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Drizzling Social and Ecological Sustainability on Solidarity Economies:

Fairtrade Olive Oil Production in Palestine

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The marketing of Palestinian olive oil as Fairtrade attempts an intervention to better the lives of farmers in a difficult political situation by providing them with markets for their olive oil. However, although a few scholars allude to the political and social discourses around Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine, none discuss the significance of Fairtrade Palestinian olive oil production in achieving social and ecological sustainability under the lens of the solidarity economy. This thesis aims to understand the perceptions of Palestinian agricultural food companies, farmers, and consumers regarding olive oil, and the extent to which Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil companies integrate social and ecological considerations in their work. As such, four different Fairtrade discourses are identified: Community, Certification, Political, and Beyond, which describe how Palestinian companies perceive Fairtrade. The extent to which the companies incorporate such considerations are influenced by their own views and experiences in including agroecological and social practices in their work. As for Palestinian farmers and consumers, results show that a general understanding of what Fairtrade entails is prevalent among them. Farmers perceive Fairtrade in line with values shared with the Community and Certification Fairtrade, while consumers associate Fairtrade with solidarity with the Palestinian farmer. The Beyond Fairtrade discourse represents an ideal version in Fairtrade that incorporates both social and ecological considerations. This also associates Palestinian olive oil with a sense of solidarity as well as an environmental cause: encouraging farmers to adopt traditional sustainable agricultural practices, thereby combing social and ecological considerations within the same discourse.

Keywords: Fairtrade, Fairtrade discourses, ecological sustainability, social sustainability, social and solidarity economy, Palestine

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List of Abbreviations

AFN	Alternative Food Networks
ARIJ	The Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organization
FT	Fairtrade
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
LISA	Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture
OWM	Olive Waste Management
PARC	Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PFTA	Palestinian Fair-Trade Association
SSE	Social Solidarity Economy
SYAL	Local Agrifood Systems
UNCTD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFTO	World Fair Trade Organization

"If the olive trees knew the hands that planted them, their oil would become tears" (Mahmoud Darwish, Palestinian poet).

1. Introduction

What is so remarkable about food is that it transcends the nutritious value it carries to encompass the cultural values and traditions of a community, rendering it a significant aspect of culture in societies (Podhorsky 2015; Agyeman et al. 2013). Olives and olive oil in the Mediterranean demonstrate how food can be a culturally embedded product. Olive oil is an example of a product for which consumption is marked by local culture, as it is representative of the diet and culture of the Mediterranean region (Dekhili and Sirieix 2011).

In Palestine specifically, olive harvest is a means of national expression and serves as a method to strengthen individual and community bonds with the land through the traditions of collective harvesting (Abufarha 2008). Over the past few decades, olive oil has become an imported commodity to the US, Europe, and Canada as means of expressing solidarity with Palestinian farmers. The contemporary Palestinian Fairtrade (FT) olive oil business attempts an intervention to better the lives of farmers under Israeli occupation.

But what does Fairtrade mean? According to the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), FT is defined as "a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South" (Sarcauga 2014).

The FT movement seeks to develop a more stable and advantageous system of trade for agricultural and non-agricultural goods produced under favorable social and environmental conditions (Raynolds 2000). FT schemes also aim to provide consumers with more information regarding the social and

environmental conditions under which commodities are produced, to build new and tighter links between Southern producers and Northern consumers, and to re-embed agro-food production in natural and social processes (Raynolds 2000;Podhorsky 2015;Moore 2004;Renard 2003).

In general, FT certification schemes are employed to affect socioeconomic and environmental outcomes, and to improve the wellbeing of farmers. Such schemes rely on standard-setting actions, training, and tools of market intervention (Oya et al. 2017). Nevertheless, in their study on agricultural certification schemes, Oya et al.'s findings suggest that although there are positive effects on prices, workers' wages do not seem to benefit from a certification scheme. As a result, many scholars contest the effectiveness of Fairtrade certification schemes in achieving their goals of social sustainability (Fridell 2007; Lyon 2006), and object to the burdens of obtaining such certifications (Geysmans et al. 2017). Additionally, only a few have drawn attention to the link between Fairtrade schemes and achieving ecological sustainability (Makita 2016; Elder et al. 2013). Ecological sustainability entails meeting the needs of the present human generation without compromising the health of ecosystems and hindering the future generation from being able to meet their needs (Callicott and Mumford 1997; Ostrom 2009). Although FT provides a symbolic tool to criticize conventional trade, some scholars contend that the extent to which it offers any gains to political solidarity with Southern producers is limited, and point out to the low levels of producer participation in the standard setting and decision making regarding Fairtrade certification (Lyon 2006).

In the last two decades, there have been various efforts to transform the Palestinian olive oil production (Meneley 2008). Following interest in exporting Palestinian olive oil, importing countries pushed to produce high quality extra-virgin olive oil. This entailed recrafting the olive oil industry. FT initiatives for Palestinian olive oil are now becoming more and more prominent (El-Jazairi 2010). As

such, marketing of Palestinian olive oil as FT olive oil stresses the need to improve the lives of Palestinian farmers by providing them with markets for their olive oil (Meneley 2011).

As such, Palestinian olive oil cannot be marketed solely on discourses of quality distinction, but the conditions of production (that are difficult due to the Israeli occupation) are conjured in its circulation in international markets (Meneley 2014). A FT initiative in Palestine serves the purposes of delivering a message and solidarity link to its consumers. This thesis will hence shed light on the perceptions, challenges, and discourses surrounding Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine, and how Fairtrade reflects the companies' core values of ecological and social sustainability.

1.1. Problem Definition and Research Gaps

Following the controversy regarding the effectiveness of FT from an ecological and a social stance, it becomes important to investigate how a FT certification scheme is translated on the ground, the discourses surrounding it, and its impact on the community. For instance, some contest and argue against the notion that Fairtrade leads to the promotion of equitable trade relationships and equal group participation between producers and consumers, and suggest that it emerges from the political choices and conscious reflexivity of Northern consumers (Lyon 2006; Fridell 2007; Geysmans et al. 2017).

In addition, agriculture in Palestine remains an insufficiently researched area, especially when it comes to Fairtrade schemes pertaining to an important cultural product, olive oil, seeing as FT olive oil is a fairly new industry, Although a few scholars allude to the political and social discourses around Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine (Meneley 2008, 2011, 2014; Gutkowski 2010), none discuss the significance of a Fairtrade scheme on Palestinian oil in achieving both social and ecological sustainability, making this an interesting and pertinent case study for a thesis.

From a theoretical perspective, other research gaps regarding this topic also exist. Theoretical frameworks underlying the concepts of Fairtrade used by scholars include convention theory in order to introduce sociological perspectives to the economic analysis of FT (Raynolds 2002), Local Agrifood Systems (SYAL) perspective, and alternative food networks (AFN) (Bowen and Mutersbaugh 2014). Ethical consumerism has also been emplpyed by scholars to better understand consumers' FT purchasing habits (O'Connor et al. 2017), as it is defined as an alignment with an ethical issue (human rights, animal welfare, the environment), giving consumers a choice between ethical alternative products, and a reflection of personal or individual choice (Doane 2001).

The concept of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) has also become relevant in the context of cooperatives and FT associations, as the solidarity economy aims to deliver knowledge on social, environmental and economic issues through practices that seek to improve the quality of life through non-for-profit endeavors (Ahmed 2015). Nonetheless, when it comes to agricultural food companies carrying a mission of both solidarity economy and ecological sustainability, an understanding of both concepts is required. In this sense, there is a gap in the interlinkage of Fairtrade social and solidarity economy (SSE) conceptual framework. There has not been any research done, to my knowledge, that attempts to use the solidarity economy as well as ethical consumerism lens to understand Fairtrade initiatives.

It hence becomes pertinent to explore how ecological sustainability and social considerations are embedded in the FT practices of olive oil producing companies in Palestine by using the SSE and ethical consumerism as a conceptual framework. Especially when political contestations often take center stage, examining a product, such as olive oil, of cultural and political significance, sheds light on the effectiveness of FT in a local context and enables us to investigate whether FT critiques, as previously mentioned, hold true.

In essence, the aim of the present study is to understand the perceptions of Palestinian agricultural food companies, farmers, customer, and consumers regarding Palestinian olive oil in Palestine, and examine how Palestinian FT olive oil producing companies integrate social and ecological considerations in their work. In order to do so, the SSE and ethical consumerism were employed as conceptual frameworks in order to answer the research questions.

1.2. Research Questions

In light of the theoretical gaps and research problem, as previously identified, the purpose of this thesis is to understand how FT schemes for olive oil reflect the values of the social and ecological sustainability that Palestinian agricultural food companies advocate. Additionally, this thesis aims to understand the perceptions of the companies, farmers, and consumers regarding Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine.

The thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the main social and ecological discourses that inform Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil production?

Research Question 2: How do Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil companies differently integrate social and ecological considerations in their work?

Research Question 3: How do Palestinian farmers and consumers perceive the social and ecological benefits and challenges of Fairtrade olive oil?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Agriculture in Palestine

Agriculture has always been considered an integral part of the Palestinian culture and economy. The importance of the agricultural sector in Palestine stems from its contribution to food security as well as the creation of job opportunities. In this section, an overview of the agricultural industry is provided, in addition to the challenges and future outlooks. Throughout this, I aim to demonstrate why Palestine makes for an interesting case study for my thesis.

2.1.1. Overview of the Agricultural Sector in Palestine

In the early Twentieth century, Palestine used to have a predominantly agrarian economy, distinguished by traditional subsistence production and considerable contribution of Palestinian rural women (Abu Awwad 2016). Agricultural activities in these areas are characterized by irrigated farming as well as rain-fed farming, which constitutes the primary area of cultivated Palestinian land. In addition, the most prominent plant production is the cultivation of trees (Cappellazzi 2012).

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2010, the total area of agricultural land in 2010 was 1,207,061 dunam (120,706 hectare). Production of vegetables accounts for 65% of total agricultural production in the West Bank. The crops that are mostly planted are tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, squash, sweet pepper, and green beans. On the other hand, 9.9% of the total agricultural land in the West Bank is utilized for fruits, with citrus fruits, almonds, dates, guava, and grapes being the predominant crops (The Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem 2015).

The West Bank is now divided into three parts (Areas A, B, and C). Area C includes more than 61% of the West Bank and is under complete Israeli control for security purposes. Area C includes the

most fertile agricultural areas (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2012).

The agricultural sector is regarded as the main source of income for many Palestinian households, especially with the prevalence of family farming and family-based production (Cappellazzi 2012), and accounts for 11.5-13.4% of the Palestinian labor force (ARIJ 2015). Agriculture was considered a last resort for people who had lost their employment following Israeli measures (FAO 2011). It is considered the main employer in rural communities and has experienced an upward trend following events of the 2000 Intifada (Palestinian uprising) until now. For instance, subsistence farming is a key characteristic of agricultural activity in Palestine, as more than half of plant and livestock production goes towards domestic consumption, and only 20% for direct sale (Cappellazzi 2012).

As for agricultural trade, 90% of Palestinian exports are to Israel, and 80% of Israeli imports are to the Palestinian Territories, creating a complex interdependence with detrimental effects on the Palestinian agricultural sector. A primary reason for Palestine's dependence on Israel regarding agricultural trade is the lack of export market access for Palestinian goods in addition to Israel's restriction of flow of goods from abroad (Cappellazzi 2012).

As for institutional mechanisms related to agriculture, the first agricultural law enacted by the Palestinian Authority in 2003 was for the creation of a Farmers' Compensation Fund. More efforts to develop strategies to stimulate agricultural growth and promote the cultivation of crops have always been neglected due to limited budget and lack of financial support to the agricultural sector.

2.1.2. Challenges

Trends show that the Palestinian agricultural sector has been most affected by the Israeli occupation. The agricultural sector lags behind that of nearby countries. For instance, the average yield in the Palestinian Territories is half that in Jordan and 43% of the yield in Israel (UNCTD 2015). Why is that

the case, considering that the three countries have similar geographic and climatic conditions? The gap may be argued to be a result of poor access to land and water by Palestinian farmers, low rates of fertilization, restricted marketing conditions, and limited integration with the rest of the economy. Such challenges primarily affect Palestinian farmers' livelihoods, making it more difficult to remain farmers and gain a fair income.

To begin with, the political conflict is considered the most critical of the challenges facing the Palestinian agricultural sector. Such challenges are characterized by the Israeli practices of land confiscation, control over water resources, restrictions on product transport between different areas within Palestine as well as access to international markets (ARIJ 2015). Restrictions also include Israeli closure policies, construction of the Separation wall, checkpoints, the blockade on the Gaza Strip, and the permit system to move in/out of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. As a result, this led to Palestinians being denied their right to access agricultural areas and restrictions on the transport of products in and out of Palestine (FAO 2011). Israel has control over more than 82% of water resources in Palestinian Territories. Thus, water resources available for agriculture are limited to groundwater pumped to wells or used through springs (ARIJ 2015). Furthermore, due to family inheritance, the land ownership system, and Israeli land confiscation policies, agricultural land in the Palestinian territories is constantly decreasing and increasingly fragmented (Cappellazzi 2012). In fact, throughout the years of Israeli occupation, the Palestinian agricultural sector's shares declined from more than one third of the GDP before 1976, to around 20-25% in 1996, following the colonization of the West Bank, to 3.9% in 2014 (Abu Awwad 2016). Such issues clearly affect farmers' livelihoods as well.

In addition to challenges caused by the political conflict, climate change is directly affecting agricultural production rates. Changes and fluctuations in rainfall and droughts have increased the risk of investing

in the agricultural sector (ARIJ 2015). However, water scarcity remains to be one of the main environmental challenges facing Palestinian agriculture, as the key water sources in Palestine are the Jordan River, springs, and groundwater, which are shared with and controlled by Israel (UNCTD 2015). Ecological considerations and challenges are hence pertinent to the circulation of FT olive oil, as will be further discussed in chapters five and six.

In addition to the limited agricultural land available to Palestinians, increased competition between farmers over the land reduced the chances of women from receiving their shares, thereby reducing their contribution to Palestinian agriculture (Abu Awwad 2016). Other challenges exist as well. For instance, the sector suffers from limited budget allocation and donor agencies (ARIJ 2015).

In summary, challenges can be classified into environmental and social challenges. Trade and transport restrictions as well as restrictions on access to fertilizers and water resources have been regarded as major impediments by the Israeli occupation to agricultural productivity in Palestine (FAO 2011) (UNCTD 2015), signifying the political considerations of olive oil production in Palestine, which are regarded as social challenges. Challenges pertaining to limited budget allocation, agro marketing challenges, and inadequate infrastructure relate to Community FT discourse, as will be further discussed in chapters five and six, and are also categorized as social challenges. Environmental challenges mainly pertain to olive wastewater management (OWM) obstacles and those caused by climate change, such as reduced rainfalls. These challenges shape companies' motivations in integrating FT discourses into their olive oil production practices, as will be further discussed in this study.

2.1.3. Future outlooks

Various studies confirm that with the removal of restrictions on the agricultural sectors regarding unrestricted access to land, water, and markets, in addition to adequate investment in infrastructure,

the Palestinian agricultural sector could see considerable expansion of irrigated land and increased productivity (UNCTD 2015). Achieving a path of sustained growth not only requires an understanding of the conditions that influenced its long-term development prospects, but also understanding how conflict dynamics impact the value chain and the local economy (FAO 2011). In addition, traditional ecological knowledge is mainly associated with women, as they usually transfer this knowledge to their daughters. Thus, projects promoting gender equality among Palestinian enables increased agricultural opportunities for women (FAO 2011).

Although organic production in the Arab world remains insignificant, the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture in cooperation with the Palestinian Agricultural Relied Committee (PARC) and the Arab Agronomists Association is developing organic agriculture in the Palestinian Territories. Currently, only 4.5% the fruitful rain-fed olives in Palestine constitutes as organic, but transformation to organic farming is on the rise (Srouji 2012).

As mentioned, various challenges face the Palestinian agricultural sector. In order to overcome such challenges and transform the sector towards more sustainable agriculture and higher food security, more research is essential. The fact that Palestine remains an inadequately researched area, especially when it comes to alternative agriculture, demonstrates the significance of this current study.

2.2. Olive Cultivation and Olive Oil Production

After providing a background for agriculture in Palestine, this section delves deeper into the olive oil production in order to provide a basis for discussing Fairtrade in Palestine and the discourses surrounding that.

2.2.1. Overview

Olive oil is an example of a product for which consumption is marked by local culture, as it is characteristic of the diet and culture of the Mediterranean region (Dekhili and Sirieix 2011). The

production of olives is now regarded as a booming industry across the world. But when did it all start? Although the specific time and place of its first cultivation is unknown, it is estimated to have happened during the Early Bronze Age or the Chalcolithic period somewhere in the Levant region. In fact, the olive tree begins life at forty, and it is only after then that full production (up to 50 kg per tree) can be expected. A smaller tree would normally produce 10 kg. Nowadays, the main consuming countries are also the top olive oil producers, and are: Italy, Greece, Tunisia, and Turkey, producing 88.5% of the world's production (Dekhili and Sirieix 2011).

2.2.2. Olive Oil Production in Palestine

In Palestine, traces of the olive tree in the land date back to 800 B.C. The olive tree is a prominent character of the mountainous regions in the West Bank, and olive oil is regarded as an integral part of the Palestinian diet (Abufarha 2008). In the West Bank, nearly half (47.1%) of total agricultural land in the West Bank is utilized for the cultivation of fruitful olive trees, most of which are rain-fed (UNOCHA 2012).

2.2.2.1. The Importance of Olive Oil in Palestinian Culture

One would not be able to visit a Palestinian home that is not stocked with enough olive oil for the year until the next harvest season. In addition, maintenance of olive trees is part of the daily activities and social life of an olive farmer family. Olives are usually grown on terraces that encircle the mountains and hills (Abufarha 2008). The setting of olive trees usually requires traditional framing methods. The harvest is considered a communal affair, as the whole family with friends gather and help each other in the harvest season.

> "For much of the villager communities in the West Bank olive oil constitutes economic security. The harvest times are very joyous days in the Palestinian village. Palestinians await the fresh oil, and it is felt most intimately in the experience of eating zeit ifghish with hot bread. For the children it is a time to collect additional change as they scatter across the olive orchards to collect leftover olives missed by olive pickers to sell to the olive press keepers to buy their own special treats. These conditions help maintain the antiquity of the farming practice and keep traditional ways of living alive in the face of modernity. The

> olive tree symbol emphasizes traditions, community, connection with past Palestinian life in Palestine, and an example of the persistence of Palestinian life as un-ruined nationhood" (Abufarha 2008 p.355).

As well-described by Abufarha, the olive tree carries deeper meaning for Palestinians, as it became a component of the student movement that emerged in the 1970s-1980s as a form of resistance under Israeli occupation. It evolved to become a crucial element in Palestinian literature, poetry, and nationalism. Most importantly, it became an element of national expression and a way to signify Palestinians' bond with the land and community, which is also exemplified in collective farming (Abufarha 2008).

The olive tree carries another meaning as well. It is common for a 75-year-old Palestinian farmer to plant olive trees, fully aware that it will take eight years to generate produce, but rather plants them for his children. This implies that a notion of sustainability and transitive reciprocity is shared amongst Palestinians, as olive trees bond past and future generations (Abufarha 2008). Meneley reiterates and develops on the link between olive oil and Palestinian culture by discussing the discourses surrounding Palestinian extra-virgin olive oil (2011). As such, she argues that by drawing on international discourses, Palestinian companies emphasize a discourse of producing 'quality goods', to gain international recognition of their product. Yet they also aim to expand from the 'quality' discourse to include the spacio-politics of "Palestinian food" and discourses of 'taste', ultimately marking their products as 'taste of solidarity' with Palestine (Meneley 2014).

