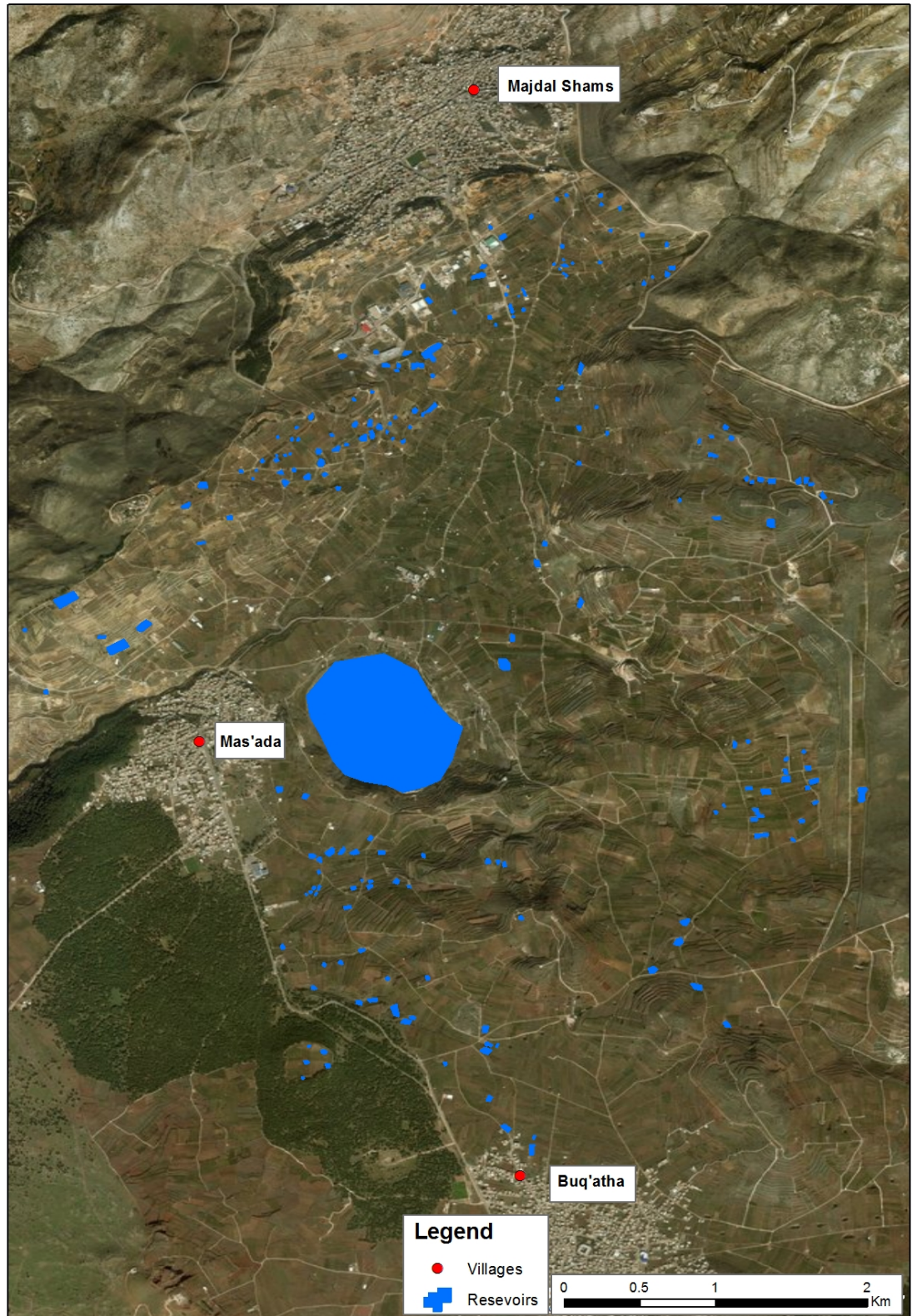


Figure 7.5 Satellite image of some of the ponds and rainwater harvesting tanks in the agricultural areas (developed by CNRS team for this thesis, 2018)

While the Ministry of Agriculture and Mekorot disregarded such tanks at first, the Jewish settlers of the Golan Heights started raising concerns with the Ministry of Agriculture. As a letter written by Knesset Member Edna Salvader to the Minister of agriculture, Arik Nehmakin, revealed settler imaginaries and rejection of Jawlani practices.<sup>64</sup> The reclamation was seen to be taking place on state land, and the Jawlanis (referred to as Druze) were accused of ‘stealing state land and water’. She also referred to the tanks’ alteration of the landscape, seen as an ugly addition. The settlers, represented by this Knesset member, were increasingly worried about the marketing of their products and how the increased production anticipated from land reclamation and greater water use by the Jawlanis, would negatively affect them, urging the ministry to take action (Min al-Jawlan, 1988, p.17).

The response from the minister was brief, highlighting that only a small portion of the land reclaimed was state land, and that any work taking place was without prior notification and knowledge from the ministry. Equally, the ministry claimed that many agricultural lands were planted without permits in the Jewish settlements and they refused to treat the Druze violators differently. The Ministry of Agriculture’s lack of urgency in dealing with the matter, coupled with its disregard of the actions of the Jawlanis in relation to land and water, is a case of how the state was preoccupied with its settlements construction, which the Jawlanis have used as a tool of grounding their claims through infrastructure.

However, as noted in Chapter 2, multiple actors work to create state imaginaries, and here it is interesting that, a new ally joined the Jewish settlers’ fight against the Jawlani land expansion: The Green Patrol director, Alon Galili, who employed the law as a tool to halt land and water reclamation in the Druze villages. The Green Patrol, known for its intensive campaigns against the Bedouins inside Israel, is a paramilitary unit located in the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and was established to pressure Bedouin Arabs to leave their lands and move into state-assigned urban settlements (Amara et al., 2012). Its establishment brought together “the four major territorial

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<sup>64</sup> This was a direct inquiry from the Knesset member, labelled 1851, which the Minister had to reply to (Minal-Jawlan, 1988, p.17).

players in Israel: the Land Authority, the JNF, the Nature Reserves Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture” (Tal, 2002, p.347). Armed, the Green Patrol has a long history of removing Bedouins from ‘state’ lands, destroying tents, water tanks and intimidating the Bedouins, Druze and Arab-Israelis to keep off designated lands. In the oGH, and according to the Golan Land newspaper, Galili acknowledged that the Green Patrol’s real work had the objective of controlling Jawlani land and water use. Due to their affiliation with powerful actors and ministries, the Green Patrol worked actively on lobbying the Northern Golan Land Regulatory Agency (which oversaw all land development issues in the oGH) and Israeli Land Authority to carry out an investigation into the Druze expansion over land, which they revealed covered thousands of dunums. The Green Patrol sounded alarm bells when it came to water, estimating that the water situation is “100 times more dangerous” than land, claiming that the “theft” amounted to 800,000 thousand cubic meters,<sup>65</sup> not including the water aqueducts and Birket Ram. The patrol advised that legal measures should be taken against all those violating the law and storing water, calling for the destruction of the water storage tanks and rainwater harvesting ponds. The Green Patrol managed to bring the tanks owners to court, where many of them faced charges of illegal building, and even reducing the water level of Lake Tiberias (Interview with Hayel Abu Jabal, 30 December 2016):

*Their claim was that the tanks could potentially affect groundwater recharge but it definitely affects Lake Tiberias water level. This was a ridiculous claim as the total water stored by these tanks does not even go beyond 1MCM, and even I remember a specific number: 700,000 cubic meters. It was a ridiculous claim but of course the judge ruled against us and the state was given the right to fine us.*

Interestingly, the Housing Ministry and the Israeli Army were leading the issuance of fines and demolition orders (Interview with Nazih Abu Jabal, 7 September 2017),

*The Housing Ministry began issuing fines to the owners of each reservoir. The army also intervened and claimed the reservoirs*

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<sup>65</sup>Compared to 8 million cubic meters available to settlers in 1975.

*limited military exercises and operations. We demolished our reservoir. We were close to a tank route. They began sending us fines, with warnings of either demolition or applying for permits. Whoever needed the reservoir had to apply for a permit and submit a plan for the location and area of the reservoir. This all incurred a lot of money in fines and permits. The farmer had to produce these plans, submit them to the ministry of defence and the environmental quality authority and protection of nature. If one of them declines the proposal, a permit will not be issued. Most of the applications were rejected and not approved. We demolished it and we incurred a lot of cost to demolish it. Many people ended up demolishing their reservoirs...We were crazy! We invested so much money in them. We only wanted to prove to them [the Israelis] that we want and demand water. We didn't resort to violence but to politics and the use of law.*

Following this cat-and-mouse situation with the Israeli authorities, the construction of such tanks by the Jawlani farmers was 'disciplined' by acts of state demolition, fines and taxation to limit the development of such structures. However, many remain to this day as a reminder of acts of asserting and reclaiming indigenous water rights, although their current use is limited. They are visible markers on the landscape of a counter-infrastructure for water (see Figure 7.6 and 7.7). As much as the water reservoirs failed in being a feasible and economical tool to gather water, they became a potent symbol of a distinctive, Jawlani ethnogeography.

Collective reclamation of water rights by constructing metal tanks as water reservoirs constituted a tactic of collective action and not merely an act by individual farmers. Defying economic rationality and realizing the tanks' limited potential to secure the water needed, the Jawlanis asserted that the tanks were a lobbying tactic to reclaim water from Mekorot and the Ministry of Agriculture. While the fines issued against the Jawlanis were significant<sup>66</sup> their determination to irrigate the land was the driving force of their actions (Interview with Hayel Abu Jabal, 30 December 2016):

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<sup>66</sup> As the ASD (1994) report shows in a testimony of one of the farmers, fines reached up between 12,000-30,000 New Israeli Shekels (NIS). This was in addition to incurring very high costs of building the tanks, which were estimated between \$17,000-\$20,000 (Abu Jabal and Ayoub, 2009).

*The building of these tanks was very important...we had very economically sound agricultural activities. We were willing to sacrifice. Our motivation was to protect our land, never to give up on it no matter what. If it required water, we will irrigate it. There was this determination.*



*Figure 7.6 Rainwater harvesting tanks still dominate the Jawlani landscape  
(Author's picture, September 2017)*





*Figure 7.7 a view of agricultural lands in Majdal Shams, with several rusted tanks visible in the orchard fields (Author's pictures, September 2017)*

The scarcity narrative, which the Israeli state imposed on water use in the Jawlani villages, is contradicted by comparing water allocations to settlements. During 1974, the 1900 Israeli settlers were receiving almost 8 mcm, while the 8,900 Jawlanis were provided with 2.1 mcm, the settlers thus receiving 17 times more water than the Jawlani (WZO, 1975). The clear discrimination in water distribution and access trumped state narratives of scarcity, as the Jawlanis witnessed the large re-allocation of water resources under the occupation, from Birket Ram's confiscation and the channelling of river floods to it, to the control over the tributaries of the Jordan, as well as water control more generally: this was a waterscape of misrecognition. The colonial geographies of the oGH created contrasting realities for the Jewish settler farmer and the Jawlani farmer. Therefore, local struggles over water intensified not only between the Jawlanis and the occupation authorities, but also with the settler population objecting to Jawlani water use and land expansion.

