

Unfortunately, although we have a substantial amount of data on the aggregate number of Arab workers in the Israeli economy, and its role in the structure of the Jewish sector, very little is known on the process of "internal migration" and its impact on the rural household and village society (cf. Migdal, 1980:54-77). One significant exception is the work of Linda Ammons on social change in the village of Ballata (Nablus District) during the early seventies (Ammons, 1978). Her study assesses the influence of several factors -- including wage-labour, pressures on land and water resources, migration, and the policies of the Military Government -- on changes in the village occupational-class structure.

A key factor affecting those occupational changes in Ammons' work is the availability of new employment patterns and land leasing possibilities as alternatives to income from agriculture (only 6% of Ballata's labour force was employed in agriculture in 1974). These new patterns and possibilities were generated by the village's integration into the periphery of Nablus and its attachment to the Ballata refugee camp built on nearby village land (Ammons, 1978:105-157; 236-239).

Those conclusions, however, have their limitations for understanding rural change in the West Bank as a whole. Land in Ballata, being in the commercial suburbs of Nablus, has become important as real estate than for agriculture, and has led to the emergence of a new stratum of land speculators and rentiers (who lease land to refugee farmers), a phenomenon which applies only to the rural periphery of the big towns. Such a situation, although relevant to a substantial area in the region, still leaves unexamined the type of relationship which obtains in over 70% of villages in the West Bank which do not constitute the immediate hinterland of the urban centres.