Olive oil in Palestine has become a commodity for expressing solidarity with the Palestinian farmers' struggles to make a living in harsh political conditions. Values related to the concept of Fairtrade are thus common through the circulation of Palestinian olive oil to international markets.

2.2.2.2.From Staple to a Luxury Commodity

After the 2nd Intifada (Palestinian apprising) in 2000, a form of re-ruralization of Palestine became evident, as people started to think of olive oil as a potential export commodity. As such, several olive oil cooperatives were established to produce extra-virgin olive oil for export to abroad (Meneley 2011). Such revitalization of the olive oil industry served as a way of providing meaningful work to Palestinians after they lost their jobs, provide them with enough income to stay on their land, and alleviate boredom due to checkpoints and curfews imposed by the Israeli army (Meneley 2008). Agricultural cooperatives were founded that aim to support Palestinians' claim to the land and that olive trees are distinctively Palestinian, with oil being evidence of their tending of the land for centuries (Meneley 2011).

Traditionally, Palestinians prefer olive oil to be of a thick-dark consistency, which is of high acidity and not extra-virgin. Nevertheless, as a result of exporting olive oil, the requirement of extra-virgin entailed transformation of traditional olive oil production practices (Meneley 2014). For instance, instead of using sticks for harvesting, farmers are encouraged to handpick olives and use jute bags instead of plastic bags. In turn, this would prevent the process of fermentation and bruising of olives, which are cause for high acidity oil and higher quantity oil. In that sense, Palestinian olive oil was transformed from a peasant staple to an elite luxury good for export (Meneley 2014). Imported olive oil from Palestine thus represents a form of solidarity with 'aesthetic discourses of distinction' (Meneley 2011).

Olive oil production in the West Bank is estimated to be 127.7 tons per month (ARIJ 2015) This demonstrates the importance of olive cultivation and olive oil production in Palestinian livelihood, for olive oil production contributes to 28.7% of the agriculture's domestic income (Al-Khatib et al. 2005).

Currently, there are nine companies that export olive oil, that of which four specialize in FT (El-Jazairi 2010).

2.2.2.3. Challenges

Many structural challenges facing olive cultivation exist. Settler violence (from Israeli settlements), experienced by farmers in the West Bank during the olive harvesting seasons makes an event that is oftentimes considered a traditional family event much more dangerous (El-Jazairi 2010). Additionally, similar to challenges to agriculture in Palestine, farmers have restricted access to their land and olive trees due to settlements, outposts, closed military areas, military bases, and bypass roads (El-Jazairi 2010). Social and political challenges hence appear to be the most prominent.

Political challenges pertaining to the construction of the separation wall has also led to the loss of approximately one million olive trees, as they were caught in the Seam Zone. The wall has also cut many farmers off from water resources essential to ensure the production of their olive groves. However, most of the olive trees in the West Bank are rain fed, making farmers particularly vulnerable to drought (El-Jazairi 2010). For olive oil, its quality and market value decrease in the heat and sun. However, the unpredictability of the Israeli checkpoints distorts this, making it more difficult to export olive oil that is of high quality (Meneley 2008). As explained by Meneley: "Though Palestinians' agricultural labor has been revalued when bottled as extra virgin olive oil, it can also be cheapened by "occupation time," as Palestinians attempt to distribute their oil to global consumers" (Meneley 2008, 20). Hence, one should keep in mind that the context of the production of Palestinian olive oil - including the properties, material and symbolic value – largely influence the possibilities of its circulation.

A global problem facing the olive industry is OWM. Currently, there are no appropriate method for treating OWM in Palestine, as it is mostly disposed of in sewage systems or discharged into water

streams and valleys, leading to the disruption of biological activities in domestic wastewater ponds. Since it poses a threat to surface and groundwater, proper treatment of olive wastewater is vital and urgent (El-Khatib et al. 2005).

As is the case for most agriproducts in Palestine, olive oil has restricted access to international as well as regional markets due to restrictions on transport. In addition to market access struggles, there has also been a decline in local olive oil consumption, accompanied by the increase in the use of imported corn and sunflower oils. This is argued to be a direct result of price considerations following increased production costs and efforts for Palestinian olive farmers (El-Jazairi 2010).

Such issues related to structural challenges, and ones raised by Israeli authorities, serve as a premise to investigate the motivations behind Palestinian agri-food companies in exporting their FT olive oil products to international markets despite numerous challenges.

2.3. Sustainable Agriculture

It's pertinent to understand the themes considered under sustainability and sustainable development. As Strong (1997) points out, sustainable development stresses the importance of environmental quality and the conservation of natural assets (Strong 1997). As for sustainable agriculture, it is an umbrella concept, which refers to a method of farming that mimics natural ecosystems (Gomiero et al. 2012). Under this domain, other definitions are classified under it, such as agroecology- which is a holistic study of agroecosystems including all the environmental and human elements (Francis and Porter 2011), low-input, and organic agriculture. Sustainable agriculture aims to integrate ecological and biological processes, such as nitrogen fixation and nutrient cycling into the food production process, minimize the use of non-renewable inputs, and integrate local farmers' skills and knowledge (Gomiero et al. 2012). In order to understand ecological considerations involved in FT discourses,

this section discusses the different concepts related to sustainable agriculture, along a continuum from conventional to organic agriculture.

2.3.1. Conventional Agriculture

Following the Green Revolution and EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) seeking to promote agricultural modernization in the last thirty to forty years, the conventional farming system was advanced. This modernization project, which is motivated by food insufficiency, was strongly supported through subsidies and price interventions. As follows, technological innovations, such as the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, mechanization and irrigation systems, the intensification of animal production practices, and monocultures became the new norm in agricultural practices. The food production system was hence characterized highly specialized, capital intensive, large-scaled and market-oriented (Mancini 2013) . Thus, conventional agriculture is characterized by relying on fossil fuels as a primary source of energy, synthetic chemical fertilizers and pesticides, as opposed on relying on manure, compost, rotations, and cover crops as sources of nutrients. The level of biodiversity can be categorized as low, with monoculture crops and two-year rotations (Francis and Porter 2011).

2.3.2. Traditional Agriculture

Traditional agriculture refers to subsistence, small-scale commercial agriculture, and the use of traditional farming tools such as the hoe and animal traction to prepare land before cultivation. It naturally follows that household members are the farm labor, with men performing the manual work, and women in charge of planting, weeding, and harvesting. Agricultural practices include intercropping and crop rotation with common crops. As for crop protection against pests, farmers generally mix concoctions sourced from local inputs. Generally, farmers are able to generate some income from their efforts and this contribute to the local economy (Maragelo 2008).

2.3.3. Low input agriculture

Concerns were raised regarding the adverse environmental impacts of conventional farming practices, due to its reliance on synthetic chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which caused ground water contamination, soil degradation and pollution among other environmental issues. As such, low-input sustainable agriculture (LISA) was coined as a term to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides. LISA refers to purchasing few off-farm inputs (usually fertilizers and pesticides), while increasing on-farm inputs (i.e. manures, cover crops, and especially management) (Ledgard 2001).

2.3.4. Organic Agriculture

Organic agriculture is a farming system that aims to improve soil fertility by the efficient use of local resources while discarding the use of agrochemicals, Genetic Modified Organisms (GMOs), and synthetic compounds. Agroecological practices are included in farming practices, which aim to minizine the environmental impacts of agriculture and the food industry, while promoting sustainability of the soil and ecosystem (Gomiero et al. 2011). Sustainable agricultural practices thus include integrated pest management, intercropping, crop rotation, and mulching (Gomiero et al. 2011). The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), defines organic agriculture as: "a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved" (IFOAM 2005). It is important to note the reference to traditional agriculture and local knowledge as a means of promoting sustainable agriculture.

As shown in this section, agroecological (sustainable agricultural) practices have been utilized in various agricultural paradigms, such as LISA and traditional agriculture. Among the benefits of organic

technologies are higher soil organic matter and nitrogen, as well as lower fossil energy inputs. What can be concluded is that, conventional monoculture agriculture can be made more sustainable and ecologically sound by adopting some traditional organic farming technologies (Pimentel et al. 2005).

Relating back to FT, Strong argues that ecological considerations and minimum agroecological practices, as previously mentioned, are common and can be linked to the underlying principles of Fairtrade, which emphasize good working conditions, standards, and respect for the environment (Strong 1997). Hence, the sustainable development in this context connotates environmental, social, and economic sustainability (Makita 2016).

2.4. Alternative Food Networks

In this section, a review of literature regarding alternative food networks is provided in order to arrive at the conclusion that Fairtrade networks exits and are compartmentalized within alternative food networks as a whole.

2.4.1. Overview

What are alternative food networks (AFN)? Jarosz (2008) defines AFN by referring to their four main characteristics: shorter distance between consumers and producers in agri-food systems, small farm size scale advocating organic or holistic agriculture as opposite to industrial large-scale farming, food purchasing venues like farmers markets and food cooperatives, and the commitment to the three pillars of sustainable food production, consumption, and distribution (social, economic, and environmental) (Jarosz 2008). Goodman and Goodman (2009) further emphasize the close tie that AFN promote, as the consumption of food is more closely tied to production - in terms of spatial, economic, and social regards – through such networks (Goodman and Goodman 2009).

Furthermore, Goodman and Goodman have done extensive critical research regarding AFN and defined such networks as the 'explosion' of organic, fair trade, local, quality, and premium specialty foods (2009).

As can be seen, common themes and characteristics arise when attempting to define AFN. As such, Jarosz pin points two main defining features of AFN: the proximity between where food is grown and where it's purchased and eaten; and secondly, the small farm size, scale and production technique of farms producing food for these networks (Jarosz 2008). Barbera and Dagnes (2016) build upon these characteristics by identifying three main concepts of AFN. The three main concepts are accessibility, sustainability, and quality (Barbera and Dagnes 2016).

2.4.2. Main motivations and themes of AFN

When it comes to research regarding AFN, what numerous scholars refer to, but a few only delve into, is the economic and social implications that the concept carries. For instance, Matacena (2016) realizes that AFN promise a new food chain, which is founded on a sustainable paradigm, but also highlights the process of re-localization and re-socialization that is required for the construction of a more environmentally sound, socially just and economically sustainable food system. In order to do so, Matacena recognizes the challenge of overcoming the regulatory constraints and institutional barriers (Matacena 2016). The transformative nature of AFN is thus very evident, and found in common with the initiatives advocated by the solidarity economy movement.

In conclusion, it can be argued that since AFN encompasses different networks and channels, Fairtrade can be contextualized and situated within the broader networks of alternative agriculture. Various common themes can be found across both AFN and Fairtrade, including their transformative potential, their link to sustainable consumption and production, their aim to create shorter links

between consumers and producers, and challenging conventional ways of producing agri-food commodities. Above all, both share one pertinent term: 'alternative'.

2.5. Fairtrade

In this section, discourses surrounding Fairtrade in general are discussed, alluding to the case study of the thesis: Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine, in which an overview of the Fairtrade initiatives in Palestine regarding olive oil are highlighted.

2.5.1. Emergence and History of Fairtrade

FT emerged as a movement and can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when the cooperative movement was established (Moore 2004). Raynolds provides a detailed description of the organization and standards of Fairtrade (2000). She explains that the Fairtrade movement emerged out of the 1960s European initiatives to link Southern producers to Northern consumers, and called for "trade not aid" (Raynolds 2000). A period of international growth throughout the 1970s to 1980s followed, expanding to importing and retailing operations across Europe, and the English-speaking 'developed' world (Low and Davenport 2005). In the late 1980s, European alternative trade organizations began labelling fair trade products in order to introduce them to conventional markets. As such, three fair trade labels were established (TransFair, Max Havelaar, and Fairtrade Mark), which were united later in 1997 under the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO) (Raynolds 2000).

The FLO currently represents fourteen different European member countries, as well as several others in the United States, Canada, and Japan. Following its establishment, FLO created common Fairtrade principles and procedures, as well as certification requirements for different common commodities, such as coffee, tea, bananas, cocoa, and sugar (Raynolds 2000). The main responsibilities of the FLO and its member organizations are securing certification of all labeled products and getting licenses for the use of the label by manufacturers (Renard 2003).

2.5.2. Different Fairtrade Understandings

Renard argues that two different schools of thought of Fairtrade exist, each with differing views as to what Fairtrade aims to achieves. One discourse/group perceives Fairtrade as a tool for challenging the conventional economic discourse and thus aims to make all exchanges fair; whereas, the other is more pragmatic and advocates the introduction of products from the South – produced under fair conditions – in the Northern markets, thereby focusing more the consumers' lifestyles (Renard 2003).

Considering that Fairtrade is regarded as a movement in addition to being a labelling project, it can be deduced that both 'Fairtrade as a movement' and as a certification scheme exist as different Fairtrade forms. A Fairtrade discourse that is rendered as a certification scheme exists as such since various cooperatives have Fairtrade commodities and initiatives that may not necessarily be certified, and may be regarded as another Fairtrade form as well (Raynolds 2000).

However, by drawing out to the sharp contrast between two scenarios of Fairtrade as a movement-oriented form versus Fairtrade as a large market-oriented form reduces Fairtrade to a binary line of reasoning, involving just one or the other discourse of it. It also implies that a market-oriented form of Fairtrade will eventually prevail to the detriment of Fairtrade's alternative origins. What is problematic about this view of mainstreaming is that it does not account for the diversity of the different discourses of Fairtrade, and infers a pessimistic perspective on the future of Fairtrade (Geysmans et al. 2017). Other discourses should be taken into account as well, as will be further discussed in this study.

Therefore, it can be inferred that these different discourses are based on the various themes and motivations behind Fairtrade: alternative trade being one view of FT, and strengthening North/South fair trade relations as another. In that sense, other discourses can exist as well, pulling from the other themes surrounding Fairtrade.

2.5.3. Defining Characteristics of Fairtrade

Social Justice and Equality

Two defining characteristics of Fairtrade are its claims to social justice and equality. As underlined by O'Conner et al (2017). Both the organic agriculture and the Fairtrade movements object to the conventional practices of production and seek to create a more sustainable agri-food system (O'Connor et al. 2017). Fridell however argues that in order to de-commodify goods through ethical consumerism and challenge existing production networks, these commodities have to go through the capitalist market, which leads to their commodification (Fridell 2007). This theme is pertinent to the case of Fairtrade companies in Palestine in light of the political and economic situation of the country.

Promotion of Equitable Trade Relationships

The overall goal of alternative trade is to challenge how the organization of production and trade revolves around principles that both devalue and exploit disadvantaged people and the environment, particularly people in the global South. As such, alternative trade initiatives seek to re-embed commodity circuits within ecological and social relations (Raynolds 2000). However, Fridell argues that FT merely focuses on inter-class solidarity between poor producers and rich consumers (Fridell 2007). Regarding the Palestinian case, Palestinian companies that are export-focused aim at marketing Palestinian products primarily to international markets in the US and EU, thereby drawing attention to the North/South relations at hand, i.e. Palestinian producers and European/ North American consumers.

Political Considerations and Transformative Potential of Fairtrade

Although the political aspect of FT is not often highlighted, it is of high relevance when considering FT olive oil from Palestine and the political situation of the country. Renard focuses on the link between the Fairtrade movement and political solidarity. She maintains that the movement originally

emerged in the context of political movements against neo-imperialism, as these movements were focused on supporting countries that were politically marginalized (Renard 2003). On the other hand, Lyon objects to the significant implications Fairtrade may impose and argues that unlike community-supported agriculture, FT falls short by merely focusing on North/South trade (Lyon 2006).

2.5.4. Underlying Theories

In an attempt to understand the themes and challenges associated with Fairtrade, some scholars look at Fairtrade from different theoretical frameworks. For instance, Renard draws on convention theory and its application in order to introduce sociological perspectives to the economic analysis of FT (Renard 2003). Other theories are used to understand different aspects of Fairtrade, such as consumption behavior. For instance, O'Conner et al. employ the theory of planned behavior (TPB) in order to understand and predict Fairtrade purchasing behavior (2017).

In this study, I build upon Ladhari and Tchetgna's view of ethical consumerism and its role in explaining the influence of personal values on Fairtrade consumption (Ladhari and Tchetgna 2015). However, since this study addresses companies' integration of FT discourses, I examine this by employing both ethical consumerism and the SSE as my conceptual framework in order to examine different aspects of FT perceptions, including social and ecological considerations, as will be explained in the following chapter.

In conclusion, this section of the literature review provides context on the emergence, history, defining characteristics, discourses, and critiques regarding Fairtrade. FT has first emerged as a movement out of a political context. Thus, defining features or characteristics of Fairtrade include its stance on social justice, equality, shortening the link between Northern consumers and Southern producers, challenging the conventional system of agri-food production, trading, and consumption; thereby,

upholding a transformative potential as well as an appeal to more ethical consumption through a labelling certification scheme. Taking that into consideration, arising oppositions object to the effectiveness of FT in achieving its goals. A few of these criticisms point out to the trade-offs and contradictions found within the changing discourses of FT: e.g. mainstreaming versus staying true to the movement's underlying principles, while others question the legitimacy and moral basis of FT. Whereas some consider FT to play a main role in sustainability, others fail to point out to such connections, Thus, examining the dispositions and discourses surrounding Fairtrade enables us to understand the overall network, and provides motivation to understand the FT network in a specific case study, that is Palestine.

2.5.5. Fairtrade Olive Oil in Palestine

Following interest in exporting Palestinian olive oil, the newly established cooperatives were also interested in tapping into the FT market (Meneley 2011). Why so? Gaining FT certification has numerous advantages, as many consumers in Europe are increasingly supporting FT and Organic products due to ethical considerations as well as perceived high quality of the commodity. For the Palestinian farmers, there was encouragement as the low use of pesticides enables them to make the transition to organic farming, and a growing FT market abroad makes it easier for Palestinian olive oil to find its way on the shelves of international supermarkets (El-Jazairi 2010). In addition to ethical considerations and the perceived quality, Meneley argues that a political component is in play as well (2014). Given the struggles a Palestinian olive farmer must endure, as a direct cause of the Israeli occupation, Palestinian olive oil cannot flow easily into foreign markets without a FT certification (Meneley 2014).

Over the past few decades, olive oil has become an imported commodity for expressing solidarity with Palestinian farmers. The contemporary Palestinian FT olive oil business attempts an intervention to

better the lives of farmers under Israeli occupation. As such, the Palestinian FT olive oil serves as an alternative to agricultural products under exploitative conditions. Meneley also makes a point of distinction between Palestinian solidarity initiatives, and the South African apartheid, in that Palestinian farmers are independent producers as opposed to slaves. Instead, FT initiatives ensure that profits go to the farmers and not to the government. A high price of Palestinian FT olive oil thus does not only reflect the difficulties of transport and production, but also the emotional difficulties of production (Meneley 2011). For instance, it was agreed that a ceiling FT price is 2.9 Euros ($4.50 in 2008 when price was set) per kg of virgin oil and 3.3 Euros ($5.12 in 2008) per kg of extra-virgin olive oil (El-Jazairi 2010).

The following chapter discusses the conceptual framework used in this study to understand the different FT discourses in Palestine.

3. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) and ethical consumerism serve as conceptual frameworks in order to analyze the research questions of the thesis. This section provides on overview of the solidarity economy and ethical consumerism to understand how this framework can be employed as a tool to understand the political and ecological considerations of Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine.

3.1. The Social and Solidarity Economy

The concept of solidarity economy is not a newly coined term but has been greatly discussed in literature. However, since the solidarity economy denotes a multitude of factors rather than a unified theory, there is not one universal definition (Ahmed 2015).