As a water-intensive and seasonal crop in the face of high competition from subsidised settler farmers, the commercial viability of apple growing is never secure. A group of Jawlani farmers established the first cooling facility, Majdal Shams Cooler,

in 1977, in order to secure its apple production and protect its price. Initially the Majdal Shams Cooler was supplied with electricity through generators that operated until midnight, which the Jawlanis invested in after refusing to be connected to the Israeli electricity grid (Qasem, 1984). For the coolers, the farmers invested in a diesel generator. In the late 1970s, these main generators were confiscated by the state and the villages were connected to the national grid. Today, there are eight communal apple coolers (Figure 7.8) that depend on a mixture of energy sources including the grid, generators and solar panels. They are collectively owned by farmers (who are shareholders) and have been an exclusively Jawlani investment, borne out of an interest to maintain the economic viability of the apple crops beyond the season. They represent another tool in the sumud on the land, as Nazih Braik, from Majdal Shams, asserts (Skype, 30 December, 2017):

*Out of this struggle to remain and protect our belonging, we had to think more economically on how to continue our apple growing but at least to reduce the losses we incur. This gave rise to the idea of large storage coolers, as a tool to protect our land as agricultural producing land.*



*Figure 7.8 Apple containers outside of Al Jawlan cooler in Majdal Shams (Author's picture, 2016)*

#### *7.2.2.2 Piped network and the establishment of cooperatives (1980s-1990s)*

*When the state began compromising with us regarding allowing access to additional water resources through the cooperatives, the tanks lost their significance and importance. We had additional water from the cooperatives, and we didn't have to struggle as we did with the tanks. Now we have a more efficient way of irrigation (Interview with Hayel Abu Jabal, 30 December 2016)*

The continued struggle and mobilisation against water appropriation by the Israeli state following the 'reservoir boom' took the form of the establishment of water cooperatives. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Mey Golan, the settler water company, constructed 8 artificial lakes/reservoirs to supply the Israeli settlements with water, in addition to Mekorot's control of Birket Ram. The Ministry of Agriculture and Mekorot had an obligation towards the Israeli settler population to

supply sufficient water allocations based on settlements' annual plans for agricultural planting. Therefore, if the settlements had a plan for apple orchards, each dunum had to receive 700 cubic meters to produce the required quality for marketing. With additional water sources becoming available to the settler populations (through the artificial lakes and groundwater pumping), the settlements' reliance on Birket Ram reduced. Following the Jawlani reservoir boom, Mekorot was willing to reach a water purchasing agreement with the Jawlani population. An important distinction is made between the settlement 'provision' of water, compared with a mere water purchase agreement with the Jawlanis. The latter carried minimal obligations for the Israeli company, allowing it to dictate the amount of water to allocate annually, with no obligation to supply the water through the national network. While Mekorot was selling the waters of Birket Ram to the Jawlanis, it was also under no obligation to provide the pipe network to reach the designated agricultural land.

The establishment of the cooperatives was fraught with political encounters between Mekorot and the Jawlanis.<sup>67</sup> The first cooperative to be established, *al-Murkhan*, providing water for the agricultural lands near Birket Ram, was pushed for by a collective of farmers who were prepared to negotiate with the Israeli state. Despite the religious and social ban on dealing with the state (since the 1981 National Statement), the water situation was weighing heavily on farmers' land and its productivity. The 1980s, as mentioned above, were a time when settlement agriculture was rising as a competitor with advantages like state support, water provisions, and favoured access to markets. The settler colonial conditions under which the Jawlanis were carrying out their agriculture necessitated a less

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<sup>67</sup> To tighten its civilian control over the population further, the military rule reinforced its control over the Golan by setting up local councils in the remaining Druze villages (ASD, 1994). The heads of the village council were appointed personnel, who had close relations with the Israeli state and were Israeli citizens. These village councils were boycotted by the local Druze population; therefore, no election takes place of the heads of the local councils but are rather appointed by the Israeli state. The rationale of the boycott of participation in the election is that these village councils are seen as state apparatus that will serve the interests of the occupying state and its aspirations to control land and resources rather than the interests of the citizens, who were still living under military rule at that point. Even after the annexation of the Golan Heights, the village councils were reinforced as state apparatus and continued to be boycotted. The acknowledgment of local state representatives was considered equal to the acknowledgment of Israeli rule over occupied land so refusal to acknowledge them remained one of the longstanding principals of the local population.

confrontational relationship with the state, but nevertheless not an equal or smooth encounter. The state privileged those Jawlanis complainant with it, and therefore recognised this first cooperative. The Jawlanis had already established facts on the ground with the construction of the water storage tanks and were also ready to engage with the state. As Shihadeh Nasrallah reflects (Interview, Majdal Shams, 8 September 2017):

*The state used every tool possible to 'normalise' the relationship with the Syrian Druze and wanted to return these shunned collaborators.<sup>68</sup> to the social fabric of the Druze community. So, when water started becoming a recurring demand by the farmers, the state used it as a tool to normalise the relationship through these collaborators who facilitated a normal relationship with the state.*

Realising the ramifications of such state strategies, but also being under great pressure from settler colonial rule-making, marketing mechanisms and competing settlements, the Jawlanis decided to demand water allocations through the cooperatives framework. As Shihadeh further elaborates:

*The cooperative establishment was during a period of a collective assault and attack on the farmer: from the state, the ministry of agriculture, Mekorot, the settlements, competition over apple marketing. It was a critical time where apple production stopped generating that income and profit like it used to. Here, farmers wanted to act, to protect their land and their trees. We had limited control, the farmers needed tools in order to raise their claims for additional water.*

These encounters with the Israeli water company Mekorot began in the 1990s, creating channels of negotiation and lobbying to acquire water rights and receive quotas for irrigation water from freshwater sources, including Birket Ram. Each cooperative consisted of a number of farmers collectively applying as one unit for water quotas, providing details of their plot sizes and the type of crop grown.

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<sup>68</sup> The collaborators were shunned by religious decrees from being part of and participating in the Jawlani community social and religious affairs, as mentioned in section 2.2.1

Mekorot studies the needs of each cooperative and decide on the quotas it deems appropriate. The 17 cooperatives are non-governmental organisations fully registered under Israeli law, therefore abiding to the Israeli state regulations. Farmers have shares in each cooperative, depending on the area of land they own and hence the water they receive. As Mekorot acted as a water seller, and not a water provider, the farmers had to incur expensive investments in designing, building and operating pipes, pumps and distribution networks (Figure 7.9). On top of that, while Mekorot provides water from different sources to settlements, the Jawlani farmers were designated water provision from Birket Ram only, in addition to expenses incurred through the maintenance, electricity and other fees; therefore the price per cubic meter was doubled.



*Figure 7.9 Filtering station belonging to one of the cooperatives, Al Masna' (Author's photo, 2016)*

However, the arrangement remains that of a commercial one, void of any acknowledgments of rights to water for the Jawlani farmers. In what one farmer described as “blackmail” and “sedated suffering”, Mekorot allowed the purchase of strictly limited amounts of water from Birket Ram without providing or supporting the infrastructure needed to distribute supplies to Jawlani agricultural land. However, the Jawlanis have still used the cooperative model as a tool to increase

their water quotas. The cooperatives started receiving around 70 cubic meters per dunum in the 1990s, but the collective efforts of lobbying raised this to 250 cubic meters per dunum by 2016 (Keary, 2013). Whilst this is still meagre in comparison to the provision for Jewish settler communities and farms, the Jawlanis have succeeded in increasing the water allocation to their fields substantially in comparison to the early 1990s (Al-Marsad, 2013). Such perceptions of suffering reveal something of the emotional harm arising from a settler colonial regime of strongly asymmetric resource control and access which the Jawlanis were forced to adapt to and negotiate with.

In this context, under the precarious conditions of settler colonial misrecognition, the Jawlanis intensified their agricultural practices and claim-making over land and water resources, carrying out “performative participation” that is, contesting domination while negotiating a reality through multiple claims, identities, relations and emotions to preserve their ontological presence on the land (Sultana, 2011).

An example from one cooperative sheds light on how water is now managed by the Jawlani farmers in negotiations with the Israeli state, represented by Mekorot and the Ministry of Agriculture. Mufid<sup>69</sup> is a farmer and a *Natoor* (Arabic for watchman who oversees and distributes water allocations to farmers). In his *natoor* work he is in charge of 540 plots of land, which receive water from Birket Ram, and his job is to ensure the distribution of that water according to allocations agreed upon by the members of the water cooperative.

*I have been doing the natoor job for 16 years. At first, we had one pump and one reservoir, and the pump distributes the water to the plots. I had to go to each stop for each farmer and make sure the quantities are distributed as agreed between the farmers. I remember in the early days of the cooperatives, we started with 80 cubic meters per dunum. It then gradually started increasing with the continuous demands of the cooperatives to 105, 170, and today around 250. We still don't get our rightful share and we will not be*

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<sup>69</sup> Mufid is a pseudonym, and the cooperative is unnamed to protect those involved in water purchasing from Mekorot

*equal to our neighbours [the Israeli settlements]. We also try to take more than our allocations, by pumping more than agreed, we have to do it because we still need another 200 cubic meters to be equal to the settlements' use. (Interview with Mufid, Majdal Shams, 10 September 2017)*

The cooperatives, in addition to acquiring increasing allocations for agriculture, have also been sites of resistance to an imposed cooperation and confined allocations. Since the allocations are given during the dry seasons, from mid-April to October, the pumping rates needed each month always exceeded the allocation agreed, this is when the Nator pumps beyond the agreed quota. This is seen as a way to get back more of the water the farmers view as their rightful share, as Mufid shares: “Now we feel like we’re stealing or forcing the water out of Mekorot. They keep threatening and announcing that water is scarce, and they might stop.”

However, the cooperatives have also increased the level of cooperation with Mekorot and the Ministry of Agriculture. As Mufid further elaborates:

*The Ministry of Agriculture also began giving us access to funds. For instance, in compensation for the pumping costs we incur, which are high, they are compensating us. This is very recent, only since last year (2016) and it's gradually happening with other cooperatives. We also receive technological support, so I can check the stops and control its opening and closing times through my mobile instead of physically being there (see Figure 7.x). Today, the Ministry of Agriculture is compensating us for the pumping costs, which are quite high and increase the water price for the farmer.*

Essentially, the Ministry’s and Mekorot’s support for farmers comes at a price. In order for Mekorot to pump water directly and with higher pressure to the cooperatives, Mekorot had to replace the existing network built by farmers and replace it with state infrastructure. The cooperatives also had to construct new assemblages of pumps and pressure relief valves (see Figure 7.10) in order to adapt to (and reduce) the higher pressure of water coming from Mekorot.





*Figure 7.10 Pump and stops assemblage built by one of the cooperatives in Majdal Shams (Author's picture, August 2017)*

Moreover, the cooperatives engage on a daily basis with the state apparatus through altering their modes of operation. Forced to communicate in Hebrew, from the contracts signed to water distribution and crop maps, and the computer software they must use (see Figures 7.11 and 7.12), the farmers had to adapt to Israeli methods and even their language. Thus, the interlocutors I met used Hebrew terms consistently to describe crops, infrastructures, equipment and procedures. The cooperatives therefore serve as an example of how the settler colonial state made the oGH farming legible, controlled and clearly monitored (Scott, 1998).

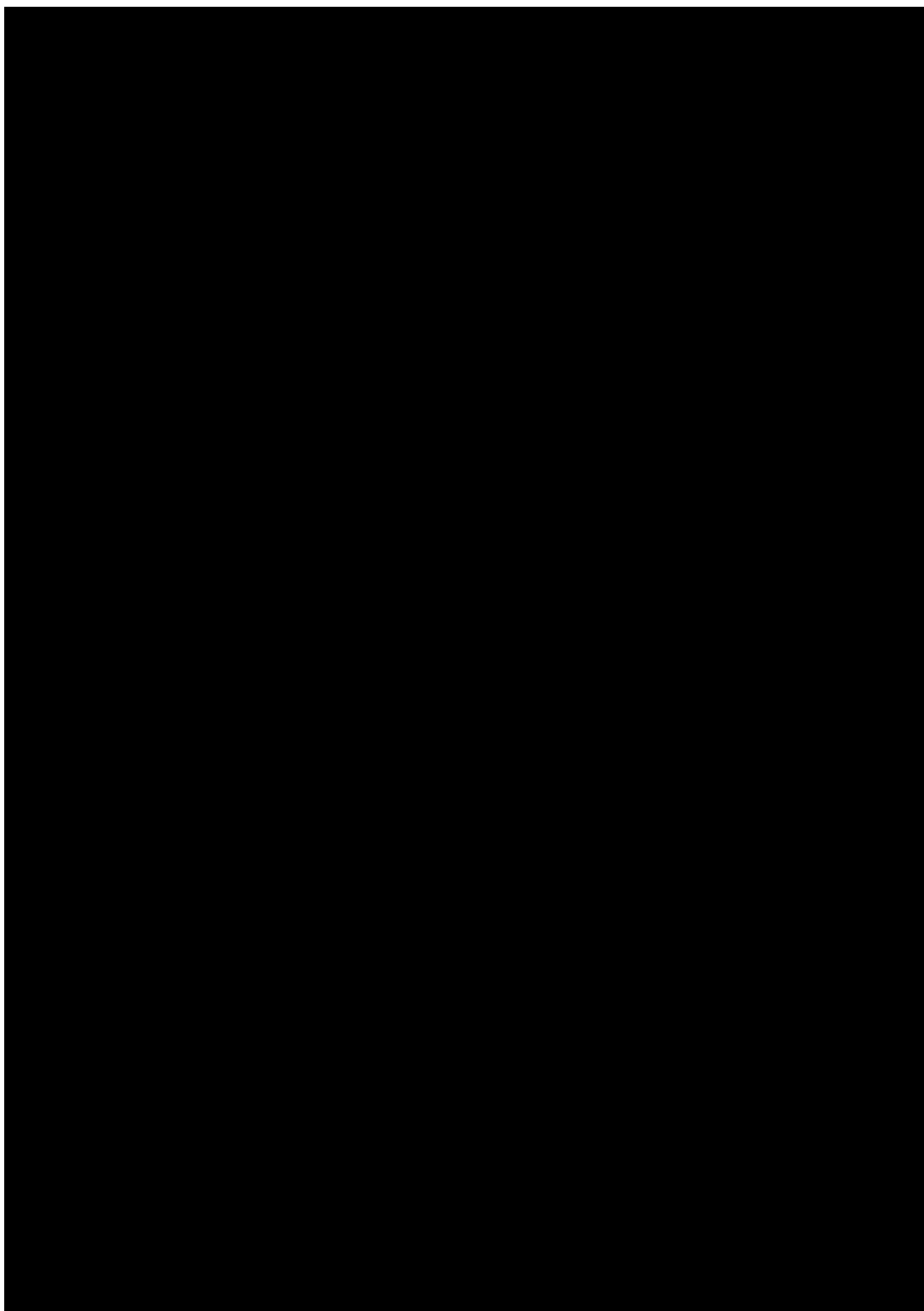


*Figure 7.11 Jawlani farmer Mufid showing the software used to control the water allocations for the farmers in the cooperative, all in Hebrew and provided by Mekorot (Author's picture, August 2017)*



