

**The Nature of Occupation:
Nature Reserves, National Parks, and Archeological Sites in the Occupied West Bank**

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“It is unfortunate that our efforts to protect this ancient landscape [*nof kdumim*] get turned into something political, instead of the nature protection efforts that they truly are.” This sentence, which I recorded on 16 February 2018 from a top planning official in the Jerusalem and Judea region, conveys much of the tension around nature protection in this contentious region. On the one hand, Israeli authorities and environmental organizations attempt to do what many such agencies do across the world: allocate uses, maintain and manage green spaces, and protect natural and cultural heritage. On the other hand, these efforts are portrayed by many as immensely political and as intended to deprive the local Palestinian population access to land and resources. Indeed, as it has been in many colonial contexts before, protecting land, plants, animals, and archeological sites, the legal designation of nature reserves, national parks, and archeological sites is at the same time also a way both to erase and remake ties to land and connections to place. This is especially the case because of the enhanced role of Jewish settlers living in the occupied West Bank in the administration of nature reserves in the area. Telling nuanced and up-to-date stories about specific nature reserves, national parks, and archeological sites in the occupied Palestinian territories, my project will unveil the everyday administration of the occupation and the mundane legal strategies enacted through the deployment of seemingly benevolent and apolitical ideas of natural and cultural heritage.