3.1.1. Main motivations and themes of the solidarity economy

Dacheux and Goujon (2012) argue that the solidarity economy is defined by several activities, such as savings, solidarity financing, **Fairtrade**, local exchange networks, and personal services. Although the activities under the solidarity economy vary, they can be identified by four common elements: they associate productivity with social needs rather than profitability, prioritize the participation of men and women in the production of goods and services, build local, national, and international social networks based on cooperation, and value democratic regulation of economic activities (Dacheux and Goujon 2011). Ahmed builds upon these elements and identifies six criteria which the paradigm of the solidarity economy would be based. He adds value in pointing out that the solidarity economy recognizes the non-economic concerns, such as social justice and collective welfare, as well as the individual freedom advocated, and the political objective behind such a concept (Ahmed 2015). As can be seen, this has many similarities to the underlying principles of the Fairtrade movement.

The political agenda as a driver behind the concept of solidarity economy is recognized by other scholars as well. For instance, Kawano contends that the solidarity economy has a systematic post-

capitalist agenda. She goes on further to argue that the chief goal of the solidarity economy movement is to expand the circle so that it becomes the economic norm. Moreover, the social economy movement aims to transform the state, policies, production, consumption, distribution, ownership structures, money, and finance such that the welfare of people and the environment is prioritized (Kawano 2013).

Besides the political aspect of the solidarity economy movement, Ahmed emphasizes that its initiatives value cooperation, democracy, justice, equality, diversity, and sustainability. In general, two main principles that these characteristics are based on: reciprocity as the prime principle of economic action, and acting democratically in social relations (Ahmed 2015).

3.1.2. Social Solidarity Economy

Due to the fact that solidarity economy is not a unified field, it is often thought to be synonymous with the term the social economy. However, social economy is commonly understood as the part of third sector of the economy - the first being private and the second the public sector, as is thus perceived to be an integral part of capitalism (Kawano 2013). It follows that the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) term was coined to embrace both the solidarity economy and the more radical end of the social economy attending to social justice and democratic decision making (Neamtan 2002). Bergeron et al. (2015) contributes to this discussion by pointing out that under the umbrella of SSE can be found different understandings of development that argue in favor of imbedded liberalism (Bergeron et al. 2015).

In this sense, SSE is about integrating activities in progressive societal norms that push for deep sustainability, alternatives to capitalism and the debt-based monetary system, participatory democracy, and active citizenship in social movements activism. In essence, SSE aims to reassert social power

over the economy as a means to prioritize environmental and social objectives over profits and focus on the role of ethics in economic activity (Bergeron et al. 2015).

A second element that has been touched upon is the transformative aspect of the solidarity economy and SSE. As re-affirmed by Neamtan, the social economy initiatives emerge from the aspiration to foster local development that privileges solidarity as an integral part of economic activity (Neamtan 2002). In order to do so, Sahakian and Dunand argue that today's SSE theories call for systemic transformation of the economy or are part of a 'counter-hegemonic political economy' (Sahakian and Dunand 2015).

In conclusion, re-occurring themes under the frameworks of the social economy and SSE are: humanism, solidarity, cooperation, reciprocity, anti-imperialism, social, political and economic democracy, equity for all, sustainable development, and pluralism. These themes can be used as a lens to better understand how Fairtrade practices - that are situated within AFN and are part of the SSE - can include both values of ecological and social sustainability regarding the production of Palestinian olive oil.

3.2. Ethical Consumerism

Although the SSE framework is able to shed light on discourses surrounding Fairtrade in an attempt to better understand the ecological and social implications of such initiatives, it is not able to answer the third question in this study, specifically regarding the perspective of Fairtrade consumers. Thus, the conceptual framework of ethical consumerism is employed in order to understand the attitudes of consumers regarding Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine.

As previously mentioned, Ladhari and Tchetgna emphasize the significance of ethical consumerism in marking a shift towards a positive appreciation of the value of Fairtrade. Furthermore, they suggest that purchasing behavior is guided more by ethical obligation and self-identity than by traditional

attitude and social norm - a view that is also shared by O'Conner et al. They deduce that the personal norm is the most powerful in explaining the purchase of Fairtrade products (Ladhari and Tchetgna 2015).

Hence, what is ethical consumerism? Strong (1996) defines it ethical consumerism as a behavior that reflects a concern with the problems of the South, and seek to better the lives of workers. In addition, ethical consumerism incorporates various principles of environmental consumerism including the human element of ethical consumerism (Strong 1996). This is in line with what Doane explains by what is meant by ethical purchase. As such, ethical purchase includes: an alignment with an ethical issue (human rights, animal welfare, the environment), giving consumers a choice between ethical alternative products, and a reflection of personal or individual choice, and not corporate decisions (Doane 2001).

With that in mind, it should be noted that some refer to oppositions and challenges within ethical consumerism as a concept. A study done by (Uusitalo and Oksanen 2004) shows that while the majority of respondents consider business ethics as important, this does not translate into their choice behavior. According their study, the most significant challenge to ethical consumerism are difficulties in obtaining information, problems in product availability, and high prices of ethical products (Uusitalo and Oksanen 2004).

However, one can still argue that ethical consumerism provides a justification for the purchase of Fairtrade products, as it sheds light on people's reasoning behind their Fairtrade purchasing behavior. In addition, Strong argues that ethical consumerism explains values and perceptions of consumers. For instance, the environmentally-aware consumer has become ethically aware. As a result, well-informed consumers are not only demanding fairly-traded products, but are also challenging manufactures to guarantee the ethical claims they make about their products (Strong 1996).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

In this thesis, a qualitative research methodology was used. The research was based on a constructivist approach and used interviews as well as observation analysis (Silverman 2002). A qualitative, and not a quantitative research methodology was adopted because the study aimed to explore ecological and social considerations of Palestinian agri-food companies. As such, I was interested in understanding the perceptions, opinions, and discourses surrounding FT olive oil in Palestine. In order to answer the research questions of the thesis, I collected qualitative data pertaining to how Palestinian company personnel, farmers, customers, and consumers view ecological sustainability, solidarity economies, FT, and the relationship between such concepts.

Thus, by combining techniques of interviews, an online survey, and observation, the study explored whether ecological and social considerations are evident in Palestinian FT olive oil. Firstly, I conducted a desk study including review of literature recapping general discourses and views surrounding FT schemes, thereby identifying gaps in literature. Hence, I developed the research design, which entailed a mixed method study, to generate rich data on private and public perceptions of ecological and social sustainability within FT networks through high levels of participation from company personnel, farmers, and consumers.

In addition, sociological discourse analysis was employed to understand the data collected during the interviews with the companies. I referred to Fairclough's (1992) definition of the term discourse as a "mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation" (Fairclough 1992, 63). In this sense, the definition goes beyond language to incorporate practices, social relations, and situations that exist independently of language use. It is also important to highlight that there are three aspects to the constructive effects of discourse.

A social discourse contributes to the construction of a social identity, social relationships, and systems of knowledge and belief. Hence, one can assume that a discourse may carry political and ideological considerations (Fairclough 1992). In order to understand how companies perceive FT, it is important to understand the meaning participants attach to their actions and language communicated during the interviews, and discourse analysis provides the means to do so. Critical interpretation of texts was employed when identifying different discourses in the collected data for this study, which entailed recovering the social meanings expressed in discourse (Gee 2011). As such, I focused on verbal discourse produced during the interviews, which include journal entries, transcribed interviews, and fieldnotes. I then identified keywords, which I further classified into categories and grouped into four main themes. These themes were then developed into what I refer to as a FT discourse in the discussion of the study. Four FT discourses form the analysis of this study.

The scope of this study was limited to companies in order to gain insight into the production process of Fairtrade olive oil in Palestine. Seeing as the Fairtrade discourse is primarily based on North-South trade, understanding what practices are included in producing, marketing, and selling Palestinian olive oil to local and international markets is pertinent. In addition, I included farmers in the study given that looked at FT olive oil within a solidarity economy perspective. In order to comprehend the extent to which FT schemes in Palestine operate within the framework of a solidarity economy, including perspectives from the whole chain, farmers (producers) as well as consumers, is therefore crucial.

4.2. Participants

Participants of this study can be categorized into three different categories: company personnel, farmers, buyers and end-users. Firstly, top management and company personnel from six different agri-food companies in Palestine were interviewed. Initial contact with the companies was made, and they agreed to being interviewed. In order to provide a general outlay of the FT olive oil producing

companies in Palestine, I chose the six companies to have different representations of agri-food companies in Palestine. As such, these companies were chosen after research on the most prominent and diverse agri-food companies within Palestine. It is also important to note that the names of the companies, famers, and buyers shall remain anonymous in the thesis in order to protect any sensitive information they might have revealed during the interviews and data collection. Pseudonyms for companies, company personnel, and farmers were chosen as a result. The following table provides a summary of the companies' profiles previously mentioned.

Table 4-1. Companies' profiles

Company	Type	Size (# of employees)	FT Certified	Organic Certified	Export
Sage	Family-owned business (LTD)	2-10	No	No	80% export, 20% local markets
Za'atar	Private company (LTD)	50 – 200	Yes	Yes	Only export (100%)
Thyme	Nonprofit organization	3	No	No	90% export, 10% local markets
Al-Shajar	Private Company (LTD)	2-10	Yes	Yes	95% export, 5% local markets
Zayt	Private company (LTD)	10-50	Yes	Yes	Both (two branches)
Chickpeas	Nonprofit corporation	2	No	No	No (0%)

As the for the farmers, access to their contact information was gained after the in-depth interviews with the companies using snowball sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). I asked every company which I interviewed for a few farmers that supply olive oil to them, and was given their phone numbers in order to arrange further interviews. In total, I was able to interview nine farmers. The following table provides information on the farmers interviewed: their location, company they are affiliated to, whether they are heads of the cooperatives, and the type of certification they have.

Table 4-2. Farmers' profiles

Farmer	Company affiliation	Type of production	Region	Head of cooperative	Type of certification
Adham	Sage	Olives	Outskirts of Ramallah	No	None
Bashir	Za'atar	Olives	Sanoor (north of Nablus)	Yes	FT and organic
Mohammad	Za'atar	Olives	Burqin (close to Jenin)	Yes	FT and organic
Abdel Mo'ti	Za'atar	Olives	Unknown	Yes	FT and organic
Abu Mahmoud	Thyme	Olives	Oreef (south of Nablus)	Yes	None
Mahmoud	Al-Shajar	Olives	Bani Zeid (north of Ramallah)	Yes	FT and organic
Bakir	Al-Shajar	Olives	Farkha (south of Nablus)	No	FT and organic
Rajai	Chickpeas	Strawberries and Pineapples processed products (e.g. grape molasses)	Close to Jenin	No	None
Najla	Chickpeas		Unknown	No	None

Although the initial research design was limited to interviewing companies, farmers, and consumers, contacting international companies seemed relevant after the first few interviews with companies were conducted, seeing as most companies do not directly work with end-users, but export Fairtrade olive oil to buyers outside of Palestine, who then distribute olive oil to consumers. Similar to the farmers, I asked for the contact information of the companies' partners or buyers in countries outside of Palestine, and was able to contact three different international companies

Lastly, in order to gain insights into the purchasing habits of end-users or consumers, I sent out an online questionnaire on social media sites (Facebook) asking friends to answer a few questions regarding olive oil, Fair trade, and Palestinian olive oil. For the online questionnaire, I received a total of 84 responds. In the case of the online survey, it is important to note that the data is not meant to be representative, but rather illustrative of the narratives surrounding FT olive in Palestine.

4.3. Methods for Data Collection

The data collection process took approximately three weeks. Different methods for data collection were employed, as explained below.

4.3.1. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews with company personnel compromised the main source of the data collection for the study. Each interview lasted an hour on average, and I conducted interviews with six companies. The type of interview can be regarded as an interview guide approach, or a semi-structured interview. The main strength of conducting such interviews is the ability to collect data that would emerge from the immediate context and deduced from the natural course of the conversation while still abiding by an outline of questions and topics that should be covered. In this manner, the interviews remained fairly conversational and situational, yet the interview guide made data collection systematic as questions were developed beforehand for each theme identified from the research questions (Cohen et al. 2007). The interview questions outline for the companies is included in appendix B. Figures 4-1 to 4-4 provide an overview of visited field-sites at the companies.

Figure 4-1. Olive tree at company

Figure 4-2. Village nearby company

Figure 4-3. Different labels of Palestinian olive oil

Figure 4-4. Tour at one of the companies

4.3.2. Phone Interviews

Interviews with the farmers were conducted on the phone. As previously mentioned, I received contact information of several farmers after every in-depth interview with the company personnel. These phone interviews can be considered standardized open-ended interviews, as all the farmers answered the same basic questions (Cohen et al. 2007). This was done to increase comparability of responses and acquire a brief but comprehensive insight into the opinions and perceptions of farmers regarding the sale of their olive oil as FT products. In addition to interviewing farmers, I was also able to call and talk to the Palestinian Olive Oil Council and the Palestinian Fair-Trade Association (PFTA). An outline of the farmers' interview questions is included in Appendix C.

4.3.3. E-mail Correspondence

In order to gain an international perspective on the export of Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil, I asked for the contact information of a few international buyers or distributors of the interviewed companies. I was able to contact three of the buying companies or distributors via e-mail and sent them a few questions. An outline of these questions is included in Appendix D.

4.3.4. Online Questionnaire

Lastly, I conducted an online questionnaire targeting consumers of Palestinian FT olive oil for both an international and a local perspective. The questionnaire was posted on social media sites (Facebook), and received 84 responds in total.

4.3.5. Non-Participant Observation

Although this method is considered a minor technique, as it depended on the willingness of companies, it provided me with an understanding of the companies' interest in FT and in including agroecological practices in their operations. As such, I was oftentimes (3/6 companies) given a tour of their facilities following the in-depth interviews with the companies, through which I understood the production process of olive oil. In addition, non-participant observations included taking notes, diaries, and direct observation. This took place at the companies' headquarters, where the interviews were conducted- as shown in figures 1-4 - as well as at one farmers' market and one store of a selected company. Lastly, available documents (strategic planning documents) of companies were looked at. Document and text analysis was also considered a minor technique undertaken in this study as it depended on the availability of such documents and the companies' willingness to provide them.

4.3.6. Summary of data collection methods used

The following table provides an outline of the methods used collect data for each research question.

Table 4-3. Summary of the data collection methods used

Data Collection Method	***RQ1 and RQ2***	***RQ3***
In-depth interviews	Interviews with (6) company personnel	Interviews with (6) company personnel
Phone interviews		Interviews with (9) farmers, the Palestinian Olive Oil Council, and the PFTA
E-mail Correspondence	E-mail correspondence with (3) international companies	E-mail correspondence with (3) international companies
Observation	Tours of the Companies/factories, field notes, journal entries, and direct observation.	Direct observation at farmers' market and shops
Online Questionnaire		Online questionnaire (84 respondents) to consumers

4.3.7. Data Verification

Collected data was verified through triangulation, as can be seen in the following figure (Lewis 2015).

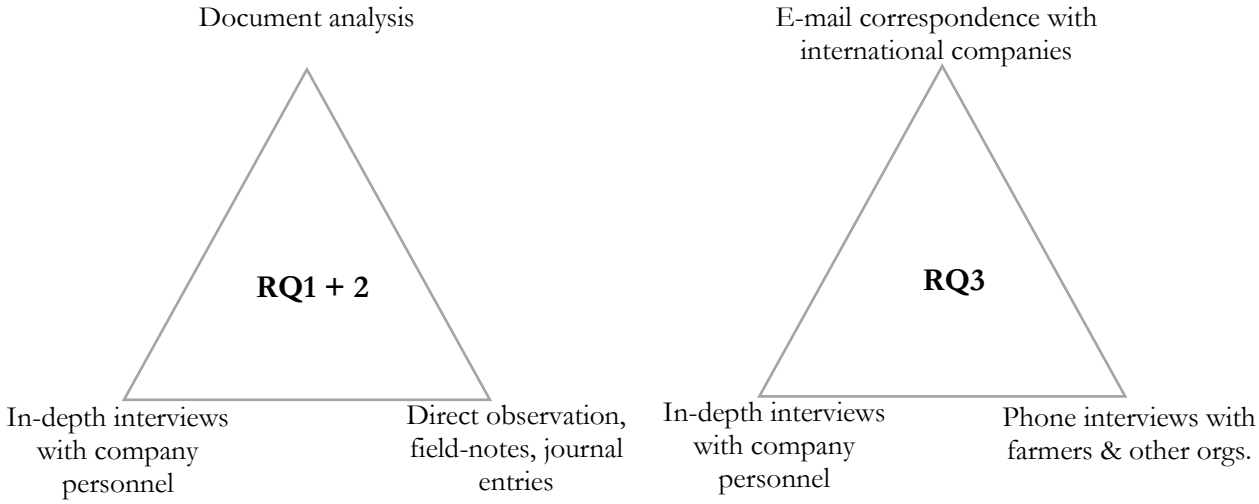

Figure 4-3: Data verification through triangulation

4.4. Methods for Data Analysis

Regarding methods for data analysis, qualitative data analysis, particularly content analysis of field notes, journal entries, transcribed interviews, and documents was conducted. Interviews were firstly transcribed. The transcripts were then coded and subsequently studied to look for common themes.

Similar codes were grouped into categories, which were then classified under four main themes (Cohen et al. 2007), as shown in the table below. The themes were then developed into what I refer to in this study as the FT discourses. For example, 'exporting olive oil' was labeled as a code, to which it was classified under the 'international markets' category under the Certification FT discourse. Content analysis was inductive; that is, searching for patterns and categories arising from the data itself (Lewis 2015). Additionally, a deductive process was used as well, were predefined categories related to the research questions, such as solidarity economy and ecological sustainability was used to account for the data (Savin-Baden and Major 2012). A table showing the four main themes that were identified, the main categories listed under them, and the total number of codes for each is included in Appendix E in addition to a table providing a breakdown of the number of codes listed under the themes for each company.

4.5. Limitations

The data collection methods employed and the high level of participation of companies added value to this study. However, this study was based on three weeks of research on site, with six interviews with companies, nine phone interviews with farmers, and three international companies. In addition, I was not able to visit the farms, nor was I able to personally talk to consumers or the international companies. Hence, the study did not document FT discourses in a comprehensive or systematic manner. Seeing as I was not able to conduct field research on the farms, farmers' perceptions and views may not have been fully communicated throughout study. Given the limited time for conducting my field research, lack of public transportation methods, and difficulty in accessing rural area in Palestine, I was unable to visit farms. This could be viewed as a shortcoming. The data would have changed had I been able to visit the farms and collect a larger sample size of farmers, consumers, and companies. It is thus important to convey that this study is not representative of FT perceptions surrounding Palestinian olive oil.

Although the aim of this study was not to understand how Palestinian farmers view Fairtrade networks, a related limitation of this study is that it did not explore the extent to which the circulation of FT olive oil impacts the Palestinian farmers. Given that I aimed to understand FT discourses within an SSE framework, a limitation of this study is hence not being able to include a higher number of farmers and consumers in the sample. Additionally, considering that most of the companies are export-focused, which I was not aware of prior to conducting my field work, contacting international consumers was rather difficult. As for the online questionnaire for consumers, I received a wide range of answers from people who were outside my targeted unit of analysis. Hence, a possible limitation is not asking for any demographic data of the respondents, and thus not being able to examine how many from each group of consumers responded to the survey.

Lastly, although I come from Palestine, and thus no language barriers existed, cultural barriers may have been a possible limitation as well. My gender and 'socio-economic status' may have been an impediment in encouraging farmers' participation, which is why I resorted to phone interviews.

The next chapters (five, six, and seven) present the results of the study and the discussion linking the results to the research aim.