Figure 7.12 Map in Hebrew showing 17 cooperatives areas, and the names of the Syrian villages and some settlements on the map, hanging at the administrative office of one cooperative in Majdal Shams (Author's picture, August 2017)

While there are 17 cooperatives to collectively manage water in the land cultivated by the Jawlani villages, different numbers were given, as smaller cooperatives merge with larger ones: on recent figure refers to 14 such cooperatives. These cooperatives are all visibly mapped and their plot sizes, crop types and water allocations are easily visible and legible for the Israeli state (Figure 7.13), as the Ministry of Agriculture and Mekorot play a central role in the provision of water. However, outside the cooperatives' small pockets of self-management of water remain, such as in the Marj, where apple planting originally started in the 1940s.



*Figure 7.13 The main cooperatives and the distribution by area, plot size and crop type (internal map for the MoA, acquired by author, 2018)*

Marj al-Ya'fourī, with lands estimated at 1700 dunums, is collectively organized by farmers who depend on the springs of Ras il Nabi', with infrastructure that they have developed and maintained since the times before the Israeli occupation. Through their persistence on maintaining the control over the springs, as mentioned in section 2.1.1., the farmers on this land are used to operating and managing water beyond the reach of the state. While the cooperatives were established because of the need to engage with Mekorot and claim water allocations, the spring water users in Al Marj maintained their detachment from the Israeli state. However, as the wells dug by Mekorot in the 1970s are still threatening the dwindling supply of the springs, the farmers have an ongoing legal battle with Mekorot to respect its agreement with the farmers and to replenish spring water pumped out by Israeli wells. This remains a matter of continuous struggle and negotiation that farmers engage with in their everyday farming practices, especially during the summer. However, the farmers who grow the apple orchards there have framed Al Marj as a place where the state interventions are not wanted, whether for water, agricultural support or development. Even on the map (see Figure 7.13), the lands of Al Marj are clearly seen as a pocket that seems illegible and uncooperative with the state. The political tension between the invariable *presence* of an Israeli state that the farmers prefer to be *absent* is captured by one of the political activists and researcher (Salman FakhrElddin, 31 January 2017, Majdal Shams):

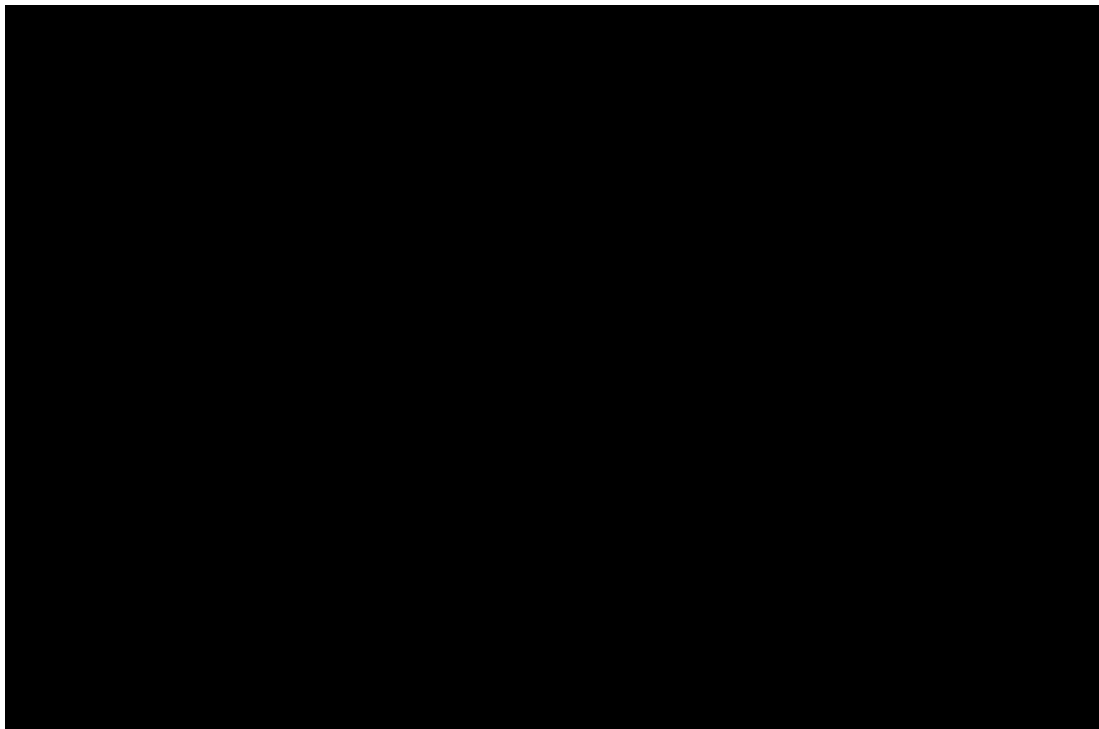
*We are forbidden to benefit from the occupation per say but we also have the right to demand our basic rights under international law. There is a certain level of services that the occupying power needs to provide. These efforts of demanding and negotiating daily rights of existence do not belittle or weaken the political struggle. We have dual responsibilities to remain on the land and strengthen our existence and we also continue to strive for freedom. But freedom is beyond a slogan that we use and is translated in the daily acts of existence. So, our struggle and perseverance on the land is when I protect my land, my agriculture, my water, livelihood, education and health services is part of my right and not a service provided to me. The occupation power will always be unjust. This is the real fabric of political struggle, bettering people's lives.*

As shown in this chapter, the community's mobilisation and collective resistance which characterised the earliest tactics against the state evolved into a strategy to negotiate with the state to claim rights to water. This required acquiescence and compliance with state regulations, rules and regulations rather than direct opposition to them. While the rustic water tanks symbolised a collective action of resistance, the cooperatives of today characterise a more compliant arrangement which binds farmers to the whims of the state and its institutions. Economic disparities and institutional shortcomings also increase the tensions and conflicts between members of cooperatives and apple coolers, especially in facing discriminatory marketing mechanisms designed to weaken and dissipate any meaningful collective action effort."

### *7.2.2.3 The significance of the apple crop as a trope for identity and belonging*

*5 am on a crispy early morning in September 2016, Abu Naser picks me up from my accommodation and on his tractor we drive towards the apple orchards on the outskirts of Majdal Shams. Lying directly on the 1974 disengagement cease-fire line drawn between Israel and Syria, the apple trees we will pick up today are on the 'border' separating Israeli-occupied Golan Heights from its 'liberated' Syrian part. A few hundred meters away from the famous Shouting Hill, where Syrian families of the Golan Heights, separated by this border, used to come to exchange (or shout) conversations across the border as this was the only form of contact since telecommunication and mail were completely forbidden (before the internet age). As we arrive, an Israeli army patrol vehicle passes on the dirt road near the fence and causes a storm of dust, leaving the apple orchards covered in yet another layer of dust. Abu Naser family joins, hurriedly picking as many apples as possible, as they yet have to return home, take a shower and start their 'official' jobs: one a lawyer, the other an accountant, one a musician. That does not stop us from recapturing moments of celebration of any traditional harvest: freshly baked pastries, tea and coffee, Apples cut fresh from the trees and reminiscing and singing folklore songs*

*about apple picking and Jawlani stories of resistance in 1982. By 10am, we conclude the picking part of the day, and I join Abu Naser for a short drive to deliver the apples to the processing factory (also in Majdal Shams) where the apples are thoroughly cleaned, sorted and waxed, ready in plastic containers for the market. Across the street from the processing unit is an apple cooler, where the sorted apples can be stored to preserve their quality and price for the next few months after the season passes. Within that confined geographical spot, in the northern point in the occupied Golan Heights, apple growing can be claimed to have become a symbol of the existence and belonging of the Jawlani. During the apple season, the villages are transformed with the recurring scene of farmers on tractors transporting huge containers of their produce – one that recharges them with feelings of pride, rootedness and hope (Fieldnotes, Majdal Shams, September 2016, see Figure 7.14).*



*Figure 7.14 Abu Naser driving the tractor in the middle of his apple orchard to begin the harvesting of nearby apple trees (Author's picture, September 2016)*

For the Jawlani, apple tree planting becomes the material expression of a land-based political ontology, countering the systemic misrecognition materialised through displacement, dispossession, and strategies of forced citizenship. Compared to historical self-subsistence focused on vegetables and pulses, apples have become

a symbol of the Golan Heights, attaching the Jawlanis to the apple crop and altering what apples mean to their ontological existence on the land:

*I believe if we had remained vegetable growers, the occupation would have encroached on our lands much more intrusively. They still encroach on our land extensively but the apples as crops empowered farmers. The power was psychological and also material and gave them a sense of independence. There is a sense of dignity (karameh) and identity with the protection of such a crop under such conditions. (Munir FakhrElddin, historian and academic, 20 July 2016, Majdal Shams):*

Indeed, the affective bonds fostered by collective attachment to apple trees invest sumud with cultural and political meaning for the whole ethno-geographic community. A recurring affirmation by the Jawlanis is that without the apple tree, their villages would not exist today. Their survival through decades, as a disenfranchised indigenous community, and amidst intense normalisation pressures, is signalled by the physical rootedness of the apple orchards. At the same time, the marketability of the apples in the early decades of the occupation (1960s-1980s) masks the economic reality of today, where Jawlani apple cultivation is now overwhelmingly a part-time occupation, and indeed a costly and not profitable one. During the fieldwork period, many of the Jawlanis I met in Majdal Shams commented on how they became 'amateur farmers', growing apple trees as a rite of passage to remain on the land, while only a handful of the old generation remained full-time farmers. Apple growing became an economic burden on many growers, and most depended on other jobs (as lawyers, dentists, medical doctors, and construction contractors and workers) to earn a livelihood. Israel has been the main export market since occupation, but from 2005 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), with local mobilisation of the Jawlani farmers, has facilitated the transport of apples to Syria,<sup>70</sup> which even continued on a smaller scale during the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011 until it eventually halted (ICRC, 2011). Farmers now speak of apple-

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<sup>70</sup> The Jawlanis refuse to refer to this as export but transporting it to Syria. Export denotes a recognition and acceptance of Israeli claims over the Golan



tree planting in the region as an exclusively Jawlani endeavor, highlighting how community rituals of apple planting and picking have developed into collective acts of resistance, slowing the advance of Israeli land appropriation.

These articulations of farming as *sumud* mirror the *sumud* narrative of Palestinians inside Israel and those in the West Bank and Gaza, where a common identity of resistance emerges from experiences of misrecognition and injustice inflicted on those populations through resource appropriation and political disenfranchisement (Braverman, 2009; McKee, 2014; Olwan, 2011; Yiftachel, 2008). What makes the Jawlani experience distinct is their uprooting from a nation-state in 1967, and the detachment from a homeland which they identify strongly with. Therefore, their *sumud* in farming supports a resistance identity anticipating re-incorporation and re-unification into Syrian territory.