5. Fairtrade Discourses in Palestine

> A 2-hour car ride offered me a tour of Palestinian nature, rural areas, and first signs of spring: hills of olive trees overlooking green pastures and exposed rocks; villages situated on tops of hills, surrounded by lush valleys of olive groves and green vegetation. I then met Daoud, who seemed timid at first but then explained to me that FT is not merely a marketing tool at Za'atar, but they take pride in the significant impact that the company has on the community and the Palestinian farmers working with them. And with that, the more interviews I had, the more I began to realize that each company had a different view or perception of fair-trade. For example, two days later, Mousa at Al-Shajar admitted that their company had a more political inclination and linked the idea of exporting fair trade products with solidarity to the Palestinian farmer who struggles in face of the Israeli occupation, which made me recall interview I had with Mohammad at Zayt, who admitted that although there is a political aspect to Fairtrade, it's more regarded as social investment project to better the lives of the community and the Palestinian economy (excerpt for field notes).

5.1. Overview of Fairtrade Discourses

In this section, different Fairtrade discourses observed in Palestine guide the presentation of this chapter, through which, RQ1 is addressed (what are the main social and ecological discourses that inform Palestinian FT olive oil production?). I begin this chapter by explaining what is meant by a FT discourse, how such discourses were identified, and the main characteristics and themes of them. In this manner, discourse analysis of FT is conducted by using the different discourses as a way to organize data. I adopt this cross-cutting framework in order to present the results of this study, and discuss each discourse from both an SSE and an ecological sustainability perspective. In this thesis, I refer to a discourse as a view of FT that can be adopted by a company or organization. It is also important to note that companies I interviewed do not fit into a specific discourse, but I classified the FT discourses as such according the main trends and themes of FT observed in Palestine.

By trying to answer the first research question and throughout the in-depth interviews with company personnel, I soon realized, that each company has a different view or perception of Fairtrade and has adopted a different discourse in its operations. Hence, as I analyzed the transcribed interviews, my field notes, and documents, I noted a link between the descriptive codes and categories and four main themes. These emerging themes were hence developed to form the different FT discourses that can be observed in Palestine. Figure 5-1 provides an overview of discourses and the percentage of

descriptive codes and categories linked to them. Although Fairtrade principles and understanding of FT as a network is universal, certain aspects or concepts within FT can emphasized, whereas others can be discarded, thereby forming distinct discourses of FT, as I elaborate on in this chapter. In this chapter, I argue that when understanding the insights of Palestinian agricultural food companies regarding the production of FT olive oil, their perceptions are influenced by the companies' own views and experiences in including agroecological and community-focused practices.

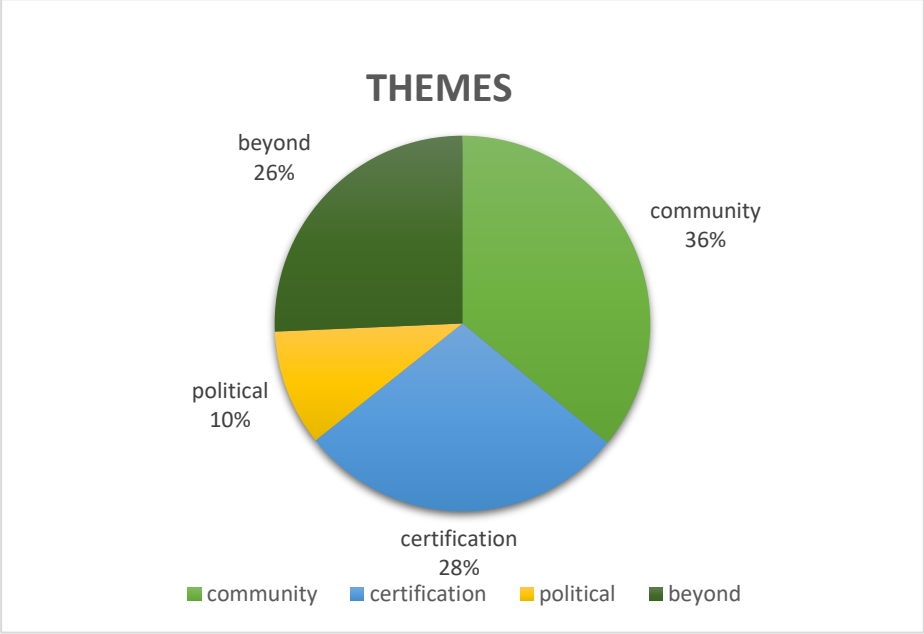

Figure 5-1: Main FT themes

5.2. Community Fairtrade Discourse

My first interview was with Ibrahim in a village close to my hometown. His son was waiting for me inside and gave me a tour of the factory. He then introduced me to his father who talked for most of the time, starting each conversation with an Arabic proverb like "ما حدا بحكي عن زيتو عكر", which means no-one would say that their olive is turbid. What stood out most to me was his sincerity and firm conviction of the work that he's doing. Not only did he portray himself as a successful businessman, but also as a strong believer and supporter of the work that he is doing. For instance, the main reason behind his motivation to produce FT products is to benefit the Palestinian farmer in his home village (excerpt from field notes).

In this section, the first discourse, labeled as the Community FT discourse is discussed. A theme that stood out in most interviews with the company personnel when asking about their motivations and drive towards producing FT products is to enhance the lives of the Palestinian community and the local economy. A sense of solidarity through community outreach programs, working with agricultural cooperatives in villages, and providing guidance to farmers has been a recurring trend throughout the interviews. For this reason, the community FT discourse maintains to be the most prominent discourse across interviewed companies in Palestine. The following figure (figure 5-2) provides an overview of main theme identified from the data, the main categories below it, and an example of three descriptive keywords highlighted under each category.

Figure 5-2: Overview of categories and keywords linked to the Community FT discourse

As can be seen in the previous figure, the three categories listed below this theme, which I developed and refer to as the Community FT discourse in my analysis, are the 'solidarity economy', 'cultural values', and 'local markets'. In this section, I argue that environmental values within this discourse are

translated into traditional sustainable agricultural practices that are incorporated in the 'cultural values' category, and a great emphasis on community participation, development, which are evident through the 'solidarity economy' and 'local markets' categories.

At the heart of the community Fairtrade discourse is the Palestinian farmer and his/her community. Hence, emphasis is put on farmers' support, whether it is in the form of providing guidance, training, workshops, or working directly with agricultural cooperatives in villages; thereby ultimately aiming to empower and enhance the livelihood of rural communities in Palestine.

5.3. Certification Fairtrade Discourse

> Fifteen Minutes into the interview with Mousa at Al-Shajar, we were interrupted by the acting director of Al-Shajar, Mustafa Jameel. He projected into how it's harmful for companies to claim that their products are Fairtrade if they are not certified. For him, certification is everything, especially 3rd party certification, as it shows credibility and demonstrates the high quality of their products to their consumers (excerpt from field notes).

In this section, the second discourse, labeled as the Certification FT discourse is discussed. I refer to the Certification discourse as the standard FT discourse, in which companies are Fairtrade certified by FLO, or are members of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO). In that sense, the primary focus of companies that have adopted this discourse is the regulations of Fairtrade, as well as organic certification regulations and standards. Although this is the most recognized discourse of Fairtrade, a distinction is made between this discourse and others seeing as some companies that I interviewed operate on a 'Fairtrade basis' but are not Fairtrade certified. This trend was observed in Palestine and is further discussed in the political Fairtrade chapter, as it is relevant to that discourse. The following figure (figure 5-3) provides an overview of main theme, certification FT, which was identified from the data, the main categories below it, and an example of three descriptive keywords highlighted under each category.

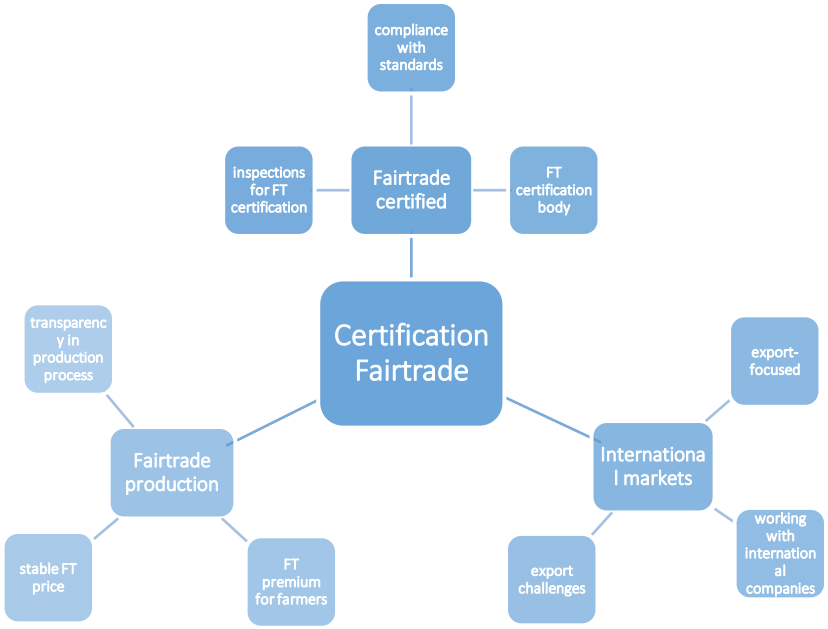

Figure 5-3: Overview of categories and keywords linked to the Certification FT discourse

As can be seen from the figure, this discourse can be characterized according to the main categories under it. The 'FT production' category refers to the principles advocated by the FT movement, such as paying farmers the FT premium price (Geysmans et al. 2017). On the other hand, the 'FT certified' category entails compliance with FT requirements and the technicalities of such requirements, whereas the international markets category entails companies' focus on export so as to abide by North-South trade relations that FT promotes. Therefore, I argue in this section that ecological and social considerations in this discourse are existent in ensuring that FT certification requirements, which necessitate fair payment to farmers and allude to taking care of the environment (principle ten of FT). Certification FT is hence distinguished from other discourses by focusing on exporting certified FT olive oil to international markets, complying with FT certification requirements, which entails that farmers receive the FT premium price and a stable income. This ties well into a global discourse derived from literature, as Moore notes that there are two different visions of Fairtrade: a working discourse and a challenge to orthodoxy (the conventional system of trading) (Moore 2004). Hence,

one can argue that two discourses of Fairtrade are distinguished: one that is characterized by the certification scheme, and the second that positions Fairtrade as an alternative trade movement discourse (Moore 2004).

5.4. Political Fairtrade Discourse

> What stood out most during my interview with Mousa is Al-Shajar's focus on marketing Fairtrade products abroad. Their political orientation is made very obvious through their practices. They realize that their product is more expensive than other organic and Fairtrade products, so they rely on marketing it as a Palestinian product (act of solidarity with the Palestinians). Additionally, their relationship with the farmers is through the cooperatives and organization they directly work with (excerpt from field notes).

In this section, the third discourse, labeled as the Political FT discourse is discussed. The categories listed below this theme, which is developed into the Political FT discourse, are 'production challenges', 'Israeli obstacles', and 'political aspects'. Production challenges refer to difficulties faced by companies, such as lack of local awareness regarding FT, preventing companies from accessing local markets, as reaffirmed by previous studies (El-Jazairi 2010). Israeli obstacles refer to difficulties specifically caused by the Israeli military occupation, impeding the companies' export and trade opportunities, whereas 'political aspects' encompass companies' motivations in attaching political values to the circulation of their FT olive oil products following such harsh challenges by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Political considerations cannot be avoided when examining FT networks in Palestine. Although only 10% of the coded data are of a political nature, this Political discourse emerges due to the significance of the political context and its influence on the FT operations of Palestinian agri-food companies. In this regard, this discourse is specific to the case of Palestine and draws inspiration from Meneley's characterization of extra-virgin FT olive oil, as she characterizes the embedded emotions in the Palestinian olive oil product as the blood, sweat, and tears of Palestinian farmers and the sympathy of the ethical consumer abroad who buys it out of solidarity (Meneley 2011).

- **competitive**

As shown in figure 5-4, the political FT discourse considers obstacles facing Palestinian companies - that are both occupational challenges and those placed upon by the Israeli occupation - as motivations to exporting high quality Palestinian FT olive oil to international markets. A sense of solidarity, that was once seen in the lens of a solidarity economy framework and the community FT discourse, now transforms to become one of political potential, thereby calling upon the solidarity with the Palestinian cause and Palestinian farmers encountering unjust obstacles in the face of the Israeli occupation. As for ecological considerations, they are translated into preserving the land and helping farmers remain on their farms as a form resistance against the occupation. This view of political considerations is aligned with Renard's reasoning of the transformative political potential of FT, as she links between the FT movement and political solidarity, emphasizing that the movement originally emerged in the context of political movements against neo-imperialism to support politically marginalized people (Renard 2003).

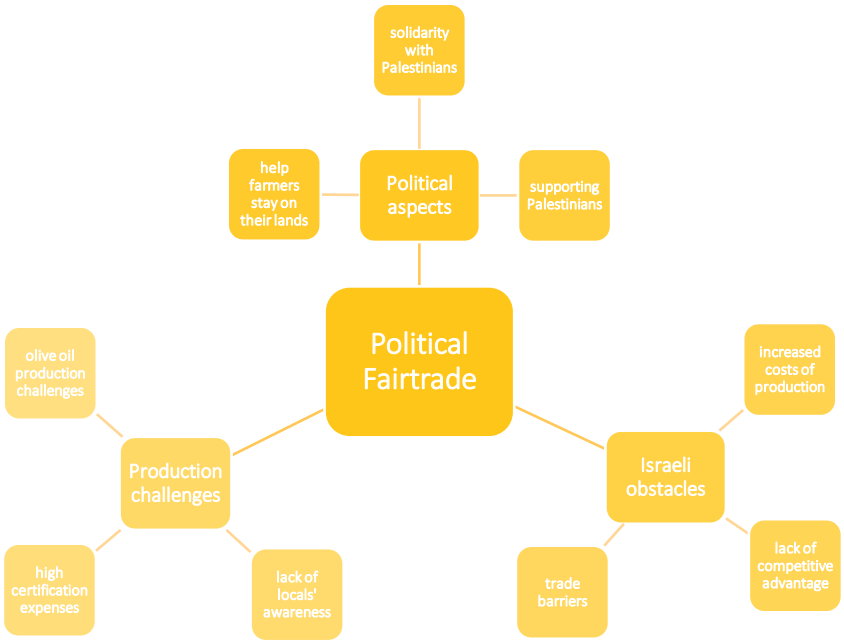

Figure 5-4: Overview of categories and keywords linked to the Political FT discourse

5.5. Beyond Fairtrade Discourse

> Za'atar's focus on both FT and organic production is evident, and they realize that FT is not sufficient in achieving environmental sustainability, but the company's values enable them to aspire and achieve that (excerpt from field notes).

In this section, the fourth and last discourse, labeled as the Beyond FT discourse, is discussed. As previously mentioned, none of the companies interviewed belong to one specific discourse, as these discourses provide an overview of current FT discourses. With that in mind, I argue that this discourse is distinguished by the previous ones by being the 'ideal' FT discourse, or the one that companies should aspire to.

Daoud at Za'atar remarked: "FT is much more than the certification. The certification is just a tool to make sure that our values and principles are aligned…So FT is an approach, path and not an end goal that we seek towards. Our aim is higher and more than just a FT certification." The Beyond FT entails aspiring towards more than just meeting FT certification requirements and encompasses both ecological and social considerations.

As several companies remarked that their operations expand beyond the realm of FT networks, I started to question whether a fourth discourse of FT should exist. When asked about the link between ecological sustainability and FT, some companies admitted that they do not see a direct connection, whereas others contended that they go beyond what is required of a FT certified company so as to include agroecological practices and ecological sustainability values in their operations. As follows, the Beyond FT discourse includes elements of the Certification FT discourse in addition to organic certified regulations, ecological sustainability, political and community values. This is shown in the following diagram, as the three categories identified for this theme are 'ecological sustainability', which touches upon organic certification requirements, 'environmental challenges' present in Palestine with regards to olive oil production, and 'sustainable production', which touches upon companies'

understanding of environmental sustainability. Figure 5-5 provides an overview of the Beyond FT discourse, its three main categories under it and keywords identified from the coded data.

Figure 5-5: Overview of categories and keywords linked to the Beyond FT discourse

5.6. Discussion of Fairtrade Discourses

In order to answer the first RQ, I first provided an overview of the different FT discourses observed in Palestine, which I analyze in the following chapter. Therefore, in this section, I discuss the implications of these FT discourse in light of social and ecological considerations. The following chapter elaborates more on how the companies integrate such considerations in production and sale practices, and why are there differences between the discourses, thereby addressing RQ2.

As can be seen, the different interviewed companies drew from different values and characteristics of the FT discourses such that these values were aligned with the companies' own values and experiences. For instance, a company that has a political inclination would link its motivations in exporting FT to conveying a message of solidarity with Palestine. In this case, whereas one might expect ecological considerations to become overshadowed by the company's prioritization of political aspects, I contend that these ecological considerations were rather translated into encouraging farmers to stay on their land and take care of it, thereby promoting land preservation and peaceful resistance against Israel, a

view that is shared by Meneley, as she touches upon the values embedded in the Palestinian FT olive oil bottle and sympathy of the consumer abroad as a motivation for buying it (Meneley 2008).

Hence, community solidarity and farmers' support appear to be a common theme between the political FT discourse and the community FT discourse. In the case of the latter discourse, ecological considerations are also translated into promoting traditional sustainable agriculture (Maragelo 2008), as most companies maintain that traditional Palestinian agriculture is harmonious with sustainable agriculture. This view is in line with literature on agroecology, as some scholars content that agroecology is oftentimes based on different movements focused on traditional agricultural practices, sustainable agroecological practices, such as intercropping, crop-rotation, and companion planting, can hence be viewed as sustainable and traditional agricultural practices (Wezel et al. 2009).

On the other hand, some companies refer to the FT certification as the most notable discourse of FT. In the case of such companies with a drive towards producing certified organic and FT, such ecological and social considerations are limited to meeting the requirements for FT and organic certifications, rendering such values mere quantifiable targets. In spite of this, some companies admit that although FT and organic certifications are pertinent, they realize their shortcomings in advancing ecological and social considerations.

In essence, when attempting to understand the perceptions of Palestinian agricultural food companies regarding the production of FT olive oil, their perceptions and views are influenced by the companies' own views and experiences in including agroecological and community-focused practices. A company's perception of FT is hence subject to how it defines its mission and core interests. If a company views itself as a for-profit marketing and trading company, it then views FT as a marketing tool and an opportunity to access international markets through the certification, which is a view commonly advocated in literature (Podhorsky 2015;Renard 2003). Companies' motivations in

including FT practices within their operations also differ depending on their core values and objectives. A company would hence view FT within a social agenda context if it is a social investment project primarily focused on community development and CSA.

The next chapter delves more into details concerning the companies' profiles and the ways in which these discourses differ across the companies' practices.

6. Integrating Fairtrade Discourses into Company Practices

> He smiled as he was reminiscing about the 'good old days' when traditional agricultural was more sustainable. He told me that the Palestinian farmer, who cultivated the olive tree 2000 years ago, worked in the land and planted the olive trees, and had chickpeas or lentils planted between the olives, raised chicken and sheep there as well. It was a full circle, there was food security from the land. Palestine is famous for hummus and falafel because they used to plant these legumes between the olives. Za'atar aims to achieve just that: use FT as a means of reestablishing traditional sustainable agriculture for Palestinian farmers to earn a livelihood (excerpt from field notes).

In this chapter, I address the second RQ, that is, understanding how Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil companies differently integrate social and ecological considerations in their work. In order to comprehend how ecological and social discourses fit into the companies' FT discourses, I first provide a description of the six different companies I interviewed by outlining each company's profile. As such, I can then draw comparisons and identify the differences between the FT discourses. It is important to note that although the names of the companies and personnel are pseudonyms, the information stated in the following section is based on the interviews, field notes, journal entries, and document analysis of the companies. Lastly, analysis of the different FT discourses in this chapter is examined through the SSE framework and ecological sustainability, through which I highlight that the Beyond FT discourse is the ideal FT discourse.

6.1. Company Profile

6.1.1. Sage

Sage was the first company I interviewed, which was with Ibrahim. The company is situated in a village close to the city of Ramallah. It is a family owned business established in 1994. The company was initially focused on beverage production, but started producing FT olive oil out of coincidence. However, Sage was motivated to continue marketing olive oil after seeing the extent to which the sale has benefited the farmers in the village. It operates on a FT basis, but is not FT certified. As such, Sage started a cooperative for the village and now works with farmer organizations there in order to make sure that all farmers are satisfied. A sense of community solidarity is evident in their different

lines of production, from beverages to olive oil. As can be seen in figure 6-1, 44% of the coded keywords for Sage correspond to the Community FT discourse, thereby rendering this discourse as the most prominent FT discourse for Sage.

6.1.2. Za'atar

Za'atar is one of the largest companies I interviewed that specializes in only certified FT and organic products. I interviewed Daoud at Za'atar's headquarters. It is a Palestinian social entrepreneurship project that produces various Palestinian specialties from small-scale farmers from more than fifty-two villages in Palestine. It does not supply to local markets, but is exclusively export-focused. It supplies bulk and packaged olive oil to Europe, the US, Canada, Australia, Asia, and the Middle East. Its olive oil is organic and FT certified. Za'atar primarily aims to create opportunities for Palestinian farmers and communities. In addition, it aims to re-establish traditional sustainable agriculture as a means for Palestinian farmers to earn a livelihood. As can be seen in figure 6-1, 34% of the coded keywords for Za'atar correspond to the Beyond FT discourse, thereby rendering this discourse as the most prominent FT discourse for Za'atar given that is focuses on both social and ecological values of FT.

6.1.3. Thyme

My third interview was with Zuhair, the manager of Thyme. Thyme is a small-scale social enterprise that markets Palestinian agricultural products in order to improve the farmers' economic situation. Thyme primarily works with different farmers' cooperatives. These cooperatives provide workshop and train farmers. Although this is a small company, their main interest/ focus is of a solidarity nature; that is, assisting small-scale farmers, creating more job opportunities for them, and helping farmer communities. Thyme works on a FT basis, but is no longer FT certified. As can be seen in figure 6-

1, 35% of the coded keywords for Thyme correspond to the Community FT discourse, thereby rendering this discourse as the most prominent FT discourse for Thyme.

6.1.4. Al-Shajar

On the same day as my interview with Thyme, I met Mousa from Al-Shajar. Al-Shajar is an investment and agricultural marketing company, that is private shareholder and owned by the Agricultural Development Association. It was founded in order to promote, market, and manufacture Palestinian agricultural products, and now exports its products to several organizations in Europe, USA, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and U.A.E, in addition to a small share going towards the local market. Its focus is to promote sustainable development in Palestinian rural areas through adopting the FT certification. As can be seen in figure 6-1, 32% of the coded keywords for Al-Shajar correspond to the Certification FT discourse. However, the political component was emphasized during the interviews and through the document analysis, to which I argue that Al-Shajar adopts concepts from both the Certification and the Political FT discourse.

6.1.5. Zayt

A few days later, I travelled to another city to interview Mohammad at Zayt, who is a quality assurance engineer at the company. Zayt is a medium-scale private company that offers a wide range of Palestinian agricultural products to both local and international markets. It follows the principles of social investment and focuses on promoting the welfare of the Palestinian community. FT production is not the mere focus of the company, as it has another branch supplying different oils to the local market. Zayt mainly works with cooperatives and helps them establish projects and activities for farmer communities and villages. I was also given a tour of the factory, which gave me a clear indication of their attention to quality and complying with organic and FT certification requirements. As such and as shown in figure 6-1, 30% of the coded keywords for Zayt correspond to the

Certification FT discourse, thereby rendering this discourse as the most prominent FT discourse for Zayt; it however incorporates elements from the Beyond FT discourse (28%) and forms them as the baseline of it's operations (through its line of organic production and community support).

6.1.6. Chickpeas

Lastly, I had a short but informative interview with Abed at Chickpeas. It is a non-profit company that focuses on shortening the link between Palestinian farmers and consumers. FT principles related to social justice and environmental-friendly practices are very evident, which is why they refuse FT certifications, exporting outside, and instead focus on improving the Palestinian society as well as increasing awareness within consumers regarding FT values. Chickpeas' interest in sustainable agriculture is also evident, and is regarded as one of the core values of Fairtrade for them. They teach farmers the adopt 'environmental agriculture' practices, which is an alternative model of agriculture that they seek to advocate on a local and global level. Thus, and as can be seen in figure 6-1, As can be seen in figure 6-1, 43% of the coded keywords for Chickpeas correspond to the Community FT discourse, but also incorporates Beyond FT values (24%), thereby rendering both discourses as prominent FT discourses for Chickpeas.

Figure 6-1 provides a breakdown of the different Fairtrade discourses identified for each interviewed company, and highlights how much each company corresponds to which discourse. Thus, the figure explains why the companies do not fit into a specific discourse but include elements from different

ones. I developed the figures from the coded data and categories, as mentioned in the methodology chapter.

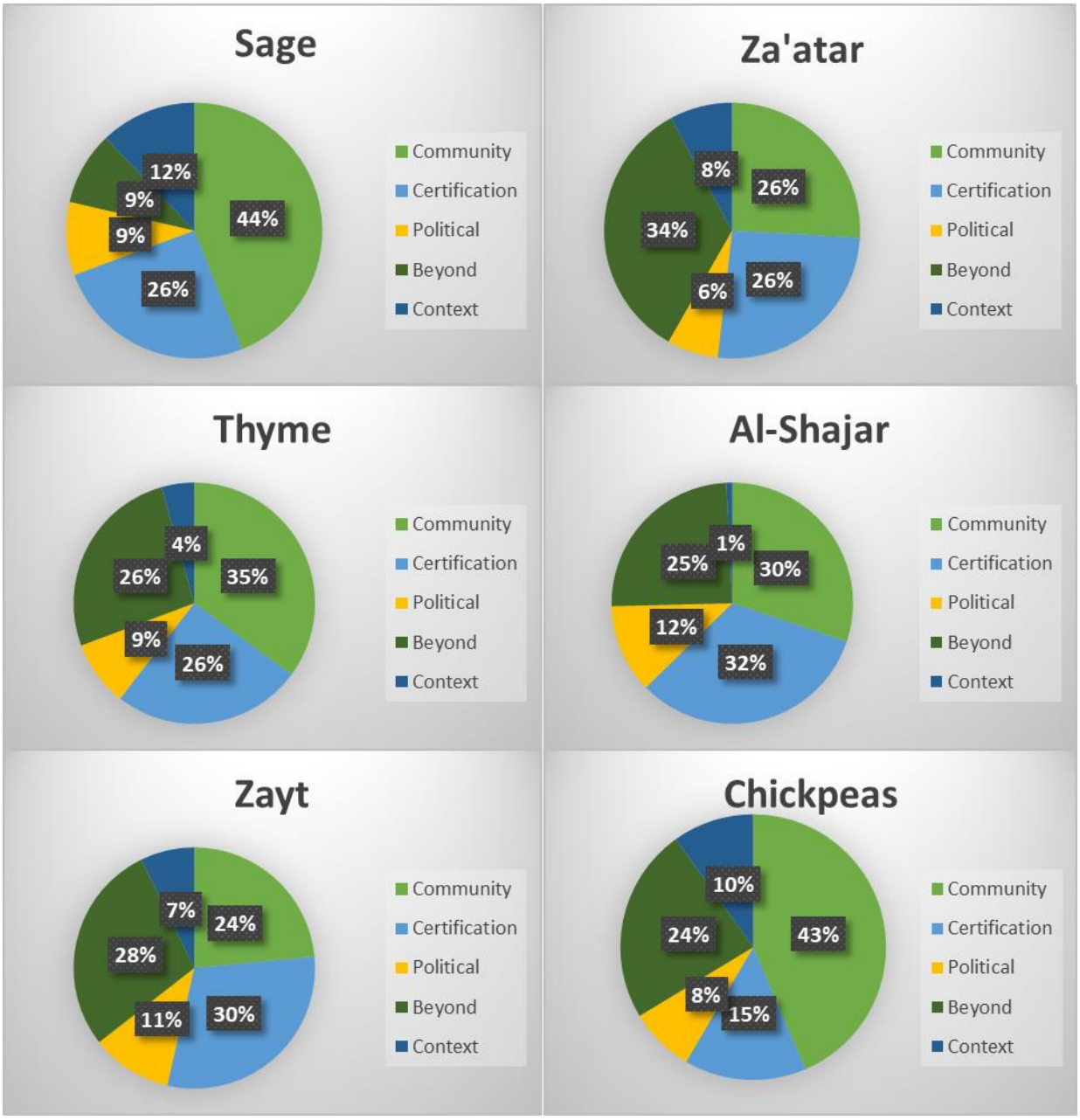

Figure 6-1. Different Fairtrade discourses identified for each interviewed company

6.2. FT Discourses and the Social and Solidarity Economy

As previously discussed in chapter three of the conceptual and theoretical framework, the SSE recognizes non-economic concerns related to social justice, collective welfare, cooperation, democracy, and gender equality (Ahmed 2015). Although the SSE incorporates more concepts, these are the main themes that I employed when analyzing the different FT discourses in Palestine.

In this section, I argue that for the Community FT discourse, social considerations and solidarity form the baseline of this discourse, as the focus is on community development and farmers' support. As for the Certification FT, values of SSE are evident through complying with FT standards and principles, thereby ensuring that farmers receive a fair income. On the other hand, the Political FT discourse broadens the concept of community solidarity by using FT as a tool to communicate a message of solidarity with the Palestinian community. Since the Beyond FT discourse represents the ecological sustainability version of FT, I only examine this discourse as a potential for an ideal FT discourse, which is why I examine this discourse in the discussion section of this chapter.

6.2.1. Community FT

Companies, such as Sage, Thyme, and Chickpeas incorporate various values of the Community FT model in their practices. What these three companies share in common is operating on a FT basis, but not FT certified. As such, community development and solidarity serve as an impetus for these small-scale companies.

In this discourse, there is a clear understanding of the role of Fairtrade in promoting community development. As Daoud told me: "Za'atar pays fair prices for the agricultural products it buys from the farmers, which are higher than market prices. And above this price, the company pays a price called the FT premium, which is the added FT price above the market price, which is used for farmers to invest in local communities." In this section, themes of cooperation, community development, and

democracy advocated in the SSE framework are related to the identified characteristics of the Community FT discourse (Sahakian and Dunand 2015; Bergeron et al. 2015).

Whether it is in the form of cooperation with the agricultural cooperatives, as Mousa claims: "Al-Shajar mainly works with agricultural organizations and cooperatives that have projects to train farmers on how to produce high quality olive oil", or cooperation with the local town similar to what Ibrahim told me: "it started in 2005 when I invited [locals] to sell their products at the fest, and it was a great success. Sage then started to market their products here at the company. Now, we market it at take 10% from their sales. We don't have anything to do with these products … but it's nice to help the local people here", the SSE value of cooperation, as stressed upon by Ahmed (2015) is very much evident in the Community discourse. As can be observed in my fieldwork, there is an attention to the welfare of the farmers and the local communities seeing as the farmer is the primary focus of this discourse. For this reason, many of the interviewed companies engage in social outreach programs in communities and villages, as exemplified in the quote below.

> "Our aim is to expand and serve the farmers. But the biggest measure of success for us is the impact fair trade and our company's activity would have on our farmers. Za'atar has provided more than 40 scholarships for farmers' kids for bachelor's studies at Palestinian universities. We've also provided grants for local communities, like the municipality of […]. We have also helped rehabilitate schools, like a school in […], a girls' high school. We also organize many activities in local communities, but the biggest impact we have is that on farmers and their livelihood" (Daoud, Za'atar).

Hence, farmers' support can also be in the form of supporting the local community through scholarships to their children, and community development projects. Some companies go a step further in incorporating solidarity economy values by associating productivity with social needs, as can be seen in the previous quote. Associating productivity with social needs is a core value of the SSE, as emphasized by Ahmed (2015). What is also observable in this discourse is a direct relationship between consumers and producers, which is a view stressed upon by the SSE framework as well, as Neamtan argue in favor of accentuating the social economy through shorter links in the production,

calling for an 'alternative form' of globalization (Neamtan 2002). For instance, Mousa from Al-Shajar remarked: "We are in constant communication relationship with the farmers. We bring in the importers … who visited our farmers and cooperatives and sat with them. We ensure that there is a direct relationship between the producer and the consumer, and that they talk to each other and understand each other's conditions."

In a similar vein, Raed from Zayt maintained that:

> "our aim or origin of our company was a social investment project, which means that we want to serve our community and provide society with services more than just our regular line of business. Yes, we're traders, marketers, exporters, and salesmen, but we also want to do something that has value to the Palestinian economy, the Palestinian case, something that makes us feel that we have offered something to our people through our position."

In some cases, the company's core values are directly linked to community development and helping the Palestinian economy, as shown in the previous quote. From the previous examples, focus on community development through farmer support and guidance is evident. In order to achieve that, a sense of cooperation across the production chain is upheld. In addition, a second main characteristic of the Community discourse is associating FT with cultural values and local norms. Some companies tie their FT networks to local markets, local knowledge, and traditional agricultural practices. In fact, some contend that a successful discourse of FT exists in their company's operations because FT principles tie well into Palestinian culture and traditions. For instance, Abed from Adel explained the importance of selling olive: "The olive tree originally has a civilized, traditional, cultural, economic, and social aspect. It is a very strong tree that's very important for the Palestinian people."

As can be seen in the two following quotes, some companies find that FT principles are well assimilated within Palestinian culture and traditions.

> "Reports on Palestinian agricultural crops say that if I had a land with olive trees but don't have the capacity to harvest it, I can find a family that helps me. This family will get part of the harvest – almost 33% as a form of salary for olive picking. When Za'atar compared this with Fairtrade standards, we found out that its fair for the family to receive 33%. There is another common tradition in Palestine; if a land owner is not able to tend to the land, he can give it to someone who can do that for the whole year (from plowing,

> trimming the trees, and harvesting), and would take 50% of the harvest. When we compared this, we found it to be in compliance with global Fairtrade standards. In Palestine, we noticed that there is no child labor, children under 18 in the field. A lot of the Fairtrade principles are already adopted here in Palestine, so it was easy to adopt fair trade practices in Palestine" (Daoud, Za'atar).

Zuhair from Thyme: "They [auditors] came during the harvest season and saw a kid on a tree picking the olives, so they wrote down that there is child labor. We then explained to them that this is not child labor, the olive harvest is like a festival, children join and play."

Hence, Za'atar and Thyme did not only maintain that FT practices are upheld in Palestinian communities, they are also an important aspect of the culture; rendering the SSE value of equal participation of men and women in economic activity an essential component of the Community discourse (Bergeron et al. 2015). Democracy, as a core concept of the SSE, (Kawano 2013), is also valued by some companies, as shown in the following quote by Mousa: "As Al-Shajar company, we don't go to the farmer and say this year the olive oil tin is 20 shekels, we don't do that. They come, tell us what they want, we tell them what we have to offer, and we decide together on the price with all the cooperatives together."

Despite the fact that FT pertains to South-North trade, a third common characteristic of the Community discourse is its focus on local markets and communities, as some of the companies, like Sage, Thyme, and Chickpeas, operate on a FT basis but are not FT certified. Some companies are interested in local markets as a means to increase Palestinians' awareness of Fairtrade. Chickpeas built on that by solely focusing on the local market and refusing export, as Abed told me:

> "When Chickpeas adopted Fairtrade, it aimed to build a new Fairtrade discourse in the world. It's not about buying from Somalia and selling to Paris. We can have Fairtrade in our local market … We are unique in being the first discourse in the world that adopted Fairtrade in local markets. That's why we are not interested in outside markets, we don't export."

In this sense, Chickpeas adopts a FT discourse similar to what is discussed by Renard, as she considers that 'FT as a movement' and as a 'certification' exist as different FT discourses. FT as a movement reverts to the principles of FT and highlights relating to social justice, fair exchanges, and cooperation

(Renard 2003). A focus on local markets and community participation is a view shared among other SSE scholars as well, as Rakopoulos recognizes the significance of the grassroots cooperatives that formed during critical periods of capitalist recession in Greece (Rakopoulos 2014).

In essence, three main characteristics of this discourse are farmers' and community support, affiliation to Palestinian culture, and attention to local markets, which were deduced from the identified categories related to the theme, and are very much aligned with – even overlap - values of the solidarity economy framework, as shown in the following quotes.

> "What motivates us is our main message towards the farmer, the producers, and Palestinian women. We use FT not as a marketing tool, but as a development tool to improve Palestinian agricultural, Palestinian productivity, production, and also strengthen and improve upon the Palestinian farmer so that we can market their products" (Daoud, Za'atar).

> "We are the only connecting them [farmers and consumers]. There are no markets, consumers, and stores. We take on a huge responsibility and a big risk by buying all products that may not get sold. We make it more convenient for the farmer by taking the products from their farm, and deliver to homes of consumers" (Abed, Chickpeas).

As can be seen in the two previous quotes, values of community participation and development, cooperation, and shortening the link between consumers and producers represent the main motivations of such companies integrating values of the Community FT discourse (Kawano 2013).

6.2.2. Certification FT

Companies such as Al-Shajar and Zayt correspond with the Certification FT discourse, as both companies are medium-scale export-oriented marketing companies, and require the certification as a tool to access international markets and gain recognition of their products.

Seeing as the certification discourse complies with FT standards and principles, ensuring that farmers receive a fair income constitutes an essential component of it. In this manner, improving the livelihood of farmers and their community may be achieved, which is a value stressed upon by the SSE, seeking to promote community development (Neamtan 2002). This is exemplified in the following quotes.

> "For FT olive oil last year…we paid them 28 shekels for the kilo plus 2 shekels premium. 28 shekels is the minimum price, premium was 2, which means that for every ton they sold, they receive a premium price of 2,000 shekel. This money goes to the cooperative, which meets and decides what to do with this money towards the community…They meet and democratically decide on what to do with it for the community, it can be an activity as well…. Most of them do nice things for their villages" (Mousa from Al-Shajar).

Daoud from Za'atar says: "The company pays fair prices for the agricultural products it buys from the farmers, which are higher than market prices. And above this price, the company pays a price called the FT premium, which is the added FT price above the market price, which is used for farmers to invest in local communities."

It can be seen that companies recognize the significance and impact the FT premium has on farmer communities (Moore 2004), and add value to it by stressing upon the value of democracy and community participation, as advocated by the SSE framework (Ahmed 2015).

In addition, complying with Fairtrade standards entails ensuring that all principles are met, including no child labor, social justice, gender equality, which are also values advocated within the SSE framework (Bergeron et al. 2015). Some of the interviewed companies, like Za'atar, assert their role in achieving that, such as Daoud, who says: "FT specifies to have equal treatment of workers, a safe working environment, pay farmers and workers fair wages and price for the farmers' effort, and pay the premium price to the farmers."

Furthermore, this discourse sees exporting Fairtrade products to international market as a core constituent, as stressed upon by FT scholars (Raynolds 2002; Raynolds 2000). As a result, some of the Palestinian companies, like Al-Shajar, see exporting their olive oil products to 'Western markets' as a tool to improve the local economy and the quality of olive oil: "We support the Palestinian farmer to produce products of high quality, which enables us to enter international markets."

A link to the SSE framework is made through the empowerment and support of farmers by way of exporting their products to international markets, as advocated by Jaroz (2008), - which is a view

shared by the Community FT discourse as well - as can be seen in the following quote by Ibrahim: "Sage benefited the farmer, even though it's a small difference, the farmers are happy to see that their product was exported and reached Japan, the US and the whole world."