However, farming of apple crops remains dependent on Israeli marketing mechanisms and input materials, such as rootstocks. Moreover, apple growing has been transformed by adhering to Israeli market preferences: the traditional varieties of Golden Delicious and Starking Delicious are giving way to marketable varieties (e.g. Granny Smith, Gala, Pink Lady) favoured by Israeli consumers for their appearance and off-the-shelf taste. The traditional varieties are still premium products because their quality is dependent on the climate conditions at the high elevation where the Jawlani villages are situated. These varieties are still unique to the Jawlani villages and are in demand. However, the other varieties were introduced to meet the demands of a global market and to increase profitability. Smaller plot sizes (1-5 dunums) characterising Jawlani holdings also meant the need to adapt to limitations on land available and the favouring of vegetative propagation, which produces denser stocking, earlier harvesting and requires less labour. Only a few orchards in the oGH have big apple trees with long roots (from seed propagation), which have longer roots, wider stocks and taller body. The realities of apple growing, therefore, are fraught with physical, economic and political constraints, acquiring farming with political subjectivity under constraining manifestations of settler colonial rule.

### 7.3 Concluding remarks

Driven by their quest to protect and expand their economically profitable apple production, and considering Israeli uprooting plans, the need to expand cultivable lands became an essential quest for the survival of the ethno-geographical community of the Jawlanis. In light of their shrinking lived geography, collective efforts were mobilised to protect their remaining property and natural resources from the encroachment of the Israel state, which utilised legal and military powers to achieve its aims. To defend the land from this mechanism of state appropriation, the farmers needed to expand their cultivated land, carrying out agricultural reclamation of neighboring hills, orchestrating collective action and the local utilisation of labour, machinery and skills, and initiating an 'agricultural revolution' to protect Arab lands and livelihoods. Restrictions on water use were intensified in the 1970s by Israeli authorities, who declared that all water sources belonged to the state, and that any collection and use of water not licensed by the government was a violation of the relevant military orders. With the confiscation by Israel of Birket Ram (Lake Ram), the exploitation of stream and spring flows and the pumping of groundwater through Mekorot and Mey Golan companies, water became an object of political contestation between a hydro-hegemon and an ethno-geographic community defending its place-based identification and belonging.

The counter-infrastructure discussed and presented in this chapter was created as tactical move against misrecognition. The rainwater harvesting tank is not an inherently powerful tool of water capture or claim-making to water allocations. However, its power emerged as it became a visible tool for claiming rights to water and therefore opposing systemic misrecognition. The tanks became symbols of power and catalyzed communal action: they stored water through locally-made metal containers, connected directly to the orchards, and provided water without reliance on Israeli state infrastructure or systems of water governance. They bypassed the state (Meehan, 2014) and forged new ground for larger contestations

over identity, land and belonging. When, with annexation, the Israeli state attempted to impose its misrecognition, through the tool of forced Israeli citizenship, the Jawlani struggle over water became part of a wider political resistance to maintain their ethno-geographic community. Water therefore *became political* (Alatout, 2009; Meehan, 2014) at this particular critical juncture for the Jawlanis. They articulated control over water as a tool for steadfastness on the land, and therefore one that defined a Jawlani waterscape/landscape in defiance of a settler colonial state.

From the late 1980s, water cooperatives illustrated a *scaling-up* of tactics to claim water (Dajani and Mason, 2018), through the establishment of water cooperatives facilitating collective water purchases from Birket Ram. Cooperatives also paved the way to the upscaling of demands and the beginning of a re-configuration of the local waterscape through the establishment of the right to infrastructure. While Mekorot allowed the selling of the waters of Lake Ram, it was conditional on the Jawlani farmers providing their own means of transporting this water to their lands. Through the cooperatives, the Jawlani farmers began working with local contractors to design the most suitable network of pipelines, pumps and meters to ensure collective administration of this water – all at a very high individual cost. Once again, the farmers found themselves leading a re-configuration of their livelihoods and lived geographies that had begun in the 1940s: construction of infrastructure to capture their reclaimed water, achieved through collaborative struggle and mobilisation which now is occurring under conditions of contestation and protracted occupation.

Resembling the water tanks that dot the landscape, the pipelines now emerged as an up-scaled counter-infrastructure (Mason and Dajani, 2018), creating facts on the ground which defied and competed with the hegemonic narratives and practices of state infrastructure (including law). The network of pipelines has made *permeable* the state's unequivocal control over water, as it transports water (the physical, social and symbolic aspects of it) away from state power and control to that of farmers irrigating their apple orchards. Through such an assemblage, the area of the apple orchards expanded to 12,000 dunums by 2012 and re-configured the state-Jawlani interaction. Farmers were thus able to irrigate their apple crop, considered "the bloodline of life" and an important signifier of community resistance and identity, by

building a water counter-infrastructure which is not state-funded, owned or operated. This bottom-up infrastructure solidified the communities' belonging and steadfastness on the land and enhanced their bargaining power vis-à-vis the state to acquire larger quotas of water for irrigation.

For the Jawlani the construction of this counter-infrastructure provided a platform for both autonomous water access and the forging of a community solidarity resistant to forced settler colonial assimilation. This further created complex socio-natural interlinkages where, for the Jawlani, pragmatic coexistence with the occupying power sits alongside dissenting hydrological flows – a material and symbolic network of resistance to settler colonial de-territorialisation, dispossession and misrecognition. That this upscaling of infrastructure was funded and constructed by Arab farming cooperatives reiterates the significance of autonomous water governance as a site of political self-determination and collective identity (Hoogesteger and Verzijl, 2015; Perreault, 2003). The development of the irrigation infrastructure for the local farming communities of the oGH can therefore be seen as an example of a “(semi)autonomous grass-roots hydrosocial territory” (Hoogesteger et al., 2016, p.97).

## Chapter 8: Water struggles as struggles for recognition – comparative findings

This thesis has analysed settler colonial water and land policies and their implication for the lived geographies of two Arab communities – Al-Battuf in the Galilee and Majdal Shams in the occupied Golan Heights (oGH). It has also analysed the opposition and resistance tactics of those communities, examining how water became a vessel through which recognition was claimed. The imposition of exclusionary settler colonial policies has significantly re-configured the lived geographies of these communities, re-articulating water struggles as struggles for recognition and transforming farming in a way that imbued it with political subjectivity. The actions carried out by the farmers to reclaim water were not only a battle over resources but actions to fight misrecognition enacted against ethno-geographic communities and their socio-natural systems.

This chapter aims to return to and further analyse the two case studies, in light of the research questions and propositions:

***How do settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices manifest themselves in the lives and livelihood practices of farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights?***

- ❖ How do farming livelihoods function in the studied agricultural communities in the context of settler colonialism?
- ❖ What ideas, norms and beliefs shape farmers' daily practices of agriculture?

And:

***How, and with what political effects, are settler colonial [water and land] policies and practices resisted by farming communities in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights?***

- ❖ What forms of collective action do farmers use to resist and counter state-led policymaking, especially land expropriation and water allocations?
- ❖ What are the political effects of the distinctive forms of collective resistance employed by farming communities?

The proposition of this thesis is that *in the settler colonial contexts studied, the farming of Arab communities acquires similar forms of political subjectivity.*

The first section of this chapter examines the re-configurations of lived geographies in both case studies, highlighting the similarities and differences in their experiences and the implications for farming as they experience the dialectic of presence-absence of the (settler colonial) state. As with all settler colonial endeavours, the power of the state enforced conditions of dispossession, exclusion and control through law and infrastructure. The case studies show through examination of historical and contemporary water-related infrastructures, that power is produced through water, exacerbating inequality and exclusion, and ultimately impacting on livelihood practices and identity re-configurations (Boelens, 2014; Budds and Sultana, 2013; Swyngedouw and Boelens, 2018). The second section discusses the thesis's proposition, the political subjectivity of farming and its similar forms of enactment in both cases. Finally, the third section summarises a main theme arising from the investigation of land and water settler colonial practices, termed 'presence-absence', as an overarching concept explaining farming communities' struggles with and without water, infrastructure and recognition. It will contrast modes of operation of the settler state in both sites and situate this in regard to larger political and societal conditions which allowed differential experiences of struggles and resistance actions to arise.

## 8.1 Presence-absence of the state and reconfigurations of lived geographies

Both struggles presented in the preceding chapters are characterised by settler colonial conditions of misrecognition and dispossession: both ontological – creating new, uneven and asymmetric ‘realities’ of land and water use – and also epistemological – devaluing indigenous ideas, norms and beliefs about identity, belonging and existence. The notion of uprooting captures, beyond the deracination of agricultural lands, the destruction of a moral economy and cultural identity associated with indigenous farming practices (Bourdieu and Sayad, 2004). Al-Battuf and the oGH have both undergone material and discursive uprooting: their lands, communities, social structures, histories and political structures were stripped away and replaced by settler colonial logics, ordering geographical space for Zionist settlement and economic development, while excluding the remaining indigenous population from such considerations. The state has been dominantly present and absent in the lives and lives geographies of those two communities.

### Al-Battuf

The enactment of the Israeli state’s military rule (1949-1966) entailed a loss of autonomy for the Palestinian Arabs who experienced this abrupt change in their access and control to their means of production – land, water and labour. On a social and organisational level, it created a trauma for a desolate and dismembered society which became a fragmented, landless and leaderless minority after 1948 (Khalifa, 2001). In 1961, David Ben-Gurion’s (former Prime Minister of Israel) adviser on Arab Affairs Uri Lubrani said he wanted Arabs to turn into woodcutters and water carriers, reflecting aspirations to turn Arabs into dependents subjects in the Jewish state (Khalifa 2001). The Israeli land and water policies enacted under the military rule were designed to disintegrate the only remaining economic activity, which was agriculture, and reduce the fellahin to a labour force in the Jewish economy (Bäumli 2009). Moreover, although citizenship was acquired by Palestinians, they were

excluded from being nationals of the Jewish state, hence remaining on the margins as citizen-strangers and settler colonial citizens. Planning and resource policies have been used to further encroach on and control the last remaining Palestinian citizens' existence on the land, and to impose Judaisation policies to make them invisible or at best disappear. During this time, the Palestinian citizens inside Israel were impacted by physical uprooting and spatial confinement, as well as an emblematic uprooting and dismembering of their societal relations and national identity.

Subsequently, the Arab farmers on these lands become the embodiment of 'water carriers' in their exclusion from the utilisation of water as a means of production, and the confinement of their economic activities to those authorised by the state: as construction workers for Israeli water projects (like the NWC and other water infrastructures), or as employees in Israeli agricultural settlements and factories which have water access in abundance. Water, like land, has been used as a tool in Israel's systematic rule over the Arabs and their resource-dependant livelihoods. This has turned the Palestinian farmers into 'thirsty water carriers', building large-scale water infrastructure on their lands but yet remaining thirsty. The thirst is an expression of the suffering inflicted through state policies of abandonment and indifference, where the state neglects Palestinian claims of rights to water and infrastructural development, while it carves imprints of differentiated access to water into the landscape and produces uneven waterscapes (see Figure 8.1).





*Figure 8.1 Uneven waterscapes co-existing in the landscape of Al-Battuf, one of abundance (the NWC canal) and the other of deprivation (rustic water tankers)  
(Author's pictures, September 2017)*

However, the imposition of settler colonial waterscapes onto the landscape of al-Battuf engendered acts of contestation and opposition. While the NWC canal inflicted direct harm and constituted a threat to the existence of communities, lands and livelihood, it also trespassed on particular sites in which their identity and belonging was embedded (Rasmussen, 2016). Little if no regard was even given to issues of land and water rights in al-Battuf, or the deep attachment to the land by indigenous Arab communities. Nor did the settler-state recognise the aspirations of the fellahin, in their protest against the NWC, to be treated equally and justly in their demands for water access and infrastructural development. This imposing discourse of the settler colonial state severely restricted the farmers' imaginary of land and water resources, producing an imaginary in limbo or competing imaginaries (Nesbitt and Weiner, 2001) in their aspirations for modernity vs. traditionalism, collective identity vs. individualism, and enemy vs. citizen. As Nabih Bashir (2006) contends, the confiscation of land entailed the uprooting of the Palestinians from their land while simultaneously also preventing them from integrating into the Jewish Israeli landscape, thereby creating a void existence characterised by political disenfranchisement and economic stagnation.