How can the regulations and the certification requirements essential to the discourse be explained within the SSE? The regulations required for becoming FT certified are a transparent method to ensure that farmers are well-supported and not taken advantage of. As Mohammad explained to me, Zayt views FT as: "a record that we paid the farmer more for the olive oil. For example, the price of extra virgin olive oil is 25 shekels. We'd give the farmer 0.5 euro, around 2 shekels extra, which is called the premium price. So instead of it being 25, it becomes 27, or 28 for one kilo of olive oil." Transparency and alternative trade in economic activity is a value stressed upon by the SSE, as Neamtan calls upon an alternative model of economic development that may be adopted according to the political, historical or cultural sensitivities (Neamtan 2002).

On the other hand, a possible shortcoming of this model is limiting its operations within the certification and discrediting other companies that operate within the same networks without being FT certified, as claimed by the head of Al-Shajar: "There's no such thing as FT without being a member of the WFTO, there's also FLO. The importance of WFTO is through the membership. Every year, the company is audited, and they check if this person is following the FT principles, you get audited every 1-2 years."

In essence, the SSE values of farmer support, alternative trade, and transparency in the production chain are translated into complying with FT certification requirements (Ahmed 2015). However, when examining farmer – consumer relations in light of the SSE, I argue that the Certification FT discourse falls short in promoting a shorter link between them, as paperwork required for the certification may undermine the type of interpersonal trust promoted by the SSE and the Community FT discourse.

6.2.3. Political FT

Al-Shajar is a company that stresses upon the political component of its operations. Although it corresponds with the Certification FT discourse more, as shown in figure 6-1, the political orientation of the company is employed as a tool to market its olive oil product abroad; and by gaining recognition of its product through the FT certification, recognition of the Palestinian struggle and occupation is achieved. This view is further corroborated by Meneley (2011).

Within the SSE framework, the Political FT discourse extends the concept of community solidarity to communicate the significance of solidarity with the Palestinian community from a Northern consumer's perspective. In this manner, elements of the SSE that are of a political nature are most emphasized in this discourse, as emphasized by Neamtan (2002). The main objective of this discourse states that solidarity with the Palestinians can be promoted by buying FT Palestinian olive oil, rendering it an added value, as evident in the following quote by Mousa: "Al-Shajar uses the Palestinian product to send a message. We take the Palestinian olive oil to promotion tours in Europe and explain the story of this product, and what is happening here in Palestine because of the occupation."

As previously mentioned in chapter three of the conceptual framework, the SSE carriers political elements of a transformative nature, such as calling upon a transformation of the current economic system to include different measures of economic productivity (Ahmed 2015; Neamtan 2002). In a similar vein, the Political FT discourse takes into account the different challenges faced by the Palestinian farmer, and uses it as an impetus to circulate FT olive to international markets. Most of the companies went into detail about the various challenges faced by the farmer in producing olive oil as well as the company in exporting their products to outside of Palestine. The following quotes provide highlights of these challenges.

> "We can't control the borders. With every shipment we send, we first have to wait for permission from the Israeli side. From an economic aspect, when we send out containers from the port; as Palestinians, we're

> not allowed to fill them all the way up. I don't know if you know about this, but we're only allowed 160 cm, while the capacity of the container is 220 cm high, so we lose 60 cm in height. This means that we lose 1/3 of the container's area. And we pay a lot of fees when we export from the port in Ashdod or Haifa …This is one of the things that increases the product's cost of production" (Mousa, Al-Shajar)

> "There are challenges gaining access to the land, there are lands next to settlements and Israeli military bases which prevent the farmers from reaching their land. There are a lot of lands behind the Israeli separation wall, and only through permits can farmers get to their land that are issued by the Israeli occupation. And not all farmers will get these permits, and even the ones that do are able to go to their land only on specific days" (Daoud, Za'atar).

The previous quotes provide a preview of the challenges faced by Palestinian companies in exporting FT olive; but such challenges also provide a motivation and an incentive for consumers to buy their products, as the high price is justified and tied to the obstacles faced by the farmers. As such, the supposition is that the Northern consumer sympathizes with the Palestinian community, and thus buys their products as a form of solidarity and political opposition to the current situation faced by the Palestinian farmer (Meneley 2014), as Zuhair claims: "they love to support us because they know that it's fine to pay more than market price and in turn help Palestine, the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian farmer."

In addition to sending a message of solidarity through the sale of FT products, this discourse also perceives the obligation that companies have towards their fellow farmers. Local solidarity and supporting farmers is hence an essential value in the Political FT discourse, which is a view shared with the SSE, as Ahmed underscores the political component of the solidarity economy and the transformative potential of it (Ahmed 2015). As explained to me by Mousa from Al-Shajar:

> "We use it [FT] as political aspect. Do you see now? These obstacles that we encounter add spice to our work. It's not like we're complaining, they're normal, and we got used to them, and continue because it's important for someone to play that role. If no one does this, then there are large portions of Palestinian farmers that would lose a big part of their income, many farmers that we work with solely rely on agriculture as their main source of income, so we can't leave them by themselves."

A final characteristic of the Political FT discourse in relation to the SSE framework is its emphasis on strengthening Northern Consumer–Palestinian producer relations, which contributes to the Palestinian cause by raising international awareness. As underlined by Mousa from Al-Shajar, their

reasoning behind going to international venues and FT marketing exhibitions with a few Palestinian farmers is due to the political orientation of the company:

> "People are becoming more and more aware. Some communities would know the general idea of the conflict but do not know the details, so that's why the presence of the farmer is very important. I imagine that there is a lot of interest in knowing what's happening, which is obvious through the questions to the farmer that's with us."

In essence, the main motif behind the Political Fairtrade discourse is sending a message of support and solidarity with the Palestinian community facing numerous obstacles in face of the Israeli occupation, encouraging farmers to stay on their lands and resist, which is a view shared by Meneley (2011). These values of resistance tie well into the transformative potential of the SSE framework that favors social justice, equality, and strengthening consumer-producer trade relations (Ahmed 2015). As emphasized by Kawano, the SSE reaffirms values such as anti-imperialism, justice for all, and globalization of solidarity, which are values expressed by the Political FT discourse as well (Kawano 2013).

6.3. FT Discourses and Ecological Sustainability

As previously discussed in chapter two of the review of literature, links between ecological sustainability and Fairtrade are made evident. For instance, in order to explain their argument, Low and Davenport refer to FLO's definition of Fairtrade: "Fair Trade… contributes to *sustainable development* by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South" (Low and Davenport 2005, 149).

Hence, the link between Fairtrade and ecological sustainability is made clear, as sustainable development links the social, economic, and ecological aspects of production, trade, and consumption. Low and Davenport conclude that Fairtrade plays a role in increasing people's ability to defend their rights, ranging from fair pay to the environment (Low and Davenport 2005).

Most importantly, Makita makes a crucial point that although the organic agriculture movements exhibit clear links to environmental conservation, the Fairtrade movement goes one step further by linking environmental conservation to poverty reduction- two objectives of rural development in the South (Makita 2016). In this study, I employ Matika's understanding of the link between Fairtrade and ecological sustainability in my analysis of Fairtrade discourses in Palestine.

Furthermore, in this section, I argue that for the Community FT discourse, the ecological sustainability aspect is incorporated into the promotion traditional sustainable agricultural methods (Wezel et al. 2009). As for the Certification FT discourse, ecological sustainability is touched upon through the compliance with FT certification requirements, which allude to minimum agroecological practices (Raynolds 2002), whereas the Political discourse stresses the importance of tending the land as a form of peaceful resistance against the Israeli occupation (Meneley 2008). The Beyond FT discourse represents the ecological sustainability 'ideal' version of FT, and thus is not examined in this section.

6.3.1. Community FT

An ecological sustainability lens can be applied when characterizing the Community Fairtrade discourse as well. Seeing as the discourse's chief focus is the community, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a key component. It is achieved through direct communication with the farmers and the company, thereby shortening the link between farmers and producers and promoting an equitable direct relationship between all parties of the value chain.

Through providing guidance and training workshops to the farmers on proper agricultural methods to harvesting olives and producing olive oil, companies, like Za'atar, Thyme and Zayt, ensure agroecological practices are being incorporated. Examples of providing guidance and training workshops to farmers are provided below. Abed from Chickpeas: "Our strength as a company lies in connecting guidance with marketing, and fair trade."

> "In order to produce high quality olive oil, there's a circular process, if the chain is broken at one point, it will all collapse. For example, you start training them in the field at the injection process, how to trim the tree, how to pick the olives properly, how to carry the olives from the field to the mill, how often should they carry the olives to the mill" (Zuhair from Thyme).

In some cases, as shown in the following quote by Mohammad from Zayt, the role of the cooperatives is emphasized in this guidance process, thereby underlying the significance of CSA in achieving ecological sustainability (Cone and Myhre 2000).

> "The cooperative follows and supervises the work during the harvest season, helps with the milling process, gives guidance and support to farmers. If it sees that farmers are using chemical pesticides, and if the cooperative is organic certified, then it helps them with that: how much to use, when's the time to use natural fertilizers, and things like that" (Mohammad, Zayt).

> "Our role is to nurture and promote the concept of Fairtrade for farmers, women, help them calculate prices right, get a fair payment, and we also raise consumer awareness that we should help farmers and economically empower them because they provide us with healthy food. We connected the consumer with the producer based on Fairtrade principles" (Abed, Chickpeas).

Therefore, the intersection between the Community Fairtrade discourse and ecological sustainability aspect is the incorporation of traditional sustainable agricultural methods that are claimed to be entrenched in Palestinian culture: "Traditionally, the Palestinian farmer was renowned for adopting different agricultural practices that are environmentally friendly and sustainable" (Daoud, Za'atar). Hence, the Community FT discourse seeks to promote a sustainable community-supported agriculture within existing Fairtrade networks (Maragelo 2008).

6.3.2. Certification FT

When it comes to ecological sustainability, abiding by strict regulations and requirements throughout the supply chain warrants that environmental standards, that may be otherwise neglected, are met. For instance, for a company to be a licensed FT trader and place the FT logo on its product, it does not only have to verify that the requirements for packaging and shipping processes that are within its operations are met, but also the whole production chain operates within FT standards. In order to do so, the companies usually work with the cooperatives and mills to control olive oil practices, and provide training to farmers on proper olive harvesting methods. As Mohammad from Zayt explained:

> "They [inhouse inspectors] inspect the milling process, the temperature they use, because these things affect the quality of the olive oil, the temperature of the water added to the mixture affects the quality ...They also calculate the rate of loss, as they take samples from the olive oil …They also take samples from the wastewater and the olive oil residue and the pressed olives juice... If the sample at the lab doesn't meet global specifications, then the cooperative will analyze their performance to solve this issue" (Mohammad, Zayt).

As elaborated on by Mohammad, mills are inspected in order to ensure high quality olive oil that can be labeled as organic and or FT: "They can only go to mills that we previously approved off and tell them they should go to, as they have the regulations we want, like using appropriate temperature. We check them through quality assurance department."

The intersection between the Certification FT discourse and ecological sustainability is the FT principle ten, which refers to protecting the environment (Raynolds 2002). As touched upon by Mousa from Al-Shajar:

> "FT talks about protecting the environment. It doesn't allude to organic, but it says that there should be respect for the environment, which I think can be classified under environmental conservation, showing consideration for the environment and the local environment for the small-scale farmers. It doesn't necessitate it to be organic for it to be FT. You can sell a FT product that is not organic, but at least within the standards, but it's better to be organic" (Mousa, Al-Shajar).

This view is corroborated by scholars like Raynolds, who substantiates Fairtrade's claim to sustainability through highlighting that there are minimum agro-ecological requirements for Fairtrade producers who are not necessarily organically certified. However, if they decide to get organic certification, they would receive a specific bonus (Raynolds 2000). This view is also substantiated by Makita, as she states that even if FT producers are not organically certified, studies show that Fairtrade certified producer groups practice environmentally better farming than farms that are not (Makita 2016). Chickpea's devotion to ecological sustainability without being FT or organic certified further validates such claims in literature.

In addition, although Zayt maintains that organic and FT are not necessarily connected, Za'atar elaborates on the interlink between them, as Za'atar, Zayt, and Al-Shajar are in fact organic and FT

certified. As such, there is a trend of associating FT regulations to organic certified regulations, as will be further discussed under the Beyond Fairtrade discourse. However, Zayt does not see a direct link between the Certification discourse and ecological sustainability, as it is more of a spillover effect as FT principles necessitate providing a fair income to farmers and capacity building, as exemplified by Mohammad saying: "Zayt exports FT products and pay the farmers the premium price. This premium is supposed to be used to help the village, or the cooperative in different aspects, which one of them could be environmental." This is underscored by O'Conner et al., as they maintain that the two primary aims of Fairtrade are to ensure stable and fair wages for farmers and agricultural workers, as well as to provide better trading and safer working conditions, and do not touch upon the environmental considerations of FT (O'Connor et al. 2017).

In their study on the impacts of Fairtrade certification on greening agricultural practices, Elder et al. deduce that FT certification does not have significant effects on agricultural practices, but the effectiveness of doing so is influenced by the national regulatory context and the availability of alternative practices (Elder et al. 2013). When examining the effectiveness of FT certifications in promoting ecological sustainability, we should hence consider the capacity of the companies and the local context. As such, ecological sustainability is not fundamentally tied to a FT certification, as large-scale companies, such as Za'atar have succeeded in finding a balance between ecological and social considerations through the incorporation of values from the Certification and Beyond FT discourses, while others, like Chickpeas, have incorporated ecological discourses by completely disregarding the FT certification.

6.3.3. Political FT

'Helping farmers stay on their land' is listed as a keyword under the theme for this discourse. As touched upon in the previous section, the circulation of FT olive oil enables the farmers to earn a

stable income and remain on the land in spite of the Israeli occupation challenges they face. Therefore, by staying on their land and tending it, the Political FT discourse ensures that the land and the olive trees are preserved, and environmental conservation is fostered, as Ibrahim explained to me:

> "It [FT] makes the farmer go back to his land and this is necessary for now especially when people stopped plowing the land or taking care of the tree. So it is a form of resistance. You see the nearby cities, Israeli settlers go there and provoke them by cutting down their olive trees. So Sage wants to preserve the olive tree, that's why we were taught as part of our culture and traditions" (Ibrahim, Sage).

In addition, what the Political FT succeeds in doing is drawing a nexus between love of land and the need to take appropriate care of it, which is also form of resistance. Companies realize the effect of FT networks on farmers, as a stable and fair income incentivizes farmers to stay on their land, rendering this a form of resistance against the Israeli occupation. This view is corroborated by Meneley, as she maintains that FT olive oil signifies an external recognition of quality, which is used as a tool for Palestinian extra-virgin olive oil producers to receive international sales, thereby enabling them to pay farmers a higher price for this higher quality olive oil. As such, farmers are encouraged to stay on their land and work it productively (Meneley 2014).

As for the political component that is embedded within the discourse surrounding FT olive oil, this commodity is perceived to be rooted in agricultural productivity for Palestinian farmers in addition to the political support of the international community. In that sense, olive oil conjures a culturally important bond between the Palestinian farmer and the ethical consumer (Meneley 2011). Daoud happens to agree, as he mentioned to me: "we believe that FT is a tool to help and support farmers on their land and to continue working on his land, and farm more lands as well" In fact, some companies, like Sage, see FT as a "peaceful resistance of the occupation."

6.4. Discussion

"They planted so we eat, and we plant so they will eat" (Palestinian proverb).

6.4.1. Is Beyond FT the Ideal Discourse?

Since the Beyond FT discourse represents the ecological sustainability version of FT, I only examine this discourse from an SSE lens, which is why I discuss this discourse in this section. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Beyond FT discourse is an aspirational discourse that aims to go beyond merely meeting FT principles. In that sense, it borrows from the other discourses to embody values of a community-focused FT coupled with ecological considerations, which begs the question, does the Beyond FT epitomize the ideal FT discourse? In order to answer this question, I look at this discourse from an SSE perspective, and deduce that the Beyond FT is a prototype of the ideal FT discourse.

Firstly, the SSE features elements of sustainability as briefly touched upon in chapter three. Sahakian and Dunand (2014) assess the potential of SEE to become the 'economy of sustainability' (Sahakian and Dunand 2015). In their case study analysis on the cities of Geneva and Manila, they conclude that SSE has the potential to become an economy with a market that is primarily guided by social and ecological values (Sahakian and Dunand 2015). In this manner, I maintain that SSE is a stepping stone towards more socially and environmentally just economy.

Specifically, the SSE framework aims to transform the state, policies, production, consumption, distribution, ownership structures, money, and finance in order to prioritize the welfare of the people and the environment (Kawano 2013). In this manner, how do companies integrate values of ecological sustainability in their FT discourse? This discourse is characterized by positioning sustainability as a central focus of FT.

This Beyond FT discourse recognizes the environmental stance of FT and adds to it, which can be considered the main theme of the discourse. In this case, companies like Za'atar most epitomize this discourse as it successfully links social and ecological considerations within its same line of operations. However, companies approach these additions in different ways. For instance, some companies, like Zayt, choose to adopt a similar discourse of the Certification FT, that is focusing on organic regulations and the certification requirements, while others adopt a different approach, a more holistic one and focus on direct relationships with the farmers in order to help them adopt agroecological practices, similar to Sage and Thyme.

Referring to RQ2, ecological sustainability considerations of companies are translated into different approaches, some, such as Zayt, limit their understanding of ecological sustainability to quantifying it according to organic certification regulations, while for others, like Za'atar and Chickpeas, it is more embedded in the company's values and mission. Lastly, for companies like Al-Shajar, sustainable production merely represents a marketing tool employed to enter international niche markets. as can be seen from the following quotes. As mentioned, some companies, like Chickpeas, finds its values to be aligned with ecological sustainability:

> "We find caring for the environment a core principle for us. We outlined a plan for us and discovered that we base our work on 4 core principles: one is that we create employment opportunities, second is that we provide healthy food to people, third is that we promote local production of food, and fourth is the environment" (Ibrahim, Chickpeas).

Similar to Chickpeas, Daoad from Za'atar defines what he believes the Beyond FT discourse to be: "for the FT certification, there is a principle that relates to the environment, but it doesn't allude to organic agriculture. But we have achieved more than that and go beyond what FT necessitates. We also want organic agriculture, because we see that it complements FT."

The following quote demonstrate some of the companies' focus on organic certification, which is in line with their focus on the certification FT discourse. Daoud from Za'atar: 'We try to combine the

societal values and environmental values. Environmental value comes from focusing on organic brands, certified organic products." As can be observed from the previous quote, what the Beyond FT discourse succeeds in doing while the others fail in maintaining, is finding an interlink between social and environmental considerations, and situating the company's line of work within this nexus by aligning its own values with both considerations.

> "If this cooperative is organic certified, and produces an olive quantity that complies to all the organic agriculture regulations and standards, and goes to be pressed at a certain mill. In this mill, a farmer has pressed his olives there before that were not organic and he used a chemical pesticide. If the organic olives are pressed after, then there might be cross-contamination" (Mohammad, Zayt).
>
> "When the farmer follows the principles and organic methods of organic agriculture, they don't put their lives or their kids' lives at risk when using chemical pesticides or herbicides, so there are dangers from that. In addition to that, you'd get healthier food. Also, productivity increases. There is a common misconception that the productivity of modern conventional agriculture is higher than that of organic agriculture" (Daoud, Za'atar).