The tactics employed by the farmers in their efforts to oppose state confiscation of their land for the NWC cannot be described as solely a counter-hegemonic or resistance act, but rather as a hybrid of opposition and negotiation tactics, stemming from state-sanctioned apparatuses and mechanisms. The struggle therefore remained within the realm of legality and consent to state rule and governance, but at the same time sought recognition and the rectification of an injustice inflicted on them. The tactics for the opposition against the NWC in the early 1960s, which were jointly led by a network of farmers, the communist political party, intellectuals and lawyers, articulated new political spaces of being for the farmers, raising concerns primarily focused on curbing land confiscation, inadequate compensation and lack of inclusion in state-led water projects. This marked the point where water struggles in al-Battuf became struggles for hybrid recognition, as farmers re-articulated and re-formulated their livelihood practices in *opposition* to state threats to their land-based existence, whilst at the same time anticipating

*inclusion* in state-led development as citizens of Israel. The presence-absence of the state therefore fuelled the struggle over land and water to be elevated to struggles over recognition and inclusion.

Moreover, the presence-absence of water in Al-Battuf also contributed to water struggles acquiring political salience. Water *became political* when these livelihood practices were ruptured and dismantled, and when the struggles over land became struggles over existence and ethno-geographic survival. Curbing al gharaq and claiming rights to water, the drainage project has been framed as an infrastructure of promise. Alluding to recent work on ‘the promise of infrastructure’ (Anand et al., 2018) discussed previously (in section 5.3), the promise of infrastructural development raised the hopes and aspirations of Al-Battuf farmers to be included in a development-driven agricultural sector. However, this unattained promise of infrastructure has caused community disempowerment and consolidated feelings of mistrust and despair. The reliance on the promise of equal citizenry and the ‘open access’ of communication with relevant ministries, government officials and others in power limited the farmers’ actions outside of the realm of the state, adapting to an imposed stagnation of development and change in the valley. The incomplete Zero Canal, on the other hand, also narrates a story of suffering and harm and the enactment of presence-absence. Its limbo status is highly reflective of the limbo state of the farmers themselves, stuck between maintaining a labour-intensive rain-fed agriculture with no economic value or marketing potential on the one hand, and on the other hand, their continued lobbying for a technological fix through the drainage project and associated agricultural modernisation, in the hope that the state will incorporate them into what has so far been an exclusively Jewish domain.

Sumud, therefore, had to be exercised through embracing a modernity narrative and a re-configuration of place-based discourses and norms about traditional methods of farming. The farmers in al-Battuf persisted by remaining on the land without piped water, practicing rainfed agriculture where farmers, both men and women, continued growing traditional crops for local use and marketing. The perseverance without rain-sourced water was utilised as a tactic for survival on the land and a belief in the responsibility to maintain presence and visibility before the

watchful eye of the state and its settler subjects on the hilltops surrounding the valley. On the other hand, the aspiration for drainage continued to be another tactic for their struggle for sumud on the land.

### The oGH

After 1967, The Jawlanis in the occupied Golan Heights (oGH) faced similar uprooting strategies, experienced mainly as displacement from their local lived spaces and national homeland. Uprooting at both these scales resulted in conditions of alienation from physical sources of livelihood (land and water) and the means of territorial identification with a nation state. While there are similarities between the two cases in terms of confiscation of land, water and the neglect of the local populations remaining, the oGH has always been framed as a case of ‘subtle’ or civilian occupation (Cuinn, 2011; Weizman, 2007), a region under a ‘forgotten’ occupation (Al-Marsad 2018). It has been claimed that the oGH is a case of a ‘refined’ form of settler colonialism, where (almost) complete ethnic cleansing occurred, producing an empty space for colonisation (Gordon and Ram, 2016).<sup>71</sup> The small population remaining after the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights (oGH) was not considered a demographic threat as were the Palestinians inside Israel or the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While the oGH population experienced military rule and strict movement restrictions in the first years of occupation, Israel’s primary goal was the erasure of an indigenous ethnogeography and its replacement with an imposing and dominant Jewish presence.

However, settler colonial expansion also required control of the remaining Arab villages in a less confrontational way that accommodated and coexisted with their ‘othering’ in a Zionist landscape. The Israeli occupation was focused on the imposition of Israeli civil law, which was evident a few years after 1967 and comprehensively achieved with annexation in 1981. While Israel has extensively

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<sup>71</sup> While Gordon and Ram (2016) make convincing points regarding the characterisation of settler colonial rule in the oGH as refined, their lack of attention to the lived geographies and water struggles highlighted in this dissertation raises issues regarding the indigenous lived experience of settler colonialism, and its implications for re-configurations of the lived geographies. I question their claim that the ‘indigenous other’ has negligible agency in the oGH, despite the extensive ethnic cleansing and uprooting.

confiscated land and water in the oGH (as seen in chapter 6), on a local level the Jawlanis experienced a military rule which utilised settlements, water infrastructure, and other artefacts of the state to control and marginalise the Jawlani population, while laying its grip over natural resources (as in al-Battuf). The aspiration to root Jewish settlements in the oGH necessitated an extensive investment and the utilisation of all resources available for this endeavour. Therefore, the Israeli state invested in the production of waterscapes to ensure the viability of its Jewish settlements, denying the Jawlanis access to their local sources, like Birket Ram, while carrying out extensive groundwater drilling and constructing floodwater reservoirs for the benefit of settlers only. As Chapter 7 shows, specifically on issues of land and water, the Jawlanis managed to puncture the Israeli settler colonial imaginary of the oGH as an empty land open for settler re-arrangement and re-configuration, by resisting Israelisation efforts (during the annexation period of 1981-83), making claims for water infrastructure and allocations, and developing new agricultural land. Their counter-infrastructure produces hydrosocial territories of contestation that defy state-led processes of ordering through policies and infrastructures (Dajani and Mason, 2018). These forms of collective agency emphasised their ethno-geographic belonging to the land and transformed water struggles into struggles to assert their identity and belonging.

In The oGH, where the seeds of a market-oriented agriculture were strong before the Israeli occupation in 1967, agriculture survived, temporarily thrived, and became a means of enacting political subjectivity through resistance in the following decades of military rule. By using water as a vessel for claiming rights from a settler colonial state, the Jawlanis established their presence through facts on the ground in a subtle, uneasy and contested co-existence with the settler colonial state, producing a system of parallel governance that affected other aspects of their social existence (Hommes et al., 2016; Wessels, 2015a). With imposed hydro-territorial constructs and the materialisation of state infrastructures, the Jawlanis contested those with counter-imaginaries and counter-infrastructures which impacted the lived geography, transforming it into a landscape of rootedness, visible through the expansion of agricultural land, planted with water-intensive apple orchards (see Figure 8.2).



*Figure 8.2 Transformation of farming landscapes around Birket Ram (Author's picture, August 2016)*

Clearly, the relationship between both indigenous groups and the Israeli settler colonial state was rife with struggles over the hegemonic 'presence' of the

state and its re-configurations of indigenous livelihoods and identities, and its simultaneous 'absence', turning both locations into sites of misrecognition and 'othering'. The state's confinement of indigenous people to a small fraction of the land essentially produces and facilitates unequal geographical reorganisation (Harris, 2004) and enacts policies of difference.

However, the livelihood practices of farming communities and their land-based identifications have been continuously changing and adapting to the conditions of their existence, shaped by *both* local ethno-geographic *and* settler colonial contexts, and not solely by an over imposing settler colonial rule. While al-Battuf case exposes a more acquiescent adaptation and stagnation in their water struggle, as it relied on mechanisms of the state and recognition tactics, their resistance efforts should not be discarded. While water still remains absent from their farming, their perseverance without water is itself a proof of resistance despite all odds. Driving through the valley shows individual efforts to make do without water, or to bring water from elsewhere through trucks, rent the land to keep it productive or use it as a site of recreation for family and friends. Throughout those 40,000 dunums, no sign of abandoning land is experienced, as farmers and their families ensure their continued presence and visibility on the land. Land becomes a responsibility and its protection an obligation as it represents the bloodline of an ethno-geographic identity and belonging against all odds. In the oGH, similar patterns of perseverance are witnessed in the lived geography. Apples remain a symbol of perseverance and of a distinct ethno-geographic community. Those two contexts produced a hybrid livelihood strategy that is empowered by a strong connection to the land and the need to defend it, while co-existing uneasily with the Israeli state (Mekorot) to ensure that defence continues through the provision of water quotas.

These encounters, expressed and articulated in the lived geographies, produce spaces of existence that situate the settler colonial state as both present and absent. The state purposefully disregards indigenous spaces and subjects as marginal, and therefore *absent* from a state-led policy of land and agricultural development. However, at the same time the indigenous communities experience heightened state surveillance as a *presence* where it exercises its hegemonic control

over resources, bodies and identities “through a matter of controlling the resources (land, water and airspace) while neglecting the population” (Sa’Di, 2016; Zureik et al., 2011, p.5). This juxtaposition of a presence-absence of state hegemony therefore shapes complex lived geographies and hybrid existences for those living on the margins, where indigenous communities seek autonomous control over land and water, while also being entangled within an exclusionary state apparatus in order to claim rights (Table 8.1). While settler colonial studies have framed the state’s hegemony as overarching, fixed and dominant over spaces and bodies, the approach adopted here reveals moments of indigenous struggle which make permeable the state’s concretising dominance over space and place. It therefore challenges the notion of the impermeability of the settler colonial state and its infrastructures.

*Table 8.1 land and water policies and their manifestation in the lived geography of al-Battuf and the oGH*

	Manifestations of the settler colonial state in the lived geographies of farming communities	
	<b>Al-Battuf (1949-1976)</b>	<b>Occupied Golan Heights (oGH) (1967-1982)</b>
Land policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land confiscation</li> <li>• Agricultural policies</li> <li>• Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapting to Israeli markets: Change crops (sugar beet, onion, tomatoes) with marketing secured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptation to Israeli markets:  Intensifying apple crop, with marketing secured</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water - No water, all remains rain-fed (<i>ba'ali</i>)</li> <li>• Reliance on livestock reduced significantly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water – continuous reliance on limited sources (spring) and expansion of rainfed agriculture</li> <li>• Reliance on livestock reduced significantly</li> </ul>
Water policies and infrastructure	<p>Water Law of 1959</p> <p>The NWC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• land confiscation</li> <li>• denial of access to farmland</li> <li>• imposed state presence (Mekorot)</li> <li>• denial of access to water from NWC</li> <li>• struggle for drinking and irrigation water</li> </ul>	<p>Military order 1968</p> <p>Water Law of 1959</p> <p>Birket Ram, groundwater wells, dams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrictions on use of springs</li> <li>• Denial of water provision for irrigation of apple crops</li> <li>• Pumping of water to settlements</li> </ul>

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As settler colonial literature shows and confirms (Harris, 2004), the communities have engaged in a 'constant micro-politics of resistance' (p.179), ranging in these cases studies from refusal to cooperate with the state, catching rainwater through infrastructures outside of the state control, to refusing citizenship in a collective act of striking and confrontation. Al-Battuf also exemplifies how resistance was shaped by enacting *sumud*, staying on the land against all odds, and through demonstrations, strikes, letters and petitions. Performative participation and seeking recognition through engagement with the state is evidently present in both case studies, and the law of the coloniser became 'a site of resistance' (p.180), where the laws of the settler colonial state were bent to their advantage and where agency was able to take form and cause effects through livelihood practices, although this occurred 'in and around the compartments created by colonialism' (ibid).

Al-Battuf and the oGH struggles therefore co-evolved, materialised and were transformed in the face of a dominant Israeli *local* hydro-hegemony, consequently shaping larger struggles over indigenous identity and belonging through the claiming of rights to resources and infrastructural development. This resulted in similar tactics being employed by both communities, which were differentiated according to local contexts. The first similarity is the resort in both cases to legal means, challenging the law and capitalising on the Israeli legal system to enhance their standing. Secondly, the deployment of non-violent resistance is evident in both cases, as tactics relied more on communal actions including strikes, networking with local and regional political actors, and the establishment of collectives to counter the hegemonic actions of the state. Thirdly, both have empowered and strengthened their place-based attachments and presence on the land in order to re-configure and root themselves through emphasising local crops, like the Apples in the Jawlan and rainfed local crops (wheat, okra, watermelon and others) in al-Battuf.

## 8.2 Presence-absence and the political subjectivity of farming

During one of my visits to al-Battuf with Jamileh and Almaza, we spent some time in Sheikh Ghanayem's tent, a famous gathering point for the handful of farmers in al-Battuf. Surrounded by tractors, forklifts and combine harvesters, we sit in this makeshift tent discussing how things had not changed in al-Battuf since the NWC canal. 'Everything has remained the same here in this valley, no changes, it's only this zero canal that was constructed in the 1990s and then we went back to normal', Mahmoud Ghanayem recalls. During my conversations with Ghanayem and a group of other farmers about the realities of farming in al-Battuf, cars causing a storm of dust on the make-shift agricultural roads announce the arrival of visitors coming to buy freshly-ground wheat and harvested sesame from Ghanayem. The villagers of al-Battuf region still rely on that handful of farmers to acquire fresh and seasonal produce and are willing to drive outside of their towns and villages (where Israeli produce is filling their markets) to come to al-Battuf to pick and buy okra, watermelon, wheat, sesame and other seasonal crops directly from the fields. Al-battuf, as one woman who stopped by the tent to buy wheat said, is 'our last connection to the bounties of our land'. She buys a few kilos of wheat flour and a few bags of sesame seeds (shown in Figure 8.3), as she tells me that she makes her own bread at home and will only prepare it with flour from al-Battuf. Other customers and farmers, who are from al-battuf region itself or from outside, come in to catch up on the latest news, discuss the situation of their crops and reminisce about the old days of glory in al-Battuf, when families used to fill the valley and spend the summer harvesting the land collectively. Today, what remains of farming are the individual efforts of a number of farmers who continue traditional farming with the inclusion of modern agricultural tools, machinery and pesticides. The realities of being in limbo, between traditional farming and its modernisation, shows an un-easy and incomplete, nevertheless relentless, effort to remain on the land with the utilisation of any tools available.



*Figure 8.3 A common scene of a traditional harvest of sesame and wheat undertaken using machinery shows the quest for modernisation alongside the persistence of rain-fed baa'li crops (Author's picture, Al-Battuf September 2017)*

While doing this fieldwork, whether in Al-Battuf or in the oGH, a common reply I received when I asked about agriculture or farming is that “farming is already extinct, vanished”, “what farming?”, “we are not farmers”. This has posed a difficult problem for me, as I assigned the role of farmers to those who cultivate the land, carry out livestock rearing and herding, and produce agricultural products as a result. Many, especially in Al-Battuf, corrected me and said we are *fellahin*, we were not given the opportunity to become farmers in the modern state definition. In the oGH, people I met would say they were ‘amateur farmers, doing it as a hobby to stay on the land’ since farming did not bring in the economic benefit to sustain livelihoods any more. However, the landscapes of both sites are still covered with signs of farming activity presence, and even livestock herding. This persistence in staying on the land, cultivating it with the available resources and means of production, is indicative of a larger role of farming in the lives of the inhabitants of Al-Battuf and the oGH. This thesis argues that, under these settler colonial contexts, farming has acquired political subjectivity. Such subjectivity accentuates the role of farming in

maintaining and solidifying norms, beliefs, and ideas about sumud and perseverance, which transcend its character as an economic activity for purposes of marketing and income generation.

The communities of al-Battuf, through carrying out farming in their 'hydrosocial territory', have maintained their existence and presence on the land and made themselves, their livelihoods and their infrastructures (cowsheds, tents, machinery and water tankers) visible to the 'watchtowers' or the Mitzpem on the top of the hills in the settlements. As an act and a praxis of sumud, they continued to see their lives inevitably tied to the health and viability of the valley, its lands and its floodplains. Seeking visibility, they aimed to root themselves to the land by claiming rights to drainage infrastructure, which they see as critical to their continued presence on the land. Al-Battuf case study, like many others, contradicts and contests earlier work on the acquiescence of the Palestinian Arab to the Israeli state, which was how Lustick (1980) had described the relationship between the Palestinian citizens and the Jewish state. While economic and political detachment from the state was quite impossible, Palestinians inside Israel created spaces of protest and resistance by existing and staying *visible* in their confined geographic spaces. Writings on Palestinian resistance to the Israeli state's deliberate alienation and exclusion policies have countered Lustick's reductionist view of Palestinians inside Israel as acquiescent to their compromised and excluded state of citizenship (see Bashīr, 2006; Sa'di, 2001; Sa'di, 1996; Sultany, 2003).

In the oGH, apple growing acquired political subjectivity as a tool to root a disenfranchised and misrecognised community. Claims and realisations of water infrastructure strengthened the roots of the Jawlanis, asserted their claims to their land as productive and abundant spaces, and turned apple (in addition to cherry and peach) growing into an act of resistance in the face of land expropriation and water access denial. Tufah Al Jawlan (apples of the Golan) is symbolic not only of a crop celebrated for its quality, but of its embedded political salience as a source of rootedness during times of uprooting and dispossession. However, the oGH case exemplifies where resistance practices of water and farming take shape and succeed in making permeable the seemingly fixed and concretised arrangements of Israeli

infrastructure and water control. This happens, nonetheless, within the limitations allowed by the state and through engaging with the logic and technicality of state apparatus and personnel: the scaling up of Jawlani water infrastructure took place in negotiation with Mekorot. The Jawlani farmers enacted *sumud* by claiming rights to water and by expanding, maintaining and sustaining their apple orchards through extensive land reclamation, all organised and funded by local efforts. Their early efforts to reclaim water outside of the settler state control, through ponds and rainwater harvesting tanks, were inspired by opposition to imposed citizenship and annexation of their lands. To oppose this misrecognition, the Jawlanis enacted multiple scales of resistance and opposition to state imaginaries of control, including those around water. A reclamation of the land and water was constructed as an authoritative claim by the Jawlanis to oppose misrecognition and enact *sumud* through farming. *Sumud* in the perspective of the Jawlani therefore is embodied in the apple crop, which thereby acquires significance as a tool for surviving an uprooting of identity and ethno-geographic belonging.

This re-configuration exposes a *political subjectivity* of farming practices, which become political acts and means of protest and resistance. To varying degrees and under differentiated regulatory processes, farming *with* and *without* water becomes a means of claiming rights to space, place and existence in both sites investigated. The act of persevering – *sumud* – utilised farming as a tool of rootedness in both Al-Battuf and the oGH. Farming the land at an economic loss, especially under conditions of resource dispossession, transcends the economic and market logic of a neoliberal settler state and continues to strengthen grounded ethno-geographic norms and beliefs about existing and being on (what remains of) the land. The weakening of agriculture as a reliable economic activity has not stopped farmers in both cases from exercising it as a right to exist and be visible in the landscape/waterscape. The *sumud* of farming itself, whether through claiming rights to water, or through continuing rainfed practices, indicates how struggles over water make visible Arab ethno-geographic communities' existence on the land despite settler colonial efforts to diminish them. Due to its entanglement with symbolic

notions of identity and belonging, farming transcends economic, nationalistic and ideological drivers and is enacted to protect the land as a symbol.

### 8.3 Presence-absence in lived geographies and the production of uneven waterscapes

Driving through the agricultural lands of Al-Battuf or the *basateen* (orchards) of Al Jawlan reveals a space of contradictions, which inspires us to examine the implications of incomplete settler colonial rule on the re-configurations of landscapes and the production of uneven waterscapes. In al-Battuf, the NWC canal that spreads across the length of the valley is clearly marked and fenced as a secure state property. Against that imposition lies an expanse of Palestinian farming land, with its lack of fences blending the plots of hundreds of farmers into one large mosaic. Driving or walking through there invites feelings of autonomy and separation from the Israeli state, as it is not present there. The agricultural roads were developed collectively by the cooperatives, and the handful of farmers remaining on the land know the vast expanse by heart, identifying their plots out of a monotonous area of valley. No signs, electricity or any other state artefact is visible on this site, except for the NWC canal which became part of the landscape. In the oGH, the apple orchards take you on a scenic ride through asphalted roads (collectively constructed by the cooperatives). There, you drive through another monotonous landscape of small plots of apple orchards, with no signs to guide your way. Except for pipelines and pumping stations belonging to the cooperatives (and some Mekorot wells and pumping grounds fenced out) the state is once again not present. The landscape is distinctively familiar to local residents and common visitors who can easily find their way through the similar plots. Any attempts by non-locals to navigate these agricultural roads (especially at night, when they are pitch black due to a lack of electricity provision) will lead them to the securitised fence denoting 'the border' or to get stuck in loops until they find an exit towards the illuminated towns. The state is not visible here and does not assert its visibility into the space (for example, by installing electricity cables

and poles) and the space is fully recognisable and legible only to the local inhabitants. However, in both cases, they are heavily monitored by the state, either through army watchtowers (situated in Majdal Shams village overlooking the area) or through the Mitzpeem (Jewish look-out settlements) in the Galilee. However, the contrast experienced while being in the two sites affirms that these territories of control, as noted by James Scott (1987; 2009), are always incomplete and limited, providing opportunities for acts of resistance and mobilisation outside the gaze of the state. While the Israeli state still maintains spatial control with regional councils and technologies of rule, the intricate spatial practices of everyday life remain largely out of its reach and surveillance.

Both cases present varying degrees of protest employed by communities to challenge exclusionary Israeli policies. What can be inferred from both cases is that the communities claimed rights through challenging the state's 'presence' and 'absence' in their lived geographies, capitalising on both conditions through deploying tactics which put them in direct confrontation with the state at times, while engaging in a negotiating position at others. Conditions and feelings of abandonment by the state towards the communities were expressed in both cases to describe unjust policy making towards them as rightful citizens (in the case of Al-Battuf) and an occupied population demanding rights guaranteed to them by International Humanitarian Law (in the case of the oGH). Suffering for water, a sentiment expressed by interlocutors during field research, reflects a persistent process of discrimination employed by settler colonial policymaking, clearly visible and quantifiable in terms of water allocations between the indigenous Arabs and settler farmers. The examined local hydro-hegemony, reflected in those two waterscapes, is founded on policies of difference and exclusion, perpetuating and evoking experiences of struggle, suffering and eventually motivating collective action to claim rights.

Even under heavily-constrained political circumstances, communal efforts create a significant role for agency in water and land use, manifested in material encounters and re-configured livelihood practices: for example, the material realisation of water 'counter-infrastructure' as seen in both the oGH and Al-Battuf



cases. All of these encounters take shape spatially and temporally as communities re-configure their lives and tactics in confrontations with the settler state, advancing rights-based claims to agricultural livelihoods, citizenship, water and infrastructure as the following sections show.

As Olwan (2011) argues, this is farming in confrontation with uprooting in an effort to defend place-based affinities and beliefs. However, such acts of resistance, whether counter-hegemonic or oppositional, consequently reinforce feelings of alienation from their means of production and from their land-based sources of identity due to the dispossessing settler colonial structures and apparatuses. Whether water struggles succeed in maintaining an agricultural presence and existence on the land, as in the case of the Jawlan, or where the struggle has not materialised yet, as in the al-Battuf case, the two cases reflect and evoke real threats to their land-based identities. Settler colonial rule has created conditions of separation and alienation from material means of production and also made it extremely difficult for the indigenous Arab populations to maintain land-based identities and livelihoods.

The politics of difference exercised through the materiality of settler-state hydropolitical territories becomes most visible in the state's infrastructure, in its dominant and concretised presence in the landscape but the simultaneous absence of its recognition of the realities of thirsty agricultural communities and their right to water and infrastructure, which they have demanded clearly through different means and tactics, as seen in Chapter 5. Therefore, the presence-absence of water fuels and becomes an articulation of a 'thirst' for recognition, expressed by farmers through tactics of maintaining their farming (without water), while aspiring for infrastructure to quench the thirst of 'misrecognition' inflicted upon them. The 'Presence-absence' of infrastructure in the lived geographies and waterscapes examined is also telling of a wider dilemma facing farming communities under settler colonial rule. The dominant and concretised presence of settler colonial water infrastructure, especially in the case of Israel as a regional and local hydro-hegemon, contrasts with the blocking and prohibition of local infrastructures. In the case of Al-Battuf, the imposing presence of the NWC canal and its power to expand and control

the space is juxtaposed by an absence of infrastructure for the people making their livelihoods in the valley. The state's monopoly over infrastructure, especially water, is reflected in the continuous stagnation and inaction in response to demands for local infrastructure by the farmers of Al-Battuf. The presence of the state water infrastructure, moreover, contrasts with the absence of Arab water infrastructure, as the communities investigated in Al-Battuf are prohibited from withdrawing water from the NWC. Their aspiration for infrastructure therefore reflects their aspirations not only for water itself as a resource, which is constructed in the farmers' discourse as critical to their economic viability and physical presence on the land, but also in its symbolic value and meaning as an instrument of identity, *sumud* and belonging to the land. The water itself, therefore, is not the end product of their struggle but a material and symbolic artefact, which will elevate their visible presence on the land.