As shown in the two previous quotes, some companies, such as Zayt and Al-Shajar see ecological considerations as a tool and justification for the high price of their products. Mousa from Al-Shajar mentioned that: "the price for a Palestinian one is 16-17 euro. There's a big difference, three times as much as Greek, Spanish, or Italian. We're not talking about a 10%, 20%, 50% difference, this is triple the price. The difference is a lot for consumers to withstand. So the least we can do is sell them organic olive oil." Although Zayt and Al-Shajar draw upon values from the Beyond FT discourse, they merely use it as a tool for justifying the high price of their products. Zayt confirms this by saying:

> "Yes, our products may have a distinct taste and flavor, and a unique style, but this does not justify selling our products at prices that high. Organic and FT certifications helps us to sell more. An organic olive oil bottle is more expensive than the conventional one, and this is not normal, it's the same olive oil!" (Mohammad, Zayt).

Hence, is the Beyond FT the ideal discourse? Granted, none of the FT discourses represent a realistic depiction of FT networks in Palestine, as they provide an overview of the different approaches or themes to integrating FT networks in companies' operations. However, I argue that the Beyond FT discourse stands apart from the other discourses by drawing from different values of the other

discourses while still recognizing their shortcomings. For instance, Beyond FT recognizes that the Certification FT discourse is insufficient in achieving ecological sustainability, as the prioritization of the certification requirements renders ecological considerations a secondary aspect of the discourse. For this reason, the Beyond FT positions ecological sustainability as a pivotal aspect of the discourse. In a similar fashion, this discourse recognizes the importance of linking traditional agricultural values with FT, and hence advocates community solidarity, as the Political discourse proclaims. Lastly, while some discourses like the Community FT discourse focuses on local markets whereas the Certification FT favors international markets, Beyond FT attempts to find a common ground both by drawing attention to the importance of improving consumer-producer relations across all markets, local and international.

The following figure represents the intersection of a few values between the different discourses that are shared with the Beyond FT discourse. The values highlighted are ones which are found to be in common with what the Beyond FT discourse advocates.

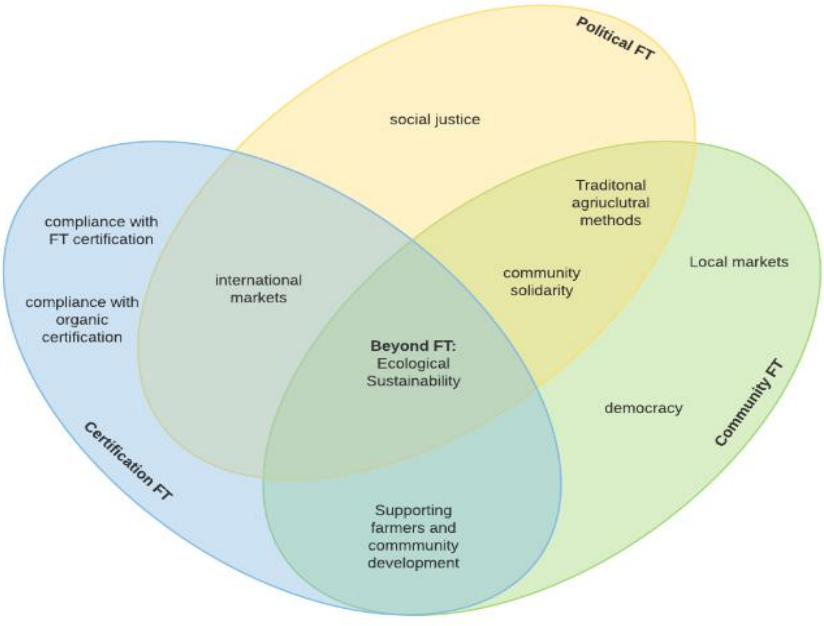

Figure 6-1: Values of different discourses that are highlighted within the Beyond FT discourse

In essence, the Beyond FT discourse borrows from the other discourses to form an ideal version of FT created by a collective of values and traits from the single FT discourses.

6.4.2. Comparing the Different FT Discourses

"Sustainability is making the farmer work on his land, benefit himself and the community around him. FT is the same" (Daoud, Za'atar Company).

In answering RQ2, how do Palestinian FT olive oil companies differently integrate social and ecological considerations in their work? Firstly, ecological sustainability in the Political FT discourse is translated into tending the land, resistance, and re-establishing traditional Palestinian agricultural practices. This view is shared by the Community FT discourse, as ecological sustainability is also translated into promoting traditional sustainable agricultural methods that are advocated to be entrenched in Palestinian culture. In a similar sense, the Community and Certification FT focus on working with farmers to adopt agroecological practices. However, I argue that when it comes to the Certification FT discourse, ecological considerations prove to be inadequate, as companies adopting this model may become more geared towards ensuring compliance with global FT standards, which would allude to, but not guarantee the incorporation of ecological discourses into companies' practices. This may not be the shortcoming of the discourse, but an indication of the companies' core motivations in selling organic FT certified products, as it is oftentimes employed as a marketing tool to enter more niche markets and regain competitive advantage regarding the products' prices.

In chief, the Political and Certification FT discourse find their common ground by using FT or the organic certification as a marketing tool to access international niche markets. Whether it's for meeting global demands or sending a message of solidarity with Palestine, both have a different agenda than mere FT principles, and hence employ FT and/or organic discourses in order to justify the high price of their products, which some may argue to be disingenuous towards the primary values of FT, and

forces ecological considerations to take the sidelines. In addition, a common ground between the Political and Community FT discourses is a focus on traditional cultural values of local solidarity and strengthening Northern Consumer – Palestinian producer relations. Whereas the Community FT may sometimes focus on local markets, the Certification FT discourse favors international markets. Lastly, a main difference between the Certification and Community discourses is the audience they target, as the Community FT discourse focuses on supporting farmers and community development, whereas the Certification discourse exclusively targets Northern market.

Therefore, as can be observed from the different FT models in Palestine, ecological and social sustainability considerations of companies are translated into different approaches that are dependent on a multitude of factors, namely the companies' experiences, core values, and chief objective.

7. The Solidarity Economy Extended: Farmers' and Consumers' Insights

> "Consumers' top concerns are fair pay for farmers and workers and product safety: a full 85 percent of consumers say these issues are important for companies and their suppliers in their dealings with poor countries. At the same time, consumers connect Fairtrade with a consistent message of clear benefits to farmers and workers. Sixty-four percent of those familiar with the FAIRTRADE Mark associate it with helping farmers and workers in poor countries escape poverty. Sixty-one percent who are familiar associate Fairtrade with "a fair price paid to producers" and "helping producers in poor countries access global markets"(Globescan 2011).

Given that this this study looked at FT networks within an SSE framework, all actors involved should be discussed so as to see if there is a sense of community solidarity between consumers and producers. As such, this chapter addresses RQ3, that is: How do Palestinian farmers and consumers perceive the social and ecological benefits and challenges of Fairtrade olive oil?

In order to do so, I analyzed the data collected from the phone interviews with the farmers and cooperatives, in addition to the e-mails received from international companies and the online survey, which provided an insight into customers' and consumers' perceptions. In this chapter, I highlight the main themes identified from this collected data and discuss it under the light of the observed FT discourses, ecological considerations, and the SSE framework. Data collected concerning consumers is examined under a lens of ethical consumerism.

In this chapter, I argue that there is a general understanding of what FT entails among farmers and consumers. For farmers, they are aware that their olive oil is being marketed as FT, but their understanding of what FT entails often differs among them, depending on their affiliation to the cooperative or company. Social considerations are incorporated into the Community FT and Certification FT discourse, as they see the direct benefits FT has on their farmer communities. Ecological considerations were not extensively covered through the data collected for farmers and consumers, but I argue that a common trend among farmers and consumers appears to associate FT with environmentally-friendly practices, without a comprehensive knowledge of either. As for

consumers and customers, the political FT discourse appears to be the most relevant discourse when it comes to consumers and costumers of Palestinian FT olive oil.

The SSE highlights progressive societal norms that push for deep sustainability, alternatives to capitalism and the debt-based monetary system, participatory democracy, and active citizenship in social movements activism (Bergeron et al. 2015). These values that focus on cooperation across the value chain are the values I employ in analyzing farmers' and consumers' perceptions regarding FT.

7.1. Farmers

This section is based on collected data from the phone interviews with nine farmers and village cooperatives. Considering that interview questions were geared towards understanding the farmers' understandings of FT and ecological sustainability, the interview questions were unique to the farmers, and hence distinct themes were derived that are dissimilar to ones identified from company personnel interviews. Although the previously discussed FT discourses are mentioned throughout the discussion of this study, they were used as deductive concepts to draw parallels between the farmers' and companies' understandings of FT.

Firstly, who are the farmers that were interviewed? As previously mentioned in the methodology chapter, they are within the network of FT olive oil production in Palestine, as they directly work with the interviewed companies. All the farmers live and work in rural villages in the West Bank of Palestine. Five out of the nine interviewed farmers are also the head of the village cooperative they live in. It is important to note that this is not a big sample of farmers, given that I had six companies, and hence, generalizations cannot be made.

The main identified themes from the transcribed interviews relate to the 'famers' perceptions of FT', 'understandings of ecological sustainability', and the 'solidarity economy'. The themes of FT and the solidarity economy are discussed within the Community FT discourse, whereas the ecological

sustainability theme is examined from a perspective of the Beyond FT discourse. As such, the following figure (7-1) represents the FT theme and categories listed below it.

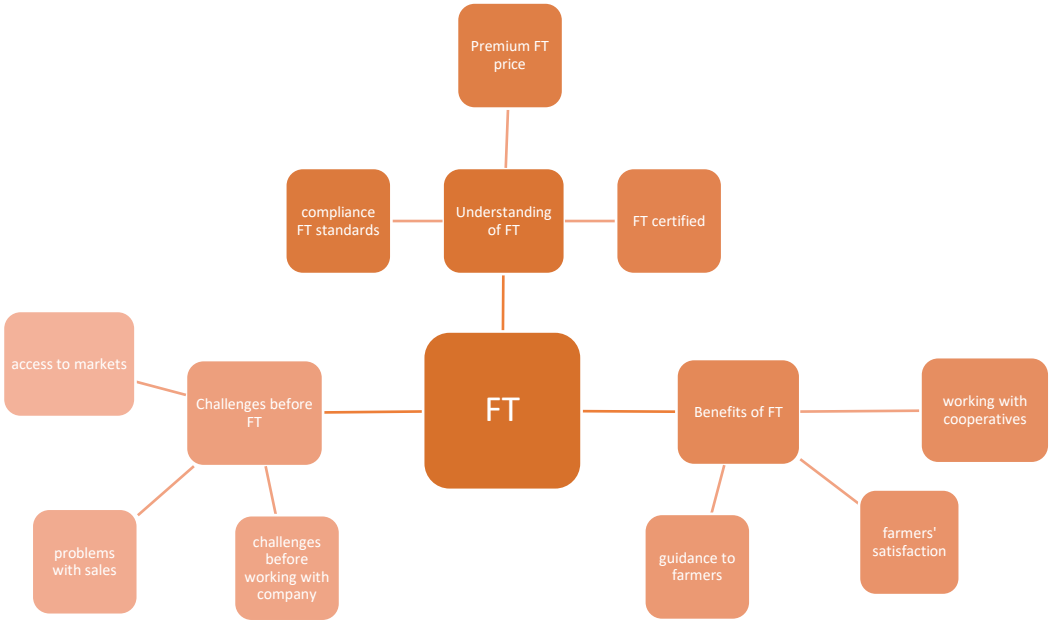

Figure 7-1: FT theme, categories and keywords linked to it

7.1.1. Community FT

As for the solidarity economy theme, keywords are similar to ones identified during the analysis of companies' perceptions. Some of the identified keywords include women's empowerment, direct link with buyers, community development, farmer's guidance and support, as shown in the following figure.

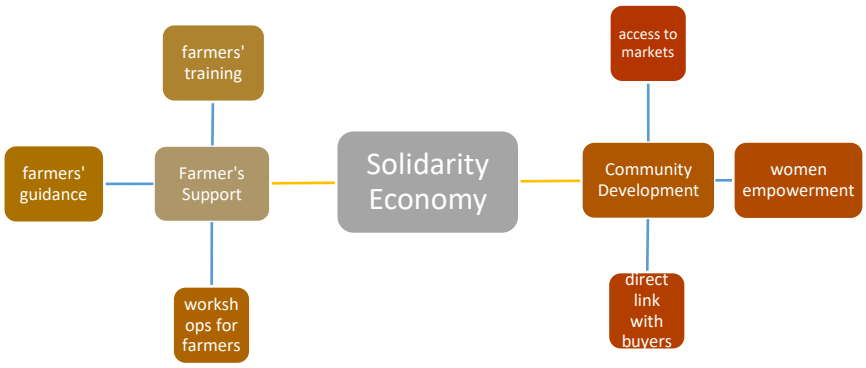

Figure 7-2. Solidarity economy theme, categories, and keywords linked to it

As can be seen, a connection is evident between the SSE and FT according to farmers, as they associate FT with community-based agriculture, rendering the Community FT discourse one of prominent FT discourses among farmers. The following quotes demonstrates farmers' understandings of FT; Baker is the head of his agricultural cooperative.

> "It's [FT] great, it helped us progress in our work. We get the premium price for 2.5 shekels, which helped develop our cooperative, and we use this money to support projects and activities in our village, voluntary work and infrastructure and for children. We do this through the premium price that we get" (Baker, Al-Shajar).

"The farmer of course benefits from his product marketed as FT. It has a lot of positive outcomes on people" (Abdel Mo'ti, Za'atar). Satisfaction of farmers regarding FT is also evident in the previous quote. In fact, various farmers made a point in drawing a distinction between challenges they used to face before suppling olive oil to the FT company they work with and after doing so, highlighting the before and after impacts of FT. This is in line with scholars promoting the effectiveness of FT, as Raynolds maintains that FT producers are paid a price that is above the world market price, guaranteeing them a stable and minimum price should the world market price collapse. (Raynolds 2000).

7.1.2. Certification FT

Although the Certification FT discourse is not evident among farmers' understandings of FT, ecological sustainability, and ecological considerations. Values of it are indirectly incorporated in the cooperative's operations that must comply with the company's operation and what they require.

> "...The farmer is a member of the cooperative, and we have a specialized field team that inspects his farm and checks up on his olives from the time he cultivates them till they're pressed. While we're following up on him, we guide him on using pesticides and fertilizers. We keep guiding him till he presses the olives and gets olive oil. And Za'atar would receive the olive oil then, either from the mill or from his home" (Bashir, Za'atar).

As evident from the previous quote, values relevant to the SSE, as cooperation, guidance to farmers, and community support are stressed upon by farmers producing FT olive oil (Ahmed 2015). In this

sense, farmers are encouraged to become part of the cooperative in order to make their production process easier, thereby contributing to higher community participation. The previous quote also further shows how the heads of the cooperatives are more knowledgeable of FT requirements.

When asked about the farmers' perceptions of FT, most companies claimed that all the farmers they work with are very satisfied, however, a difference was noted when some farmers were asked the same question. Although most farmers I talked to indicated their satisfaction in FT sales, one stated otherwise. Abu Mahmoud said:

> "Thyme decided to market our [the cooperative's] olive oil as FT for a year, and we'd get a percentage for that, but unfortunately they didn't give us the deserved payment. So, we didn't practice FT with them again. There must be a percentage, 10,000 shekels for example, but we didn't get that money. They said that they divided that sum for several cooperatives, so we can't get that much money" (Abu Mahmoud, Thyme).

In addition, although most farmers I talked to showed a clear understanding of FT and the practices it entails, such as providing capacity building (training and guiding farmers), ensuring good working conditions, and no forced labor, it was oftentimes the farmers who are in managerial positions, heads of their agriculture cooperative, that exemplified clear understandings of both FT and organic production certification requirements. For instance, when asked about agricultural practices required for FT production of olive oil, Abdel Mo'ti replied:

> "There are requirements that we have to comply with…These conditions mainly have to do with the milling/pressing process, and not like old practices in which people used to pick olives with sticks, and it has to pressed on a daily basis, chemical pesticides and fertilizers cannot be used, unless it's allowed by FT standards …But in general there are requirements that must be reviewed by the inspectors present at the cooperative. In essence, farmers that are members of our cooperative really benefited from this business" (Abdel Mo'ti, Za'atar).

On the other hand, individual farmers who are not in charge of the cooperative seem to not be as knowledgeable regarding FT certification practices. As Adham responded when I asked him what kind of experience he has with FT: "Honestly, I'm not going to lie to you and tell you that we [farmers] have enough experience, I don't. We just sell our olive oil according to the demand by tin, as farmers

that is. And as an investor or a trader, they buy from us farmers". Hence, it can be concluded that heads of agricultural cooperatives seem to have a better understanding of FT, organic agriculture, as opposed to regular farmers.

This finding is in line with some criticism of FT regarding the low participation of farmers in the process. Lyon contends that while FT provides farmers with higher incomes, low levels of farmer participation in the standard setting and decision making regarding Fairtrade certification schemes demonstrate that the goal of social justice has not been achieved (Lyon 2006).

7.1.3. Political FT

Considering the brevity of the phone interviews I had with the farmers and the cooperatives, I was unable to fully comprehend all values farmers may associate with FT, such as the political aspect. However, when asked about their satisfaction with FT, many farmers described the obstacles they oftentimes encountered before becoming affiliating with a FT company. As previously discussed, the Political FT discourse incorporates the production challenges of olive oil, and employ them as motivation and communicating a message of solidarity with the Palestinian farmers when selling the product abroad (Meneley 2014). In this manner, the obstacles facing farmers, as companies like Al-Shajar claim, are substantiated by farmers, as Abu Mahmoud said: "as our cooperative, we're very satisfied. I used to produce oil and encounter problems selling it, with the price. But now, the price is set, and a mill is provided for us, and I can sell it on the spot at the mill. And I get paid within a short amount of time."

Some farmers went a step further by saying they owe the company they work with for being able to remain a farmer, demonstrating the significance that FT can have on some farmers. This goes in hand with the Political FT discourse's stance on encouraging the farmer to tend the land, thereby resisting peacefully against the occupation, as well the sense of solidarity towards farmer communities. Rajai

says: "I wish there were more organizations like [Chickpeas]…They helped me a lot. They're the only organization that helped me stay afloat and continue in agriculture. There are a lot of difficulties that farmers encounter, and if it wasn't without [Chickpeas], then I would've stopped practicing agriculture a long time ago."

However, it should be noted that this was the case for the small-scale company Chickpeas, which operates exclusively on a local level, and refuses to have intermediaries in the production process, but works directly with farmers. As such, a generalization cannot be made regarding the positive impact FT has on farmers, but may be limited to the case of this local non FT certified company.

7.1.4. Beyond FT and Ecological Sustainability

The following figure represents the 'ecological sustainability' theme identified from the farmers' interviews, and the categories and keywords liked to it.

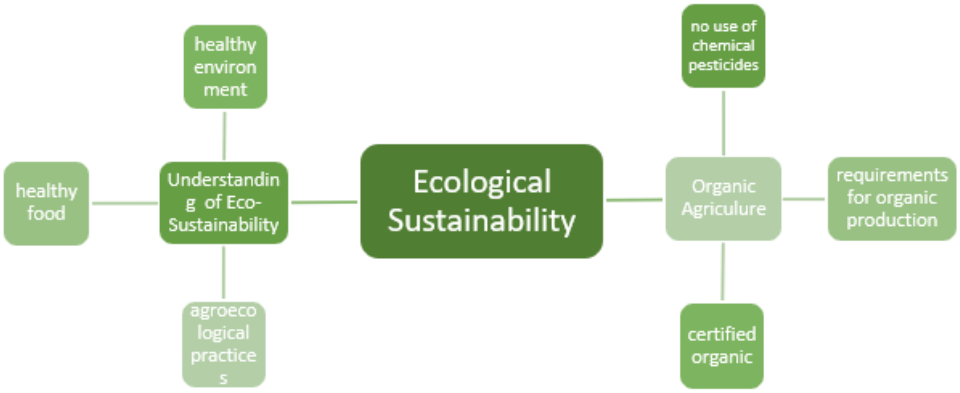

Figure 7-3. Ecological sustainability theme, categories, and keywords linked to it

As can be seen from the figure, clear understandings of organic agriculture, and agroecological sustainability, were also evident, but I argue that this was limited to the farmers who are the heads of the organic certified cooperatives, who were five out of the nine interviewed farmers. Hence, although the Beyond FT discourse is heavily focused on by Daoud, from Za'atar, for the cooperatives working

with them, understandings of the Beyond FT values are translated into ones that more associated with the Certification FT. For instance, Abdel Mo'ti stated: "We are organic farmers. We produce olive oil and cultivate olive trees … we sell our oil to Za'atar, they specify the requirements for organic production. Our task is to cultivate olive trees and take care of them and produce organic olives." This seems to underline an attitude of: 'they tell us what to do, and we just do it', without a full understanding of what these FT or organic requirements entail.