The fact that water claims came because of and in relation to the state's encroachment on Al-Battuf is an example of claim-making borne out of the presence-absence of the state. The struggle with and without, highlighting the main theme of al-Battuf experience, is a continuous struggle to challenge the state's absence (enacted by refusing to meet farmers' demands for infrastructure and access to water and leaving them with *al-gharaq*) but also to challenge the state's presence (as an active agent of land confiscation and appropriation) and its encroaching campaigns to judaise the Galilee, which Al-Battuf and nearby lands and villages have challenged with large acts of resistance, like Land Day in 1976. The judaisation of the Galilee, and the transfer of land use jurisdiction to predominantly Jewish regional councils, like Misgav, has created pockets of resistance to the state's dominant presence in the landscapes and spaces of Palestinian existence in the Galilee.

In the oGH, the Israeli water infrastructure is also dominant in a concretised and centralised form, with water stored in artificial lakes, pumped from deep wells and diverted from Birket Ram. However, the presence of this state infrastructure reflects a situation similar to al-Battuf: a corresponding absence of infrastructure for the local indigenous population. The proliferation of settlement water infrastructures by Mey Golan and the hegemonic control of water resources by Mekorot in the oGH deliberately marginalised the Jawlani population and their agricultural livelihood

practices, except insofar as this met Israeli market needs before the build-up of settlement agriculture. The state-enforced absence of water infrastructure for the Jawlanis necessitated the construction of counter-infrastructures to oppose the imposed hydropolitical territories exclusively for settlements. However, Israel continued its systemic misrecognition of the Jawlanis and imposed its hegemony through the destruction, prohibition and control-through-metering of their local rainwater harvesting tanks in the late 1980s. The Jawlani aspiration for infrastructure was scaled up in the 1990s and re-configured to that of direct engagement and negotiation with the state apparatus, Mekorot, to claim larger water quotas and ensure the maintenance of their livelihood within their confined spaces of existence.

#### 8.4 Concluding remarks

Al-Battuf and the oGH have been examined throughout this thesis as constructed sites of a settler-state hydro-imaginary. When infrastructures materialised those imaginaries, these sites were re-configured as sites of contested *hydrosocial territories*. The hydrosocial and hydropolitical story of infrastructure and agricultural development, told through experiences in the lived geography, enable sumud in a complex and heterogenous manner. This approach forces us to go beyond the deterministic and romantic view of local and indigenous imaginaries as stewards of nature, and to analyse communities' actions within complex socioeconomic, political and social dynamics. The othering of both indigenous populations and the imposition of settler colonial temporalities excluded them from the state. The settler colonial depiction and construction of Arab agricultural practices as primitive and without any future, expressed and justified a settler colonial approach of Arab de-development. A denial of agriculture and irrigation prospects in Al-Battuf's case equates to a denial of contemporary belonging, and of their recognition as citizens of the state and as an ethno-geographic community with land-based roots and attachment to the land. The state enforced a temporal sanction on their environmental imaginaries and aspirations. While similar efforts were carried out by

the state in the oGH, a local imaginary succeeded in rooting itself back into its landscape and establishing facts on the ground.

Exposing the spectrum of interactions (from resistance to co-existence) between settler-colonial state and local imaginaries around natural resource management, is telling of a more complex story of sumud through livelihood re-configuration. Infrastructural dynamics represent one of those instances where, in both cases studied, engagement with the state takes the form of opposition, negotiation and 'co-existence'. The landscapes examined in the empirical chapters have been subject to a hegemonic state imaginary – which viewed them as regions of geostrategic and hydrological significance, requiring centralised, concretised and coercive state infrastructural interventions. Walking through the landscapes and learning about local landscape imaginaries complicates and weakens the idea of the impermeability of state assemblages and mechanisms of rule. The landscapes reveal more complex temporal and spatial realities and meanings that the state's hegemonic imaginary fails to capture. Relevant to understanding water struggles, the reduction of water to a transboundary resource confined to inter-state dynamics of conflict and cooperation overshadows these other realities, meanings and re-configurations.

The dynamic political struggles of both case studies show covert and overt forms of hegemonic control by the Israeli state and also differentiated tactics of local protest. Therefore, changes in protest are tactical, re-appropriating formal rules of water governance to serve counter-hegemonic purposes. This produced a dynamic livelihood strategy for both communities in a settler colonial context, opposing while adapting to settler colonial rules of resource extraction and control. The sumud concepts and beliefs of both communities forged strategies to seek recognition with rights-based claims to natural resources, merging to produce the lived geographies and land-based imaginaries of today. The oGH communities relied on water-intensive crops, particularly apples, which were constitutive of their indigenous imaginaries and livelihood aspirations, but inevitably were also partly aligned with a market-oriented settler colonial regime. While both communities realise the politics of difference and discriminatory resource allocations exercised by the settler colonial

state do not align with their constructions of place-based identity and belonging, these communities necessarily negotiate and engage with the state to claim rights to recognition and resources. Al-Battuf, also suffering exclusion from a centralised infrastructure network (the NWC) chose to embrace imaginaries of drainage and the elimination of gharaq, as a manifestation of their 'development' ambitions and efforts to participate as equal citizens alongside Jewish farmers. Under settler-colonial rule, interaction of the Palestinian community with the state is never simplistic or straightforward, resulting in a complex dynamic of livelihoods and landscape.

The exclusion of Arab lands and communities from the state was intended to maintain an othering of Palestinian and Syrian existence and the lived spaces they inhabit. However, with that exclusion, it has also provoked struggles to maintain rootedness to land through different means which capitalised on the state's presence-absence. The presence of the state created forms of mobilisation that spoke the language of the state (Scott, 1998), which is evident in the formation of cooperatives to claim rights and make demands to be included in agricultural development. It also allowed for engagement with, and challenging of, the state in its own legislative and regulating bodies, like courts, to assert claims through law—that is, strategies attempting dialogue with the state, seeking visibility and recognition. The practical (day-to-day) absence of the state in Al-Battuf and the oGH, moreover, fostered the continuation of agricultural practices in defiance of settler state logic, allowing a continuous presence on the land albeit under difficult economic conditions. The communities living under settler colonial conditions try to live with an inherently exclusionary form of governance and ordering of their lives while rejecting it at the same time. The water struggles, livelihood tactics and recognition demands provide the farmers with a platform to claim rights to resources and rectify injustices inflicted on their lived geographies and farming practices, continuously re-defining and re-articulating what it means to be Palestinian and Syrian under Israeli hegemonic rule.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

This thesis has examined water struggles in two specific locations which are central to the construction of the political geography of the Jordan River Basin (JRB), both constituting important sites of the Israeli waterscape – Sahl al-Battuf in the Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights (oGH). The main research questions of the thesis explored how settler colonial land and water policies manifest themselves in the lives of farming communities (Research Question 1) and the acts of protest and resistance enacted by those communities in light of such policies and their political effect (Research Question 2). Informed by these research questions, the key proposition assessed is that, *in the settler colonial contexts studied, the farming of Arab communities acquires similar forms of political subjectivity*. Political subjectivity refers to the constitution of farmers as subjects with a communal political identity and shared political goals, notably relating to land and water resources. Following the empirical investigation of Research Questions 1 and 2 for al-Battuf (Chapters 4 and 5) and the oGH (Chapters 6 and 7), the comparative analysis in Chapter 8 confirmed this proposition, highlighting how farming practices in both locations have been politically enacted as a form of sumud on the land, with similar strategies of place-based identity-formation and similar claims to land and water resources. It showed how water, simultaneously experienced under settler colonial conditions as a presence and absence, was framed as an object through which community struggles are shaped. The demand for water infrastructure has been explored as a manifestation of those struggles and their enactment by the community as tools of resistance and collective expressions of ethno-geographic identity.

I have engaged with three main critical theoretical concepts: political ecologies of water, lived geographies of ethno-geographic communities and settler colonial studies. Adopting such a framing allowed the tracing of Israeli (settler colonial) water infrastructure as it has re-configured lived geographies of the indigenous Arab communities over decades. Those lived geographies are fraught with acts of contestation, opposition and negotiation with the state to reclaim rights to resourcehood and, through these resource claims, rights to their ethno-

geographic identities. These communities have undergone military and civilian forms of governing, under which their farming practices and water claims have acquired political subjectivity.

To conclude, I will summarise the findings of this thesis. In the second section, I present the major contributions of this research to settler colonial studies and critical (water) political ecology. The third and final section presents the potential of this research for future investigations of water in the Jordan River Basin and beyond.

## 9.1 Findings of the thesis

This thesis examines contemporary cases of water struggles by focusing on their historical construction as uneven waterscapes. Demonstrating how the Israeli settler colonial project is not confined to a historical moment, I explored how the construction of state infrastructure, like the NWC in 1961 or the control of the upper tributaries of the Jordan after the 1967 occupation of the Golan Heights, is part of an ongoing structural process of resource control and dispossession. I emphasized that, typical of settler colonial projects, infrastructures are built in the state's image, mirroring its coercive, exclusionary approach to displace, overshadow and make invisible indigenous socio-natures, infrastructures and hence identities. However, I also exposed the settler colonial project to be incomplete, and therefore provide a theoretical and a practical platform to examine not only dispossession but resistance through land-based farming practices. Uneven waterscapes, such as those examined in this thesis, are a manifestation of an un-easy co-existence between both settler colonial and indigenous re-configurations in the landscape which are fraught with opposition, resistance and cooperation (Simpson and Bagelman, 2018). As Ayyash (2018) argues in the case of Palestine, fellahin struggles are the impetus of decolonial resistance. With the centrality of land and farming in their resistance, "displacement of people from the land" is seen "as the displacement of life itself" (p.24).

Through exposing uneven waterscapes, this thesis has showed how water struggles shape and Arab communities' lived geographies. The *presence* of the state

materialises in the imposition of its land and water policies which dominate the everyday livelihood practices and geographies of colonised communities, forcing them to interact as citizen-subjects to claim rights and receive benefits. The *absence* is manifested through the state's abandonment, neglect and disregard of the remaining geographies of existence of those communities and their imaginaries, which ultimately produces a platform for counter-state resistance practices, infrastructures and imaginaries.

Under such conditions, the resistance acts of the Arab communities are ongoing and evolving, asserting claims for recognition and visibility on what remains of their land. However, what this thesis also showed is that resistance takes shape and is produced under the structures of settler colonial rule (Wolfe, 1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that I identified tensions and contradictions in the resistance and sumud strategies in Al-Battuf and the oGH: uneasy cooperation with the settler colonial state is often necessary to achieve concrete outcomes in struggles for greater control over, and access to, land and water. Infrastructures of resistance, as discussed in Chapters 1, 7 and 8, are co-produced with infrastructures of settler colonial control, increasing the complexity and dilemma of seeking justice through the tools of the coloniser. However, such struggles have re-configured a land-based identification and attachment and solidified the ethno-geographic sentiments of farming communities. In the oGH and al-Battuf, protecting the land and claiming rights to water become as integral and invaluable as their rights to other basic services which they are entitled to as settler colonial citizens/residents.

These ethno-geographic communities are facing an imminent threat as the state's technological apparatus of resource dispossession and control is relentless in encroaching on their physical geographies of existence and even their geographical imaginaries. The journey of the consolidation of an Israeli (Zionist) waterscape and infrastructure is widely told as a story of the triumph of modernity and technology over nature with its epitome being 'to make the desert bloom' with drip irrigation, wastewater treatment and reuse, desalination and other technological fixes. However, it has also been shown to re-produce a deteriorating environmental situation inside Israel and its occupied territories and has intensified the freshwater



deficit in the country. This thesis argues that this hydraulic mission is defined by the denial of Arab (Palestinian and Syrian) hydro-imaginaries, and the suppression or 'othering' of the socio-natures of these indigenous populations. As Veracini (2015, p.9) claims, the 'settler colonial present is also an indigenous one', urging us to conduct scholarly work which examines the experiences, struggles and resistance of the indigenous as extensively as we do for settler colonial rule.

The incompleteness of the settler colonial project is largely a result of indigenous resistance (Qumsiyeh, 2011; Svirsky, 2017). In this thesis, and along the same argument aforementioned, I argue that the settler colonial water assemblage is not as completely *impermeable* as the settler colonial state constructs and envisions it. Rather, in the face of contesting hydro imaginaries and practices, indigenous resistance serves to make it permeable, porous and punctured by alternative modes of claim-making (Meehan, 2014). As seen in the empirical chapters, the Al-Battuf case of unrealised infrastructure is nevertheless a resistance tool which aims to puncture and perforate Israeli hegemony over water management and use, merely through staying on the land even without the planned water infrastructures. In the oGH, the rainwater harvesting tanks also succeeded in capturing rainwater claimed to be under the sole ownership of the state, and re-configured the engagement between the settler state and the indigenous community to that of water management.

## 9.2 Main contributions

Engaging with critical water political ecologies has enriched this thesis through three interactions. First, the historical study of water in the two study locations revealed how it became an object of governance within broader settler colonial processes of environmental transformation in regional landscapes and waterscapes. Second, looking at the historical construction of water-as-resource through a power-sensitive political ecology lens allowed me to analyse water in its multiplicity of meanings and processes and examine the production of uneven

waterscapes and its implication on the lived geographies of farming communities who had worked the land with and without water availability (for agriculture). Third, examining water infrastructures of control and resistance under settler colonial rule allowed me to combine and draw upon critical scholarship (in political ecology, geography and settler colonial studies) to expose the imposition of settler colonial waterscapes on indigenous communities' geographies and realities. The seemingly impermeable water infrastructures of the Israeli state have been, and continue to be, sites of contestation and claim making through different tactics of negotiation and opposition by indigenous Arab populations. This is how infrastructure as an ethnographic site of exploration becomes clearly relevant in the case of settler colonial regimes.

Examining lived geographies also exposes the quotidian acts of *sumud* and perseverance around water, re-configuring livelihood practices and instilling political subjectivity in everyday farming activities. Agricultural and farming livelihoods in this context of resource control and exclusion were shown to acquire political subjectivity, where farmers' collective assertion of resource rights played a pivotal role in strengthening communities' belonging and rootedness to the land. Rootedness, the act of staying on the land, is demonstrated through the continuous cultivation of the remaining land in both Al-Battuf and the oGH and the objective of remaining visible as an ethno-geographic community by planting certain crops, and ensuring land is not abandoned or left barren. To realise this, water becomes a political object to claim rights to remain visible and rooted. Just as certain crops, like apples in Majdal Shams, require water to survive and thrive, so to in al-Battuf water serves as a conduit for aspirations for more reliable and marketable crops. Without state support for a necessary drainage canal, farmers resorted to *ba'ali* rain-fed agriculture as an adaptation to state-enforced water scarcity, also re-configuring local knowledge and traditional farming methods with modern tools (such as agricultural vehicles and pesticides).

In politicising everyday life and practices and in conceptualising political resistance beyond the western definitions of it, a de-colonial conceptual space is opened to understand *sumud* and everyday resistance under settler colonialism,

following work on the centrality of the olive tree in the Palestinian context (Braverman, 2009; Reger, 2017; Simaan, 2017). This study aims to provide new insights into farming and water politics that pay attention to the multiplicity of water meanings and ontologies, as constructed in farming contexts. In this regard, both the dominant (settler colonial) modern water ontology and other indigenous local ontologies embodied in place-based relations and practices are scrutinised to assess their influence on water governance, theory, and practice (Yates et al., 2017). The original findings provided in this dissertation on the lived geographies of indigenous communities under settler colonial rule and their interaction with the settler colonial state and its infrastructures provide a platform for theorising infrastructure and water as objects of political claim-making and recognition. While most settler colonialism literature is preoccupied (and rightly so) with land and the technological objects of its control, re-focusing attention on water infrastructures within settler colonial rule allows us to explore infrastructure not as a fixed, banal and apolitical object but a theoretically rich object of exclusion and emancipation. The originality of this research and analysis will hopefully enable decolonised and critical knowledge production on water politics and settler colonial infrastructure in Palestine and beyond.

In their work *Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine*, Salamanca and co-authors put forward a cohesive framework for a liberation-focused research agenda, which aims to “analyse Zionism’s structural continuities and the ideology that informs Israeli policies and practices [...] towards Palestinians everywhere” (2012, p.2). Rejecting framing Palestine as an exception, or confining Palestinian experiences according to constructed geographical divides, this research urges us to take a structural approach which attends to a historical context and avoids distinguishing between the military occupation (of the oGH and the West Bank and Gaza) and the larger structures of Israeli settler colonialism (in the Galilee, inside Israel and in the diaspora). In this thesis, I focused on overcoming those symbolic and material borders upon which studies of Palestinians have focused. For example, studies of water and farming in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, detachment from similar experiences of farmers in the Galilee or the Triangle, have produced truncated

histories and narratives, conforming to settler colonial geographical fragmentation and disparity. With the focus on the oGH, the thesis also aimed to unify understanding of the struggles of Palestinians and Syrians living under Israeli settler colonial rule by focusing on a 'second stage of colonisation' after the 1967 occupation. Studying water, therefore, transcends these imposed distinctions and categories and allows us, for example, to understand water struggles faced today by marginalised Palestinian communities in Area C (as mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis) as part of wider struggles against a structural settler colonial water hegemony which aims to eliminate indigenous culture, existence and imaginaries. In conclusion, this research contributes to scholarly work that aims to use settler colonialism as a tool to de-colonise knowledge production rather than describe conditions under which elimination of the indigenous takes place. In this thesis, I relate this specifically to *settler-colonial* policies and practices undertaken by Israel as the hydro-hegemonic power.

The everyday politics of water remain missing in the plethora of scholarly literature on the water politics in the JRB. This dissertation aimed to uncover different relations, actors and actions taking place in the everyday lives of communities who identify as farming communities but with heavily restricted access to land and water. Their small acts to maintain presence on the land puts them in direct confrontation with an overly centralised and concretised Israeli waterscape. However, these actors opposed challenged and negotiated claims to remain rooted and visible on their remaining land. More than a reliable livelihood activity, farming acquired political subjectivity and re-configured ethno-geographic communities' meanings and value of the land.

The politics of water therefore, are not only articulated on the international level as the historical construction of the JRB has shown, or in Israel's historical control over the river, but can be observed and analysed at *local levels*, understanding how communities survive, adapt and challenge imposed water scarcity narratives on them. They directly experience the politics of difference and inequality exercised by the state and demand equality and recognition. Realising the

limitations imposed on their spaces of existence, characterised as enclosures and unruly spaces of othering, Palestinian and Syrian farmers adopt tools of resistance to reclaim their uprooted identity and belonging to the land through enacting farming as *sumud*: by planting another apple tree despite its economic irrationality, or building a rainwater harvesting tank to capture rainwater before it seeps into settler waterscapes, or in negotiating with the state water quotas (however unequal and insufficient). In al-Battuf, Palestinian citizens of Israel have witnessed an uprooting of their society and their transformation into minority citizens, severing their ties to a national identity and connection to the land. Farming was enacted there by remaining active in cultivating the land with the little means possible; rain-fed agriculture, ad hoc water tankers and pipes to bring enough for saplings of different crops to survive, and machinery, pesticides and fertilisers compensate for decades of stalled drainage promises and the disregard by the Israeli state of Arab agricultural activities. Experiencing the everyday dynamics of farming under precarious settler colonial conditions highlights how politics are enacted through land and water policy making, re-configuring farming as a site of identity rooting and belonging.

### 9.3 Potential for future research

The thesis alluded in the introduction to a critique of transboundary water regimes in the JRB, which has largely neglected the transformations that communities faced due to nation-state policymaking and wider hegemonic power asymmetries. The Israeli water regime was constructed during times of heightened political instability under which the newly-established riparian state, with U.S. support, strongly exerted territorial sovereignty over water through economic and agricultural development imperatives.

The communities studied for this dissertation have tended not to be considered by international and transboundary literature as requiring investigation, as their water issues are considered to be at a sub-national level. The Jawlanis in the oGH have been under a de-facto Israeli annexation (although condemned by the

International community, it has not been reversed since 1981). Al-Battuf communities represent Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are not considered by the international community to be under occupation, in contrast to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The latter have received more attention in the literature on water injustice and dispossession. However, the former groups are even more marginalised in transboundary and international river basin deliberations and arrangements, as they are relegated to intrastate water issues (recognising state sovereignty over domestic water) which further disenfranchise them and normalise their unjust water realities.

The domination of modern water ontologies by the riparian state, framed by national security and other state interests, often fails to take in to account and represent the realities of minority communities who depend on water for livelihood and place-based identification. Moreover, water use practices such as irrigation, which is instrumental in TWM arrangements in general and constructions of the JRB in particular, become sites of “the construction of gendered power and hegemonic masculinities” (Zwarteveen, 2017, p.40) through the way legitimacy is given to actors such as engineers to construct our understanding of how water should be harnessed most efficiently and effectively. Irrigation is seen as “being modern in a backward rural world” (Molle et al., 2009, p.330), transforming the backward practices of indigenous and native populations. These hegemonic representations and practices silence feminist and gendered perspectives on water multiplicity (Earle and Bazilli, 2013). Dismissal of traditional practices of water management has defined the approach of the colonial and postcolonial experts who appointed themselves as producers of knowledge and policy on water management. Ultimately, colonial discourses and their legacies have underpinned the merging of engineering science and the strong rule of the state with a technocratic vision of harnessing and controlling nature, including in the context of the Jordan River Basin.

The cases examined in this thesis support the argument that the stories, histories and realities of water are only partially told with the dominant TWM lens and requiring us to delve in, scale down and unearth a story of water users struggling

and experiencing water ebbs and flows. This thesis has followed how the presence and absence of water made a difference to the lived geographies of communities, re-configuring their socionatural relations and involving them in contestations and struggles around water. Many more communities share such struggles within and outside the JRB: displaced communities in Area C, especially in the Jordan valley, and the Bedouins of the Naqab, where water made the desert bloom, but only produced such waterscapes for Jewish settlements. Other locations outside of the Israeli settler state also offer potential for examining water –based agrarian political struggles in the region, like the Deraa’ farmers in Syria, who were also placed as important actors in a state-wide agricultural revolution (de Châtel, 2007), or the Palestinian refugees in Jordan for whom basin-wide arrangements were supposedly made in the 1950s, and who today face (alongside Egyptian and Pakistani agricultural workers) the changing waterscapes of the lower Jordan River (Van Aken et al., 2009). What distinguishes the case studies I’ve selected for this thesis is the settler colonial lens, predicated on notions of exclusion, elimination and uprooting. While highly significant to land struggles, settler colonial rule also uproots through control of water, as both land and water are interlinked and intertwined as critical means of production and livelihoods.

These contested encounters over water at a local scale, therefore, reflect critical scholarly work on transboundary state-level dynamics by Zeitoun, Mirumachi and Casaco amongst others, who provide theoretical grounds for examining the co-existence of conflict and cooperation, hegemony and counter-hegemony, contest and consent (Casaco and Zeitoun, 2010; Mirumachi and Van Wyk, 2010; Mirumachi, 2015; Zeitoun et al., 2017; Zeitoun and Warner, 2006). The local scale water struggles examined in this thesis could usefully provide an impetus for applying analytical frameworks, such as Mirumachi’s TWINS Analysis (2015), to a sub-national or intra-state level to expose how power asymmetries reflect on community level dynamics of contestation, resistance and co-existence with state water policies and infrastructures.

Another potential avenue to widen research on water is to heed Earle and Bazilli’s call for a gendered approach to the study of transboundary rivers (2013). This

research has revealed how women's role has for decades been overshadowed by a water-as-resource framing. Even when fieldwork was conducted (see Chapter 3 for reflections) for this research, women's role around irrigated agriculture was sidelined by male interviewees. In Al-Battuf women were present, visible and assertive in making their mark and continuing traditional farming methods. However, the planned drainage project was seen by community representatives as an issue outside their concern, relegated to male-led negotiations with the state. The role of women in maintaining a presence on the land during critical times of land abandonment (e.g. the 1970s), should also be thoroughly studied and acknowledged as they continue to this day to maintain and revive traditional farming activities in the valley, alongside male-framers. This also allows for cross-examination with the experience of women farmers in the West Bank, who also are leading traditional farming efforts (Teddell and Issa, 2017). In the oGH, women are less present in the apple growing activities, but have been assigned roles in its other marketing and processing stages, where women workers mostly are hired in packaging houses there, altering their role from the field to the factory with implications that are worth investigating in further research.

In conclusion, the contribution this thesis aims to provide is to enrich interdisciplinary discussions and scholarly conversations between critical political ecology, settler colonial studies and geography to take water out of its confined construction as a resource in TWM literature and governance work in the JRB region. This has restricted understanding of water relationships in the context of Israeli hydro-hegemony over the Jordan River, as water struggles are not only between riparians and not only about resource distribution. Water scholarship requires examining water from below, its meanings, values and ethno-geographic role and how relevant such an understanding is to track hydropolitical collisions and territorial struggles as struggles also for meaning and recognition.



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