> "We have group olive pressing for the farmers, so that they can go to the mill two or three days a week, and everyone presses their olives at the same time, cloth bags or plastic containers are also provided. And they check the acidity and do all these tests and Za'atar then buys the olive oil at the mill" (Mahmoud, Za'atar).

As can be seen in the previous quotes, understandings of FT with regards to ecological considerations are more common among the heads of the agricultural cooperatives, and are dependent on the companies that the farmers / cooperatives are affiliated to. For instance, Za'atar ensures that FT practices are met and included FT and organic certified regulations in its line of work, seeking towards adopting the Beyond FT discourse.

> "we have environmental agriculture, not only organic agriculture. We have a 400 dunam [40 hectare] farm, which is an organic certified farm, and is for 18 farmers. In addition to that, we are very active in environmental agriculture, and as a village, have become the first environmental agricultural village. We are very interested in environmental agriculture, we have an environmental education program" (Baker, Al-Shajar).

As shown in the previous quote, interest in organic agriculture is made evident by other farmers, which seems to be based on the community's own intertest and motivations in pursuing organic agriculture, and not considerably influenced by the affiliated company. Beyond FT discourse aims to achieve just that: pursue ecological considerations not merely from a certification requirement stance, but necessitate that it stems from the parties' own values and motivations.

7.1.5. Conclusions

As previously mentioned in this section, different themes emerged when examining the interviews conducted with farmers, such as FT, ecological sustainability, and solidarity economy. Furthermore, when looking into farmers' understandings of FT, a connection can be observed between categories listed under FT and those for the solidarity economy, deducing that farmers view FT as community FT as well as the Certification FT discourse, aimed to promote community development (Raynolds 2002) , and help them maintain their livelihood. An emerging theme in this manner is the distinction farmers made between before and after FT was introduced to farmer communities, as most farmers pointed out the market and price challenges they used to face, and the positive impact with regards to stable income that they now enjoy, which is a view shared among scholars as well (Renard 2003). As such, as mentioned in chapter 3 of the conceptual framework, SSE aspires to foster local development that privileges solidarity as an integral part of economic activity (Neamtan 2002). Hence, I maintain that the SSE framework is an effective lens to study FT networks and situate them with AFN (Matacena 2016).

As RQ3 addresses the perceptions of farmers regarding FT, there is a general understanding of what FT entails, as can be seen from the direct benefits it has on them (Podhorsky 2015). In all cases, farmers are aware that their olive oil is being marketed as FT, but their understanding of what FT entails often differs among farmers. In most cases, it is the farmers who are heads of the agricultural cooperatives who to seem to demonstrate a higher degree of awareness and knowledge regarding FT and organic production practices.

7.2. Customers and Consumers

In this section, I analyzed the data received from e-mail correspondences with international companies (customers), and the online survey targeting consumers. Two different types of consumers were

targeted, consumers in Palestine and ones living abroad, as well as distributors or buyers of FT Palestinian olive oil in the US and Europe. In this sense, I define the consumer as a buyer of olive oil, not limited to FT or Palestinian olive oil. The conceptual framework of ethical consumerism was employed in order to understand consumers' perceptions regarding FT.

Ethical consumerism incorporates various principles of environmental consumerism, including the human element of ethical consumerism (Strong 1996). As such, Doane explains an ethical purchase as an alignment with an ethical issue (human rights, animal welfare, the environment), giving consumers a choice between ethical alternative products (Doane 2001).

It is also important to specify that the targeted unit of analysis for the online survey (with a total of 84 responds) included a wide range of consumers: Palestinians living in Palestine and primarily consuming Palestinian olive oil, Palestinians living abroad and consuming different types of olive oil, and consumers living outside of Palestine from different nationalities who consume various types of olive oil. However, I did not ask for any demographic data of the respondents, and thus, was unable to examine how many from each group of consumers responded to the survey.

7.2.1. Community FT

Daoud from Za'atar sees the consumer as an ethical consumer: "But the consumer, who is often an ethical consumer, looks for a product in which no one was disadvantaged during its production, a product that is healthy, and is of high quality." This view is shared by Doane, as she views an ethical consumer motivated by a cause, whether it's humanitarian, political, or environmental (Doane 2001)

Given that the international companies contacted are in direct contact with the Palestinian companies, they view their consumers in a similar light. In fact, an emerging theme among the international companies appears to be perceiving consumers as being motivated by solidarity with Palestinian farmers and the community. For instance, a correspondent of Za'atar company in the US, defines

their customer base as follows: "We have a varied customer base – selling direct into community distributors who sell through places of worship, friends and family and their work places, and we also sell into wholesalers who sell into retailers nationwide. The consumers engage with the product of high quality, ethics and solidarity."

This view is shared among respondents to the online survey as well. When asked about factors that are most important to them when buying Palestinian olive oil, granted that they do, the factor listed as most important for most of the respondents was solidarity with Palestine and Palestinian farmers. Hence, a sense of solidarity is built between consumers and Southern producers in Palestine, as advocated by both the SSE and FT (Ahmed 2015; Raynolds 2002).

As follows, a picture of the ethical consumer is provided: one who is motivated and committed to an ethical cause. The perception of ethical consumers as such corroborates Doane's (2001) view of an ethical purchase as an alignment with an ethical issue, such as human rights.

Another common element of consumer behavior is that most respondents (67%) buy olive oil from grocery stores, which provides insights into consumers' buying habits. Although many may be motivated by the purchase of FT to support farmers, a minority buys from farmers' markets (29%), which perhaps ties into their preference for buying local instead of environmentally-friendly or FT, as exemplified in the figure below.

Figure 7-4: Consumers' purchasing behavior and preferences

7.2.2. Certification FT

The Certification FT discourse views FT a labelling project, as it underlines the importance of consumers being provided with sufficient information about the environmental and social conditions under which the commodities are produced, and are thus, asked to support sustainable production and trade (Raynolds 2000).

Is that the case for the online survey respondents? Given that it targeted a diverse group of consumers, it is rather difficult to infer that FT buyers are motivated by the notion of ethical consumerism. Nonetheless, the online survey helps provide insight into consumer awareness and responsiveness to FT Palestinian olive oil. When asked about their familiarity with FT, 61% of respondents said that they are very familiar with it. In fact, when asked for their input on FT, respondents' answers indicated a general understanding of FT and what it entails, touching upon many of the values relevant to FT, as evident in the following quotes:

"Fair trade is a trading partnership between producer and seller for greater equity. The term is mostly used for international trade between developed and developing countries. The goal is to seek sustainable development by fair trading and securing rights to the producers from developing countries."

"That it cuts out the middle person within trade in order to fairly pay and compensate the laborer for their involvement in the harvest/farming/etc. of the product."

"It exists to make sure no one is being taken advantage of."

When respondents of the online survey were asked about the values they associate with FT, the FT label, fair income to farmers, and fair labor conditions appear to be the most common associated values, which illustrates consumers' general understanding of FT principles.

7.2.3. Political FT

The Political FT discourse was the most identified one across consumers, and companies' perceptions of the motivations behind their consumers' purchases. Interviewed Palestinian companies viewed their target consumers as ethical consumers living outside of Palestine who associate Palestinian FT olive oil with solidarity to Palestine, as can be seen from the following quotes.

Mousa from Al-Shajar: "he/she doesn't necessarily have to be pro-Palestinian, but at least feels for oppressed people, you'd see that he/she buys it. That's why we emphasize the part that this product is Palestinian."

Furthermore, other international companies hold that consumers are motivated to buy Palestinian olive oil as a form of solidarity with Palestine: "Palestinian olive oil has been a relatively small product volume and revenue-wise for [the company] but it has been extremely important to carrying out our mission. Many people in our network look for opportunities to support Palestinians and this is one tangible opportunity."

A third international costumer validates a common theme found among the three international companies: their target consumer and consumer base are solidarity and interfaith costumers.

"When we started in 2005, all of our business was what we called 'solidarity' (sold to activists) versus retail (sold in stores). It has been a goal to keep the solidarity customers while growing the much larger retail market... The Solidarity and Interfaith customer are motivated by 1) Palestine 2) fair trade helping Palestinian farmers livelihood. The Retail consumer is motivated by taste, quality, organic factors. Some are interested in fair trade, especially if they are shopping in a retailer that is promoting fair trade (like Whole Foods Market)."

Hence, it can be seen that consumers are motivated by an ethical cause and recognize the solidarity link to Palestinian farmers and communities that is accentuated by the Political FT discourse.

7.2.4. Beyond FT and Ecological Sustainability

In this section, I argue that ethical consumerism is a tool that can be employed in understanding the significance of adopting an updated version of Political FT discourse in marking a shift towards a positive appreciation of FT, as ethical consumerism sheds light on people's reasoning behind their Fairtrade purchasing behavior (O'Connor et al. 2017). As such, I argue that the ideal discourse of FT from a consumers' perspective is the Beyond FT, as through it, one can associate the ethical purchase of Palestinian olive oil with a humanitarian cause of solidarity, as well as an environmental cause: encouraging farmers to adopt agroecological practices, thereby combing social and ecological considerations within a 'solidarity with Palestine' discourse.

An interesting remark is associating or equating FT with agroecological practices, as 29% of respondents stated that they associate FT with environmental practices. "The [FT] label could also be used to describe products that compensate people for environmental resources." This is aligned with Raynolds view of FT and sustainability, as she deduces that the Fairtrade movement has gone further in educating consumers about ecological as well as social injustices that are embedded within the conventional North/South relations; thereby calling for changes in the global regulation of the agri-food system (Raynolds 2000).

As such, the Beyond FT discourse is built on the premise that its ethical consumers are well-informed of the social and ecological discourses, which are incorporated into the political considerations that the Palestinian olive oil producing companies aim to promote.

7.2.5. Conclusions

In conclusion, according to companies and customers, an ethical consumer is perceived to be motivated by an ethical cause, that is supporting Palestinian communities and farmers. Therefore, I argue that the political FT discourse appears to be the most relevant discourse when it comes to

consumers and costumers of Palestinian FT olive oil. Similar to farmers, consumers targeted through the survey appear to have a basic understanding of FT and associate values, such as fair income to farmers, with it. Ecological considerations are only briefly touched upon by farmers, as they associate ecological considerations to being already embedded within the FT certification requirements; which is a view also shared by consumers, as they associate ecological considerations with FT. However, many of the customers find ecological considerations to be incorporated into the Political FT discourse, by supporting the Palestinian farmer remain on his/her land and preserve it. Thus, a sense of solidarity and community support among Palestinian farmers and consumers living abroad is established through the circulation of FT olive oil from Palestine

8. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand the perceptions of Palestinian agricultural food companies, farmers, customer, and consumers regarding Palestinian olive oil in Palestine, and the extent to which Palestinian FT olive oil companies integrate social and ecological considerations in their work. The SSE and ethical consumerism served as conceptual frameworks for the study.

Regarding RQ1 (the main social and ecological discourses that inform Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil production), I identified four main FT discourses that describe companies' perceptions of FT in Palestine. The discourses identified were Community FT, that focuses on CSA, famers' support, and traditional sustainable agricultural practices; Certification FT, which focuses on complying with FT certification requirements; the Political FT that stresses employing FT as a tool to communicate a message of solidarity with Palestinian farmers. And lastly, the Beyond FT discourse was identified, which represents the ideal FT discourse, and pursues a FT scheme with an ecological sustainability agenda.

As for RQ2, (How Palestinian companies integrate social and ecological considerations in their work), I argued that this is often influenced by the companies' own views and experiences in including agroecological and community-focused practices in their work. For instance, the Community FT and Political FT discourse highlight the significance of adopting traditional agricultural practices that are in line with sustainable agriculture, whereas the Certification FT discourse ensures that social and ecological considerations are met through the FT certification requirements. The Beyond FT discourse finds a balance between social and ecological sustainability by incorporating different values from the other discourses, forming the ideal version of FT - one that is based on the company's own values and motivations in advancing such social and ecological discourses.

As for RQ3 regarding how the Palestinian farmers and consumers perceive the social and ecological benefits and challenges of FT olive oil, a general understanding of what FT entails is prevalent among farmers and consumer alike. However, what they differ in is the FT discourse they mostly associate with. Whereas the farmers perceive FT in line with values shared with the Community FT and Certification FT discourses, such as farmers' support and cooperation, consumers generally link FT purchases to an ethical purchase that is grounded in a message of solidarity with the Palestinian farmer, thus borrowing values from the Political FT discourse.

As such, a main finding of this study is the political aspect and the significant role it has in the circulation of Palestinian FT olive oil, regardless of whether the companies deliberately decide to incorporate such values in the marketing of their products or not. The Palestinian FT olive oil bottle thus represents a politically-charged global discourse of distinction that draws attention to how the product was sourced, produced, and exchanged by using FT as a tool to access global markets and gain international recognition. Hence, I argue that since any Palestinian company using FT as a tool of recognition and a means to access markets abroad, the mere representation of a Palestinian olive oil product in face of the challenges of production automatically becomes associated with a political aspect, whether the company adopted the Political FT discourse or not.

Hence, Palestinian companies can adopt a 'politicized version' of the Beyond FT discourse, building on traditional sustainable practices, and making use of traditional knowledge that is shared among Palestinian women, thereby advancing social discourses of community development and social justice as well as ecological considerations of traditional sustainable agriculture.

As for theoretical implications, this study underscores the success of the SSE as a lens to understand social and ecological considerations within FT olive oil practices. This study further contributes to the literature in highlighting the shortcomings of FT in adapting to local contexts and different

environments than ones usually prescribed. As highlighted through the shortcomings of the Certification FT, which loosely represents the standard discourse of FT, ecological and social considerations are merely met, but other local challenges faced by the producers may not be addressed. As such, power dynamics between farmers and consumers should be taken into account. In the case of Palestine, it was evident that a political component of FT should be incorporated to better fit the circulation of FT products outside of Palestine, as the standardized version of FT cannot thrive there. A standard FT discourse which assumes a homogeneous application across all countries cannot be universally applied, but we should design a FT discourse that understands and acknowledges the local context it is in.

Given that most of interviewed farmers belong to agricultural cooperatives, a possible limitation of this study was not incorporating cooperatives and a larger sample size of farmers in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between all actors of the FT supply chain. Considering the political aspect of the case study at hand, including more literature on food citizenship, political ecology, and food sovereignty in light of FT networks may further substantiate this study's findings. Hence, future research may use the agricultural cooperatives as the targeted unit of analysis or central focus, as they serve as the linkage between farmers and FT companies, through which, understandings of farmers' perceptions may be better addressed and integrated into existing FT networks.

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Appendices

Appendix A

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Consent to take part in research

I…… agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that participation involves being interviewed and providing access to documents if necessary.

I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and the Company's name, and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in Dalia Hashweh's possession, until June 2019.

I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for one year after the submission of the thesis (June 4th, 2019).

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of researcher

Appendix B

Interview Questions – Top Management (Company Personnel)

RQ1: What are the main social and ecological discourses that inform Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil production?

Theme: company's values and experiences

1. Can you tell me about your company? How it started?

Theme: olive oil production challenges

2. How did you get into olive oil production?
3. What are your achievements when it comes to olive oil production?
4. Do you face any challenges when it comes to producing olive oil? Especially exporting olive oil?

Theme: environment in Fairtrade, Fairtrade challenges

5. What are your Fairtrade products?
6. Why do you produce Fairtrade olive oil?
7. Who is it exported to?
8. Do you face any challenges with exporting fairtrade olive oil? And does fairtrade affect the purchase of your products?

Theme: agro-ecological practices, ecological sustainability

9. What practices does the production of Fairtrade olive oil include?
10. How do you ensure fertility for the trees and soil fertility?
11. Do you have to do anything with pollination?
12. Do you use chemical pesticides or fertilizers?
13. Where do you get water from?
14. Is organic something that you've considered? Why / why not?

RQ2: How do Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil companies differently integrate social and ecological considerations in their work?

Theme: company's values

15. What do you believe are the company's main values? And how are these values translated into practices?

Theme: fairtrade

16. Can you tell me about Fairtrade and the role it has in your company?
17. What do you mean by Fairtrade?
18. Why have you decided to produce Fairtrade products? And specifically, olive oil?
19. Who are your main consumers? What do you think are consumers' perceptions/opinions regarding fairtrade olive oil? (local and international consumers)and can you connect me to your costumers?

Theme: solidarity Economy

20. Do you have any social outreach programs to local communities? Why/why not?
21. Is there cooperation in the production of Fairtrade olive oil?
22. What other values do you think are included under Fairtrade? Justice? Social issues?

Theme: social sustainability in Fairtrade

23. How are social values linked to Fairtrade in your opinion?
24. How does Fairtrade affect farmers in your opinion? And can you connect me to some of your farmers?

Theme: ecological sustainability in Fairtrade

25. Is there a relationship between environmental sustainability practices and faitrade?
26. Is there a contradiction or a trade-off between environmental sustainability and Fairtrade? Is it difficult to try to achieve both?
27. What do you think about environmental sustainability?
28. What role does environmental sustainability have in your line of work?

Are there strategic planning documents I can look at?

Appendix C

Interview Questions – Farmers

Theme: farmers' values and experiences

1. To whom do you sell your olives? What company?

Theme: agro-ecological practices, ecological sustainability

2. Is organic something that you have considered? Why/ why not?
3. What practices does the production of fairtrade olive oil include?

RQ3: How do Palestinian farmers and consumers perceive the social and ecological benefits and challenges of Fairtrade olive oil?

Theme: fairtrade

4. Have you heard about Fairtrade? What can you tell me about it?

Theme: solidarity economy

5. What's your perception / opinion regarding Fairtrade? Are you satisfied?

Appendix D

Questions for International Companies

RQ3: How do Palestinian farmers and consumers perceive the social and ecological benefits and challenges of Fairtrade olive oil?

Theme: company's value and experiences

1. Firstly, can you tell me about your company? How it started? and your operations?
2. What is your relationship with [selling Palestinian Company]?

Theme: Fairtrade

3. Can you tell me about Fairtrade and the role it has in your company?

Theme: solidarity economy

4. Who are your main costumers? What do you think are consumers' perceptions/opinions regarding Palestinian Fairtrade olive oil (or Fairtrade products in general)?

Appendix E

Table E-0-1. Main themes from coded data, categories, and keywords

Main Themes	Categories	Keywords
Community Fairtrade	Local markets Solidarity economy Cultural values	273
Certification Fairtrade	Fairtrade production International markets Fairtrade certified	215
Political Fairtrade	Production challenges Israeli obstacles Political aspect	76
Beyond Fairtrade	Environmental sustainability Environmental challenges Sustainable production	195
(Context)	Other values Company experiences	60

Table E-0-2. Number of codes under each theme for the individual companies

	Community	Certification	Political	Beyond	(Context)
Sage	76	44	16	16	21
Chickpeas	44	15	8	24	10
Thyme	40	29	10	30	5
Al-Shajar	38	41	15	31	1
Za'atar	36	36	9	47	11
Zayt	39	50	18	47	12
(total)	273	215	76	195	60